

Ep #238: Sierra Swofford's 100-Mile Ultra: Race Day Preparation



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Jill Angie

[The Not Your Average Runner Podcast](#) with Jill Angie

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Welcome to *The Not Your Average Runner Podcast*. If you're a woman who has never felt athletic but you still dream about becoming a runner, you are in the right place. I'm Jill Angie, a certified running and life coach, and I teach women how to start running, feel confident, and change their lives. And now I want to help you.

Jill: Hey, rebels. So I am back this week for part three of the journey of Sierra Swofford to her 100-mile trail race, which is taking place very, very soon. And we're going to catch up with her on how her training has been going for the last probably like six to eight months, and what's left on the agenda, and how she is doing.

So, Sierra, welcome back to the show.

Sierra: Thanks, Jill, for having me again.

Jill: And I was just thinking about this, you are going to be officially the first Run Your Best Lifer to do a 100-mile race. How does that feel?

Sierra: It feels amazing. And it feels even more amazing that I'm going to be the first but not the last.

Jill: Oh for sure. Say more about that because I feel like you started a little bit of a trend.

Sierra: Yes, we have had a huge uprising in Run Your Best Life. When I started Run Your Best Life the big thing to do was like the half marathon. Now, we've got so many people doing Ultras, 50Ks, 50-milers, 100K, we've got at least one maybe two other people in pursuit of 100 miles as well.

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And it is just so incredible to be part of this big revolution of growth in this community.

Jill: Yeah, I love that, right? Because you joined what? Probably two to three years ago, it's been a while. You've been around for a while.

Sierra: Yeah, about three years.

Jill: And those folks that were like, "Yeah, I'm going to run my first half marathon" had been in from the beginning and were like just kind of getting to that half marathon point. And now you've all progressed, so I love that. I love that so much. I mean, it's really fun for me to watch, that is for sure.

Okay, so let's just check in with the facts. When is the race?

Sierra: So the race is Memorial Day weekend. It starts on the Saturday of that weekend at 5am in Utah, just outside of Bryce Canyon. So as of the time of the recording of the podcast, we are 92 days, 17 hours, 49 minutes and 56 seconds away from the race.

Jill: Oh my gosh, okay.

Sierra: Not that I'm counting.

Jill: Not that you're counting. Well, and this podcast will drop in seven days. So, basically, by the time people are listening to this, we're going to be about 85 days out. So that's what, a little over two months?

Sierra: Yes. Oh my goodness.

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Jill: So what are you thinking about that? Tell me everything that's going on in your mind.

Sierra: Yeah, so there is so much because we're at the point of fine tuning all of the travel details, and hotel reservations, and rental cars, and grocery shopping lists, and all of the fun final details of the race. I have an amazing crew set to accompany me on the race. Shout out to them because I could totally not do this without them.

And all of the people on my crew are amazing members of Run Your Best Life. And some of them I've never met in person, I even have one member coming from another country to help me with my race. And just like how incredible is that, that people are so wonderful, and giving of their time and commitment to help me do this?

Jill: It is kind of amazing. And I just think it speaks to what the running community is like, that runners are just super helpful people in general. And they're always like, "Yep, I'll drop whatever I want to help you. I want to see you succeed." And I think Run Your Best Life is an excellent example of that, for sure.

Sierra: Yes, very much so.

Jill: Okay, so 100 miles, in 92 to 85 days, depending on when you're listening to this. And I want to get into the training, because I know as you and I have discussed the whole process of training, there's been a lot of things that have come up that it's been like, oh, wow, I didn't really expect that.

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So give me like three things that were either unexpected for you or that people might not necessarily think about when they consider training for a 100-mile race.

Sierra: Yeah, I mean, for me the number one thing has been the quantity of food that one must consume, even just for your training runs. Yesterday I did a 22-mile training run. And that's a lot of calories that you're burning, and if you're not eating some of those calories back, then you're not going to survive. So just the amount of food that one must consume to do a race of this magnitude is a very surprising thing that has come up.

And that's one of the most important things when you are doing a race like this, because you need food to survive. And if you're not eating properly and have a proper nutrition plan for a race like this, you're not going to make it. Especially for me, because this race is at elevation, it's a higher altitude than what I live at. You need more food when you're racing at a higher elevation. So practicing that amount of eating throughout this training process has been incredible.

The second thing has really been like, everybody says, "Oh yeah, I'm going to run 100 miles." Well, run is a relative term. And I always say run even when I'm walking, right? Running 100 miles requires a significant amount of walking. And not just like intervals. I know, we talk a lot in this community about intervals and how wonderful and great strategy those are, which is true. I will be running intervals for the entire 100 miles.

