



The Extra Mile: One Woman's Personal Journey to Ultra-Running Greatness

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The story of the woman who shocked the running world in 2002 when she won the sport's most grueling race--135 miles from Death Valley to Mount Whitney--beating her closest competitor by 5 hours!

One year after her astonishing victory at the Badwater Ultramarathon, Pam Reed again made distance running history when she braved the hottest weather in years--135 degrees--to successfully defend her title. How does this 100-pound mother and stepmother of five muster the endurance and courage for the 28-hour climb from the hottest desert floor on Earth to the shadow of the continental United States' tallest point?

In *The Extra Mile* we watch this ultramarathon champion seek balance in her life as a wife, mother, athlete, and entrepreneur. With astonishing candor she tells of her 15-year-long battle with *anorexia*. And she helps us to understand her passion for ultrarunning--to discover how far the human body can be pushed. The success of Dean Karnazes's book, *Ultramarathon Man*, and Reed's TV appearances have demonstrated the public's fascination with this growing sport. Reed's book will be an inspiration to women everywhere.

The Extra Mile: One Woman's Personal Journey to Ultra-Running Greatness Details

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Kim says

Trying not to be snarky. Trying. I couldn't even finish this. I tried. So many times. But it's so disjointed, and the writing is so poor.

I'm sure she's a very inspiring person (I picked up her book wanting to be inspired). But I just couldn't get through it, and I found her as a person so unlikeable for much of what I did read. I think I'll pick up Dean Karnazes book, because I'm terribly interested in ultrarunners, and this one just didn't do it for me.

Sabine says

I did enjoy reading about Pam's races, her successes, training and life in general. What I didn't like was that the book didn't follow a timeline. It went always back and forth between older events and more recent ones. I like it a bit more organized.

Nevertheless, she is a great athlete and I enjoyed reading her story. It is very motivating and shows clearly that if you want to do something badly there is always enough time in your life to do it.

Cate says

After enjoying Dean Karnazes' Ultra Marathon Man so much, I was really looking forward to reading this book by an ultra marathon woman. When she wrote about running and her races, the book was really interesting. Unfortunately, she spent a lot of time whining (in my opinion) about her anorexia and rather quite a bit discussing her disturbing, ego-filled, somewhat neglectful relationships with her husbands and children. Could've done without the girlie angle. If you are going to write about running, write about RUNNING! No one likes a whiner, least of all athletes. She's obviously in amazing shape, but I had a hard time taking her seriously. I enjoyed Karno's book a lot more, even though he seemed to barely manage a thin veil over his huge ego and possibly even his misogynistic views of female athletes.

Celeste says

I've been on a kick of reading running memoirs this year. I saw this book while searching around and really wanted to read it when I saw that it was a woman's story.

And Reed blew me away with her accomplishments, and she really lets the reader know about about them. And then reminds the reader again. And again. Her writing had voice, which so many memoirs have a hard time with, but as I read, I found that I just didn't like her very much. At times, her tone was one of bragging. And, don't get me wrong, she's done things worth bragging about but it's off-putting just the same.

I was also put off with the Dean Karnazes stuff. I didn't know this before reading the book, but apparently

there was some media-blown rivalry between the two of them, and Reed spends a fair bit of time discussing it. In fact, she spent so much time talking about what she declared was a non-issue that I rapidly felt that she was trying to convince herself as much as the reader of this. And if she's going up against Dean Karnazes based on personality, then she's going to get blown out of the water. He's one of the nicest people running trails today.

Reed hasn't written any other books, so I don't have to worry about whether I want to read anything else written by her, but in honor of the lack of rivalry, I'm going to read another one of Karnazes's books!

Jody says

Pam Reed is a great runner, but unfortunately this book is boring and meandering.

There's so much description of people she knows, and so little description of racing and training. She writes as if she's just always good and running and goes out and does it - no struggle, no conflict, no anything interesting. It's like: "I decided to do this long race. So I went and did it. I ran for a really long time. Then I won." And maybe that's how ultrarunning is for her. If so, great. But it doesn't make for an engaging book.

Jen says

This was interesting, but I didn't really find myself relating to her as a person or a runner. I questioned her honesty at times. A memoir is the perfect opportunity to show our nitty-gritty selves or to continue to show the world how we'd like them to see us. I'm not sure which one she did with this book.

All that aside, I can't believe all the things she's accomplished in running. It's pretty incredible.

Stephanie says

I was a newbie runner in 2012, and when I first took it up, I decided to read some memoirs of great runners, for inspiration and information. Pam Reed's memoir is the first one I picked up and I'm glad to say it both inspired and informed me, the perfect memoir combination.

Most people probably don't know what ultra running is, and that's because it's pretty crazy. Then again, I've heard that all runners are crazy, which I just refuse to believe. ;) If you're one of those people that think running is crazy, then your mind is about to be blown. Ultra running is running distances further than a marathon which is 26.2 miles. Ultra runners typically run races of 50 miles, 100 miles, or in Pam's case, even 300 miles! Without stopping! WHAT THE WHAT?! Yeah, talk about making me feel lame when I struggle to run a few miles.