But there will be significant periods of time where I won't be running at all. I will just be walking. Number one because you have to eat. To go back to the last one, you have to take the time to eat and it's hard to run and chew at the same time, if anybody has tried that.

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Jill: That's like asking to start choking on your food, right?

Sierra: Right, exactly.

Jill: Don't run and chew gum, don't run and chew food. Nothing in your mouth when you're running.

Sierra: Yeah, or you got to do the chipmunk thing. Like if I eat a lot of the little the peanut butter pretzels, I just stick it in my cheek. And so then when I get to my next walk interval, I can have it already right there and I can start chewing.

Jill: All right, that's interesting. I have not tried that. I love it, love it.

Sierra: Yeah, so when you say you're running 100 miles, you do have to plan on walking a significant amount of time. And you got to think too like at night, in the dark, on a trail, you're going to be walking through those. When you've got some big hills, you're going to be what they call power hiking up the big hills and not really running.

So it is a significant amount of walking. And I'm guessing that I probably, of actual walking time I'll probably be walking at least 50%, if not more. Maybe even more like 75% of the actual run. And I still call it a run because it is a run.

And that is surprising to a lot of people. Because when you say I'm going to go run 100 miles, people just automatically assume you're running from mile one to mile 100. And that's really not the case. And so when we get into longer distances it actually is, for our community, very much an accessible thing because you can walk and achieve a large, you know, the

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50K, 50 miles, whatever. You can achieve that by walking a significant portion of your miles.

And then the third thing I've kind of learned is how much of a difference your support team makes. Like I mentioned, I have an amazing crew. I have two amazing crew members, Tanya and Mary, who are going to be the backbone of the team. They will be out there the longest trying to keep up with me at aid stations and all the things. And then I have three amazing pacers, Rebecca, Debbie, and Barbara, who will be pacing me through the back half of my race to drag my tired corpse across the finish line.

And then also just my family. My husband, my mom, my dad, my brother, they all have been so supportive through this. My husband is also making a sacrifice too because he's the one who's like, "You're running again? I want to sit down and watch TV with you." That kind of a thing. And it's his sacrifice too, to get me to the end of this.

And we had to have that conversation a couple of times throughout my training of like, hey, you know, I understand this affects your life. You know, it's not just me, it's him too putting in the time and the commitment even though his time is alone on the couch while I'm out running or whatever.

So that has been a really hard learned thing as well, to learn about how much that affects other people. Because if you're training for 5K or something, you don't really see as much of that. But yesterday I was out running for seven hours. And then my husband has to get dinner and all the other things together because I'm like, "I'm not doing it." So it's a big, it is a big sacrifice for your family members as well. They are going through the training with you step by step just as much as you are.

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Jill: Yeah, that's a great point. Because it's like, yes, you're doing the work of the actual running. But because you're out there for seven hours, that's seven hours of time that you're not necessarily doing stuff around the house or spending time with your spouse or your family. So it is a family commitment, right? It's not a commitment of just one person.

Sierra: Yeah.

Jill: And you so you've got, I think I counted right, you've got five people on your actual crew that are going to be meeting you at different points along the trail and either bringing you food, or gear, or running with you.

Sierra: Yes.

Jill: So how did you even approach organizing all of that? Like what tools did you use? How did you figure out who's going to meet you where? Or were you just like, I don't know, we're just going to take a shot in the dark? Or did you have like a, because I know you're a huge planner, so I'm sure you had like a pretty detailed expectation, not expectation, but a pretty detailed plan for what you thought was going to happen. But how did you come up with that? Tell me all the things.

Sierra: So I bet you right now my crew members who are listening to this podcast are probably laughing, because they know how incredibly like detail oriented I am, more than anybody else. I have so many spreadsheets, I can't even begin to tell you, of like how this is laid out. This race is a massive undertaking of planning.

There are races out there if people want to do 100 miles that are easy to plan, don't require as much intricacy as this one does. This one just happens to be a pretty complicated race. So I have a spreadsheet that lays

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out the timeline for the crew and the pacers with my predicted pace of when I think I'm going to be in between each aid station.

There are only five aid stations that my crew can meet me at. And then the back half of the race is where the pacers will come in. So it's also an intricate planning of the crew members and where they're driving to, because this is a really remote race. The aid stations are all up dirt roads.

One of the aid stations, the furthest one out, is over a two-hour drive from our rental house to the aid station. It's only about 60 miles, but it's going to take them two hours to get there because of the windy dirt road in the dark, they're going to be driving it in the dark to meet me.

And that's why I'm saying like my crew, Mary and Tanya, like they're the backbone of this race. Because they're the ones who are going to have to navigate that to get everybody to where they need to be on time before I get there. And then they have to sit and wait for me to show up. And then you know, get me out and going off to the next aid station.

So it is incredibly detail oriented for this particular race. And we have set up even a system of like as I go through aid stations, I'm going to text them, like the aid stations that they can't meet me and I'm going to text them what time it is and what aid station I went through. I have made the spreadsheet so they can put that time in and it will adjust my predicted arrival times for the rest of the aid stations.

Jill: Oh good, I love this. So you've automated it in addition.

Sierra: Yeah.

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Jill: So talk to me about your pacers. How many miles are they going to be running with you?

Sierra: So my first pacer is Barbara and we have about a 10-ish mile hill to climb together. Basically we're going to go up and down and that's going to be 10 miles. And then once we come down, that will be a turnaround point and I will pick up my next pacer. Barbara and Debbie will switch, and then we'll basically go back up that same hill and back down that same hill.

Jill: Oh my gosh.

Sierra: So they each will do about 10 miles with me. And that will be at night, in the dark, we will be power hiking that hill to death to get up and down that hill as quickly as we can. And then my last pacer will be Rebecca. And she's going to basically do the back half of the race from there all the way to the finish line, which will be about 24, 25 miles.

And most of it's going to be downhill, there's like one major uphill, but most of the rest of it is downhill. Which is nice of the race to structure it that way so it's not uphill in the back half of the race

Jill: I mean, when you're doing 100 miles, it's the least they could do.

Sierra: Yeah, right? So although this race technically is 101 miles, just as a side note.

Jill: Of yours, right? Of course it is.

Sierra: So Rebecca will finish out the race with me and literally like drag my tired body across the finish line. And there are also time cut-offs in there too. So we have to make sure we're meeting those. There's three aid

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stations where I have to be through the aid station by a certain time. And then I have 36 hours from the time I cross the start line to cross the finish line.

So that will be another thing that my crew will have to keep track of. Somebody is going to start a timer the second I cross the start line so we can keep track of where I'm at throughout the race and how much time I have to cross the finish line.

So they have a rolling start line, so you have from 5:00 to 5:30am to start. So if I start at 5:15am on Saturday, then I have till 5:15pm on Sunday to finish the race.

Jill: So do they keep it open until 5:30pm? So if you cross at 5:20 are they going to be like, "Sorry, you're disqualified."

Sierra: No, yeah, so if you cross the start line at 5:30am, you'll have till 5:30pm on Sunday to cross the finish line.

Jill: But I mean, if you cross it at, say you start at 5:00 am, because they're keeping the finish line open until 5:30pm the following day.

Sierra: Yeah.

Jill: But what happens if you don't get there by 5:00am?

Sierra: Yeah, so if I cross the start line at 5:15am and I cross the finish line at 5:16pm on Sunday, on my record will be a DNF.

Jill: Got it. Okay.

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Sierra: Even if I finish it will be a DNF.

Jill: Because this is sort of a different beast than your typical marathon where it's done, you know, they're just like, we just want you to finish. Because there's so much involved, because there's some risk involved, right, running in the dark at night on trails. So I think they do have to be pretty detailed about how they're going to control the finish line.

Do you get a belt buckle if you finish this one?

Sierra: Yes.

Jill: Oh my goodness.

Sierra: And it's beautiful. Oh my gosh, the belt buckles for this race are handmade from some of the natural elements of the landscape out there. Like they've taken some of the pieces of landscape and then like enameled over them, and they're absolutely gorgeous. And I so desperately, desperately want one.

Jill: Yeah.

Sierra: And we've talked about it before on the podcast, there's a good chance I may not finish. But I want to finish. You also get to ring a gong when you cross the finish line to signify that a 100-miler finished, because there's people camping all around the start line. So anytime 100 miler finishes, they get to ring the gong. And so I've been playing in my training that old song about ringing the gong.

Jill: I love this.

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Sierra: Like I'm visualizing myself ringing that gong when I cross the finish line.

Jill: I love this. I love it so much. I mean, I think that, you know, in theory, when people think about like, oh my gosh, 100-mile race, that sounds so crazy. But when you start talking about it in detail and bringing it to life, it still sounds crazy but it doesn't sound quite as out there. Because you can see that there's a lot of method to the planning.

And it's not like, "Oh, I'm going to go out there and hope that I make it." You're doing so much. So much of your training is not just the running, it's like all of the additional planning that goes into making it a success.

Sierra: Yeah, and when you're talking about Ultra running, like the running training itself is like the fourth or fifth thing on the list of priorities.

Jill: Yeah.

Sierra: It's not the first.

Jill: That's fascinating, right?

Sierra: And really, number one is really mindset. And number two is eating. Number three is hydration. And then like number four in there is the actual running. It's really not, everybody thinks oh, you just got to run all these miles. No, if your brain is not keyed into what you need to do to cross the finish line, then you're not going to make it on that alone. Let alone your fueling and hydration.

Jill: Right, you could have the best training in the world, and if your brain is not on board, it's a stop.

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Sierra: Absolutely.

Jill: Well, let's talk a little bit about the food. Talk to me about yesterday's training run and how you planned for it. Actually, yesterday's training run was what, 22 miles?

Sierra: 22, yeah.

Jill: Yeah, let's talk about how you're planning for the 100 miles, because that 22 miles, I feel like you could do that in your sleep at this point.

Sierra: I don't know about that. It was hard, don't get me wrong, 22 miles is not easy. It's never easy. I think I said it before on the podcast that sometimes even for me going out and running three miles can be hard because that's what you have in front of you to run. And you're like, "Oh yeah, running is hard. Three miles is hard."

Jill: It's all hard. It's like when you live in the north, this is so funny. When you live like in the northeast it gets pretty cold, especially like, you know, New England area. And I used to live up in that area and we would have a saying that once it gets below zero, it doesn't matter how cold it is. It's just like zero, negative 10, negative 40, it's all the same. It's all really fucking cold, it doesn't matter, right?

And I feel like running is kind of the same way. Like once you get over a certain distance, like it just doesn't matter how far it is, it just is.

Sierra: Yeah, and I think that's part of the thing with 100 miles when you're looking at it, like it's going to hurt. You have to expect that it's going to hurt, that you are going to be uncomfortable, that your feet are going to be tired, that your body is going to be tired. You have to know that going in.

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It's not like you're singing about roses and daisies while running down the trail for 100 miles. No, it's going to hurt. This is not something that you're naturally made to do. I mean, our bodies are made to move and made to run, but 100 miles at a time is not something that you're really made to do necessarily.

And so you have to, again, going back to that mindset of like, hey, this is going to hurt. But that doesn't mean you quit, you know? That means you can say to your crew like, "I don't want to do this." And they're like, "Uh-huh, we'll see you at the next aid station."

Jill: Yeah, exactly.

Sierra: And you have that plan set up also with them to know, okay, these are the actual reasons for quitting. A cut that needs stitches, okay, yeah, maybe that's the reason for quitting. But a small cut, maybe you're bleeding a little bit? No, you keep on going.

Jill: Right.

Sierra: Hallucinations, those are normal. You keep on going, you know? I was recently listening to an audio book about Ultra running. And the guy was telling a story about how he was pacing somebody who had a full-on conversation with the Michelin Man while he was racing because he was hallucinating. And they just kept on going.

Jill: It's like and now there's three of us, awesome.

Sierra: Yeah, so hallucinations, that's normal. So you just have to have that plan and know that like, hey, these things are going to happen because you are pushing your body to the limit and figuring out where that limit is. And

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everybody's limit is different, some people's limit is a 5K is some people's is 200 plus miles, because those races are also out there.

So it's finding that limit for you and where you want to be. But just still knowing that, yeah, it's going to hurt and it's going to be uncomfortable.

Jill: Well, let's get back to the food again. How are you going to fuel yourself? Talk me through your sort of overall fueling plan for this race.

Sierra: So I calculate it by calories per hour. For me, I find that that is the easiest way to understand my fueling needs. I don't eat as many calories as I'm going to burn, but I try to keep up. And that's kind of the goal for any Ultra runner, is you try to keep up. There's just no way for you to eat as much as you're actually burning.

And to eat early and often is important because if you wait till mile 30, mile 40, it's too late, you're already in trouble. So even like mile two is probably about where I'll start eating. And I will have calculated out from aid station to aid station about how many hours that's going to be, so about what that equates to calories.

And then I have been practicing, and I'm still practicing and refining what I want to eat. I am not a big Gu person. I know some people love it and it's a great product for some people. I'm more of a whole food person, so I'm eating a lot of peanut butter pretzels, some cookies, some different things.

And I will have at certain points in the race some hot food planned. Like maybe like a cup of noodle kind of thing to quickly slurped down, you know, because it'll be cold at night because it's the high desert. So it'll be nice to have some hot chicken soup or something in the evening when I'm freezing to death. So I'm working on those things.

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And then especially training my body to react well to electrolytes, because I have a tendency to get an upset stomach with electrolytes. So I've been training with the electrolytes that I want to use in the race and letting my body know that these things are okay and letting it adjust to processing these things. And my upset stomachs are getting less and less.

Also utilizing products like Tailwind, which is a liquid electrolyte but it also has calories in it. So if your stomach does start to go south a little bit and whole foods, you just can't chew them anymore, having liquid calories available. So practicing with that before the race so you're not introducing a new product to your stomach in the middle of the race because it's in dire need of calories. So I've been practicing with that as well.

Also thinking about things like caffeine is another important thing. So about a month out from the race I'll cut out all caffeine from my diet. So then at the race the caffeine will have more of an effect during the night time because it'll be out of my system. So having like a coke with lots of sugar and caffeine in the middle of the night will be a really great pick me up to help get me through the 3am hour of hallucination time, because that's when that happens mostly.

So those are some of my fueling strategies. I'm also making some homemade fuels with like sweet potatoes mashed up and in a little squeeze pouch. I've been doing also like a version of rice krispie treats with like peanut butter and some different flavorings in it so it kind of tastes like birthday cake, which is really yummy.

So there's lots of different options out there. So just depending on what works best for you, you just practice with that and get your body used to that. And then that way when you get to the race it'll just be easy to have it there for you.

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Jill: And have you ever thought about putting electrolyte powder into your food? Like you're making rice krispie treats, like throwing some electrolyte powder into that so that it's like all combined into one.

Sierra: I haven't done that. I do have actual like electrolyte pills that I take occasionally.

Jill: Oh, okay, there you go.

Sierra: Which those, my stomach does really well with. It's something in the actual powdered electrolyte drink mixes that I usually have a reaction to. But the pills are really, really great, they don't upset my stomach at all. So I tried to do a combination of both the pills and the drink, because I'm trying to get my body used to the drink so I can do kind of both.

Jill: Got it. Got it. I mean, there is a lot to consider, right? Because you're going to be in the woods far from everything. And so if you have an upset stomach, it's not like there's a porta potty around the corner, right? You got to handle it. So it's best to just avoid it if possible.

Sierra: Absolutely. I will say this race is really great at having some bathrooms at the aid stations. So that is really nice to know. But if it's in between aid stations and you're out in the woods.

Jill: Yeah. Well, and how many aid stations are there for a 100-mile race?

Sierra: So there's about 20 aid stations in the race.

Jill: Okay, let's just stop though. 20 aid stations sounds like a lot, but it's 100 miles. So it's still like five miles in between aid stations, right?

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Sierra: Yeah.

Jill: Anyway.

Sierra: Yeah, and some of them will be full aid stations with places to get hot food. And some of them are just water only because it's remote and the race company doesn't want to leave you completely without water that far in between aid stations. So some of them you'll just like roll up and there will be some big jugs of water where you can just fill up and go on and that'll be it.

So you have a combination of just water to full on cookout aid stations with volunteers and all the things. So this race company does a really amazing job at their aid stations. And they're very well stocked with everything you could possibly need. So even though I'm pretty prepared, I'm sure there's going to be something that I'm going to forget that we're going to be like, "Hey, do you guys have this at the aid station?" So I mean, that's part of what you pay for in your race fees, the aid stations.

Jill: Yeah, exactly. Well, Ragnar was like that, right? We prepared, and prepared, and prepared, but then, of course, things get forgotten and that's why you have support at the race.

So the whole time we're thinking, I'm like 36 hours is a really long time to be awake, period. Awake and moving, even a longer time. So will you take any nap breaks during this?

Sierra: No.

Jill: No, okay.

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Sierra: And the simplest thing is because I'm a slow runner. If I take a nap break, I won't make the cut-offs.

Jill: Got it.

Sierra: So unfortunately, that means I have to be moving for the full 36 hours, unless for some reason I'm going to be incredibly faster during the race than I think I'm going to be or planning on being. But I have decided that I would rather plan on being slow and steady than trying to kill myself to be faster just so I could lay down for an hour.

And I know that there is a lot of science for Ultra runners behind taking a power nap and how beneficial that can be for a person. But I think when you're under 48 hours, you're okay to just stay awake. And I did a lot of studying and research on this. And if your race is under 48 hours, you can just power through. If it's over 48 hours, then yeah, you're going to want to get some sleep because things are going to go south.

But I think I'm going to be okay with the 36 hours. I will probably before the race do like an overnight where I'm going to just stay up and be in my house and maybe do some like exercise videos, and maybe do a little elliptical, and I have a little trampoline, maybe do a little of that. Maybe bake some bread or something just so I'm not just sitting on the couch and watching TV all night. But being up and moving around.

Like, heck, I could clean my whole house during the night. But just being up and moving and just practice being awake and moving, even though it's not as physically taxing as what I'm going to do for the race. But sometimes it's just helpful for your brain to practice these things and know that hey, yes, I can stay awake for 36 hours and I will be okay.

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Jill: Yeah. Right, and it's not like you're doing it all the time. I mean, I think if your life was suddenly, "Oh, I'm going to do all these like 36 hour runs, like once a month." That's probably detrimental to your health. But I think once in a while is not a big deal.

Sierra: Yeah, actually getting more sleep and practicing as you get closer to your race, actually increasing your sleep time is going to give you more benefit than practicing being awake for long periods of time. And letting your body rest and heal during that time, you're going to get way more benefit of getting more sleep than getting less.

Jill: Yeah, agreed. Agreed. Okay, so that was one question that I wanted to make sure we talked about. But let's talk about what you're going to wear for this. So what's the climate going to be like? How are you going to dress for it? Are you going to have people bringing you fresh clothes, fresh socks? Like how's that all going to work?

Sierra: Yeah, so I've not nailed this piece down 100% because we're still a little far out. It is in the back of my head all the time because we will be in the high desert. So it gets really cold at night and really hot during the day. So layers is going to be my strategy, which I'm practicing now. Like just wearing lots of, it's cold at my house. Yesterday everybody was making fun of me in the Facebook group, with good humor of course, about how many layers I was wearing for the temperature.

I get really cold, so practicing wearing extra layers. Putting stuff on at night for me is going to be key. So the early morning I'll have a couple extra layers on when I start the race that I'll shed and leave in a drop bag somewhere. And then when I get towards the evening, I'll start putting more things on as I go, just depending on how cold I get. Because it'll probably

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get down to maybe as low as 20 degrees at night. And it'll probably be in the upper 70s during the day.

And the high desert, the cold is really cold. So I know I'm going to need gloves, and hats, and extra jackets. So I'm just strategically thinking about and buying things that I know that I can layer on top of. And also knowing that maybe at some point I may want to take all my clothes off and just change things out because you're going to be sweaty and gross.

And so I will have extra clothes in the crew van for me to make a complete clothing change. And then just planning on putting layers in various drop bags so that if I'm cold or hot, I can take things on and off as I need it. And I think it's important to just have that flexibility, like have a good base outfit that I can put stuff on and take it off as I feel like I'm going to need it. Because I don't want to be too hot, but I definitely don't want to be too cold.

Jill: Right, either extreme is going to impact your performance.

Sierra: Yeah.

Jill: Okay, so it sounds like you've, I mean, I know you said you haven't quite figured it out. But I think you actually have, that you're just going to have like a shit ton of options available to you so that you can make a decision. Because you're not going to know until you get there what the weather is going to be like. So you have an idea, but it's weather, right? So it's always kind of up in the air.

Now, what is your longest training run going to be for this race?

Sierra: Ooh, I'm excited to talk about that. So my longest training run that I have on my schedule is going to be 50 miles. And I am in the midst of fine

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tuning that plan, which I am so excited. I am going to have like the biggest adventure for this training run. I live in Oregon and there is a trail that runs down the entire coast of Oregon. So it's hundreds of miles, so I'm going to go out and do a 50-mile section of this trail.

So I'm going to have everything from being on the beach, like running on sand, which will be great practice for the desert. And then the section that I've chosen is going to also have some hills. So I'll get a little bit of hill and elevation training going in there as well. And my husband is going to go with me. So about every 10 miles he'll meet me and be my mobile aid station so I can change my shoes, or refill my hydration pack, or get more food, or whatever I need.

So that's the plan right now for my 50 milers. I will not have ever done this trail, so it'll be a big adventure. There is a wonderful lady who, she's the expert on this trail and I've corresponded with her and gotten more information about the section that I'm going to be doing, which has been fantastic and wonderful.

And then one of my pacers, who also lives here, she's going to come out and do a little bit of the trail with me. We haven't decided which part yet, but she's going to come out and meet me. So that'll be good pacing practice as well.

And again, the running part is subjective. I don't know how much of the 50 miles I'm going to run because I have never run on the beach. So we're going to see how that's going to work. And then also part of it, actually, you have to go along the highway. So I'll have to be safe and be careful of being along the highway with cars and stuff.

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So it's a very broad range of experiences. But I think it's going to be so much fun. And my goal with that run is to have fun and practice all the things that I've learned. Because it's really going to be like practicing a race, you know, because you're going to a place that you don't normally go to, you don't normally run on, with things that you're going to encounter. So how do I problem solve things as I come across them, if I get lost? You know, all of that kind of stuff.

So it'll be great race day practice, I think. But I just ultimately want to have a good time and have a great experience.

Jill: Yeah, I think you will. I mean, it sounds like actually a really fun thing to do.

Sierra: Yeah, it's going to be really fun.

Jill: So fun. I love it.

Sierra: Maybe not so much for my husband because he's just going to make sure he has a lot of Netflix movies download on his phone.

Jill: I was going to say download some movies, bring a book, he's going to get good, bring his Gameboy or whatever kids are playing now.

So okay, so one last question I have for you, I think, is what thoughts are you deciding in advance to think while you're on your run? Because you're going to have a lot of thoughts that come up, like, "This is dumb, I want to stop." Right? And so how are you going to deal with that? And how are you planning in advance for that?

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Sierra: Yeah, I mean, even yesterday I had that thought because I did three loops. And so I was at my car and my last loop I was saying that exact thing, that this is dumb and I just want to get in my car and go home. So those thoughts always pop up and those thoughts are always a factor. But having a counter balance thought to whatever that is, for me, makes a difference.

And having those beliefs of things like I am an athlete, and athletes do whatever it is that I'm having the thought about. Athletes eat when they're supposed to eat, they drink their water when they're supposed to drink their water. Athletes do the best that they can. And if they're injured, they take care of their bodies, like whatever it is.

For me, that's always been a powerful thought, that athletes do, fill in the blank. And that I am an athlete. And sometimes we all question that belief. But I'm like, well look at the evidence. Look what I'm doing. I'm an athlete.

Jill: Exactly. Exactly.

Sierra: And that is such a fun thought. And I would rather have that fun thought that makes me smile, than I'm a failure and I'm not going to succeed.

Jill: Right. Right, I feel like there's no upside to thinking I'm not going to succeed.

Sierra: Yeah.

Jill: There's no upside to it. Even if it's obvious that you're not going to succeed, you're going to get so much farther by thinking, "Well, I'm an

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athlete and this is just what athletes do” than to focus on anything else. So I absolutely love that.

Sierra: Yeah. And I've definitely had a period of time in my training where I thought a lot about failure, because it's a really real possibility. It is.

Jill: Yeah.

Sierra: 50% of people who do this race fail. And I spent a lot of time thinking about this. And I think I even talked about it on the podcast before. And actually, the period of time that I spent thinking about that a lot was, in a way, really healthy for me because it took away the fear of failure because I'm like, I know, it's a real possibility. Acknowledging that, talking about it, accepting that fact that it's a real possibility.

But now I'm at the point where, you know what? I'm going to cross that finish line. I'm going to do this. I'm going to ring that gong and I'm going to get that belt buckle. And being brave and just speaking out and doing all the things that I need to do that are in my control to get me to that finish line.

And I could fall during this race and something completely out of my control could absolutely happen and I could not finish. But as long as I do everything that is in my control during my training and getting ready for this race, that makes me successful, and it makes me a winner. And whether I cross that finish line or not. It doesn't matter because I did what I set out to do, which was to train for this race.

Jill: Yeah, I love that. I'm so proud of you. Like it's just been a pleasure watching this evolve, watching you evolve. Because I do remember, it was like October 2020. Was it October 2020?

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Sierra: Yeah.

Jill: When you kind of whispered it and we were in one of our Run Your Best Life retreats, and you're like, "I think, maybe I'm going to do this 100-mile, I don't know, maybe." And then I was like, "All right, well, I want you to tell five people." And then you came back and you're like, "I told the pizza delivery guy that I'm going to do this race."

And it just mushroomed from there. It was like telling that pizza guy was the thing, I feel like, that shifted something in your brain that you're like, "Oh my gosh, this is going to happen." And then it's just been, you know, just like watching you make it happen has been so fun to watch.

Sierra: And now you can't get me to stop talking about it.

Jill: I know.

Sierra: I find a way to work it into every conversation I have.

Jill: Right? I think that when you have such a profound experience in your life that not just like, "Oh yeah, it's really cool that you ran 100 miles." But like, "Here's what I learned about myself. Here's what I learned about other people. Here's what I learned about life." Right? There's so much that has come out of this, it's so much more than a belt buckle.

Sierra: Absolutely.

Jill: Not that that won't be amazing, but I just feel like you've gained so much life knowledge from this that why wouldn't you want to tell everybody about it?

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Sierra: Yeah. And in two ways in my own personal life it's changed me so much and given me confidence to speak boldly, to talk about it, to be brave. And even so much so I may have signed up for another 100-mile race already.

Jill: I love this.

Sierra: But also in helping other people do the same thing. And that's my big, big passion in Run Your Best Life, is helping other people discover the same things about them that I've discovered about myself, and that you can do anything that you think is impossible. If you really want to and you put your mind to it, that you can do that.

And I really encourage people, like if you're listening to this podcast and you're like, "Hey, I want to do a crazy, impossible, scary thing." This community is the place to start.

Jill: Yes.

Sierra: We will encourage you as much as you need to be encouraged. So this is the place to be if you have a scary, crazy goal. And if, for you, that's a 5K, that's okay. That's a great place to start.

Jill: Exactly. Yeah, so if you do, if you want to join Run Your Best Life and get coached by Sierra the badass, all you got to do is either join the Rebel Runner Roadmap, or one of our 5K classes. Which we're going to be running them back and forth all year long, make sure that you get on our mailing list. And at the end of those classes you're eligible to join Run Your Best Life and then you can have coach Sierra talk you into running a 100-mile race.

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Sierra: because I will.

Jill: She will, she will, we're not joking.

Sierra: Yeah, and if you get into one of those classes now, you will get a little bit more behind the scenes glimpse into my training and my life. And if you end up joining in, you'll get to see the final outcome. And if you're in Run Your Best Life in the in the next sign up area you'll get some behind the scenes things that other people won't get to see, including some special things that the Run Your Best Lifers don't even know about yet.

So I'm so excited to do that. So yeah, if you guys really want to see the full like nitty gritty, like in fact like even what I wore yesterday, well, I put up a post in Run Your Best Life of guess how many layers I'm going to wear on my run because it's cold outside. You know, we played that game yesterday in Run Your Best Life and it was so much fun.

Jill: Did anybody guess it? Did they get it right?

Sierra: No, I don't think anybody even got close.

Jill: Well, how many was it? Seven layers, that was going to be my guess.

Sierra: I can't remember now. I mean, and it depended on if you were counting just tops or bottoms or the whole thing.

Jill: How many articles of clothing, I guess?

Sierra: Well, if you included my shoes 1, 2, 3, 7, 11, 12, 13, like 15. No, 16, I forgot my buffs. I know, you would have died.

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Jill: I would have been so miserable because what was it, like 40 degrees outside?

Sierra: No, it was like 20.

Jill: Okay, all right. Fair enough. When it's 20 degrees, I will wear a long sleeve shirt and either a vest or a super lightweight jacket. For me, at 20 degrees that's me. But also, I think I live in a colder, I'm already used to the cold and I have a lot more insulation than you do so it evens out. But it's so funny.

But here's the thing, Andy has recently undergone a significant weight loss. He lost about 100 pounds a few years ago and if it's like 40 degrees outside he's in shorts and a tank top. I'm like, "What is wrong with you? Even I am wearing long pants." He's like, "I don't like to be all tangled up in my clothes." It's so funny, right? I'm like, "You're freezing." He's like, "I know, it's just more comfortable." So every runner is weird and different in their own way.

Sierra: Yeah, yesterday a girl ran by me wearing shorts and I was like, "You're going to make me cold just looking at you."

Jill: That's so funny.

Sierra: Do what makes you happy.

Jill: Exactly, do what makes you happy. And I think that's like, for sure the message of Not Your Average Runner, is like run in the way that makes you happy.

Sierra: Absolutely.

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Jill: But let's wrap this up. I want to make sure everybody knows that, if this is your first time listening to Sierra's story, check out episodes 172 from November of 2020, when we first started talking about this. And then last August we did episode 208 where, Sierra, it was about six months into your training and you had just kind of gotten over some injuries that you were thinking like, "Oh my gosh, I might not be able to do this race after all, I might still be injured." And you had just gotten past them.

And so we're going to do one more episode this summer after it's all over. So it'll be like a four-part series. But episodes 172 and 208 are sort of the preview to what we're talking about today. So make sure you check those out. And May 30th?

Sierra: 28th.

Jill: May 28th, okay.

Sierra: Because it starts on Saturday.

Jill: Oh my goodness.

Sierra: I think it's the 28th. Now I'm questioning myself. Yes, it's the 28th.

Jill: You double check that.

Sierra: It's the 28th. It's the 28th and 29th because the 30th is Memorial Day and I'll be done by then, hopefully.

Jill: Yes, you will be done by then. I love it. All right. Well, we wish you the absolute best of luck. We're very excited for you. I can't wait to hear how

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this all comes out. And I think that's it for today. Thanks for being here and sharing your story.

Sierra: Thanks, Jill.

Oh, and one last thing, if you enjoyed listening to this episode you have to check out the Rebel Runner Roadmap. It's a 30-day online program that will teach you exactly how to start running, stick with it, and become the runner you've always wanted to be. Head on over to rebelrunnerroadmap.com to join. I'd love to be a part of your journey.