Pam has run so many events and has an overwhelming list of accomplishments and awards. Her biggest accomplishment to date is winning Badwater two years in a row. This race is astounding. Racers run 135 miles in temperatures of about 120 degrees, give or take some degrees. These ultra events are so intense that runners have crews with them who give them food and cool them off, and also typically don't get any sleep either. Their reward for finishing this race? A belt buckle.

Pam has also run 300 miles nonstop, which took her a few good days. She took this idea upon herself just to show that she could do it. Color me impressed!

Pam's story is nothing short of astounding. She tackles a lot of issues in this book including Anorexia, being an elite athlete while also being a wife and mother, and the problem of women not receiving due recognition in sports such as ultra running. I enjoyed reading about all of these issues, as well as the casual tone of the book, but enjoyed the racing parts the best. Pam has run all over the world in all kinds of events including 24 hour runs, where racers just run for 24 hours straight to see who can run the most miles in that time frame.

Pam could come off as a bit conceited, maybe a bit crazy at times, but ya know what? I'd take conceited and crazy any day if I had the physical strength, determination and skill that she has. Her story has inspired me to push myself and forgo any limits I've placed upon myself, because really? We can do anything we set out to do, even the hardest things, if we want it bad enough. Pam Reed is living proof of that fact.

As for me? I'm going to keep on running my heart out, and I'll think of Pam when I feel like stopping, and know that I can always, always do more.

Quotes to keep:

"Placing limits on what I think I can accomplish is something I tend not to do. I've heard that people are actually able to cover about twice their imagined limit: If you think you can run only 1 mile, you can really run 2; if you think you can run 2, you can run 4... While initially I never thought I would run the distances I have, or in the times in which I've done them, I haven't really put mental limitations on myself either. And truly, I've surprised myself." (p. 7)

"It's really funny how your energy level and motivation can fluctuate during a race, and the things that give you a boost are weird." (p. 49)

"I once talked with a woman who believed she could never be a good runner. She said, 'I've tried it, but the whole time I was running, all I could think was, 'When will I get to stop?' And I thought, 'I feel that way lots of times, and I just keep going.'" (p. 55)

"Running is something you're ready to do, something you want to do, and perhaps even something you're born to do." (p.64)

"... desire and commitment are so important in ultra events. There is a certain amount of technique involved in running, but as the distances get longer, the race depends more on the heart than on the legs." (p.139-140)

"Before a long run, there's a sudden realization of how impossibly far you have to go. So you have to step back from the long-range perspective and just focus on letting the first mile happen, or the first quarter mile, or even the first step." (p. 149)

"If you can mentally convince yourself that you can tackle a task, whether it's running a marathon or cleaning up a room, you can always accomplish it physically." (150)

"So here is tip number one for any new distance runner: savor the milestones. In your running career, whether you compete at the top level or just make running an enjoyable part of a long, healthy life, you are only a virgin once. Only once will you run your first 10-K, your first half-marathon, your first full marathon, your first ultra. So when you do experience a first, I think it's really important to stop for a moment to recognize how great it feels." (p. 172-173)

“Everything was so exciting when I first started. All I cared about was running as much as I possibly could. I would finish one event and think, ‘Well, when’s the next one?’ Whenever it was, wherever it was, I would try to get there just to be on a course again.” (p. 172)

“Athletes in the third category are interesting. These people don’t have to be especially gifted. Physically they may be only average. But they tend to be resilient, and on a given day, for some mysterious reason, they are able to come up with a performance that’s much better than anything they’ve done in the past. It’s like some extra spirit takes hold for a short time and transforms them into stronger and faster competitors.” (p. 206)

“... the mental and emotional elements of running are by far the most important.” (p. 207)

“I think we tend to underestimate our own abilities at all levels. I think of the speech that Ken Chlouber, the race director, gives at the start of the Leadville Trail 100. He says, ‘You are better than you think you are, and you can do more than you think you can.’” (p. 245)

Wendy says

Pam Reed is an amazing ultra runner, no doubt about it. She won Badwater (135 mile race through Death Valley in July) overall two times in a row and ran 301 miles straight (in 79 hours), among many other great accomplishments. However, she is no writer. I enjoyed the race details in her book. I guess that is what I was looking for when I picked it up at the library. However, she is all over the place in her story, talks about her anorexia, her affair, her personal issues too much. She talks about how she doesn't keep track of her fellow runners/competitors, but then lists all kinds of stats on them. She protests a feud between her and Dean Karnazes, but it seems more like a "thou doth protest too much" sort of thing. She spent a chapter talking about each of her kids and her friends, etc. and I guess I just didn't care. I wanted to hear more racing stories. I liked the running stuff. I admire her ability and accomplishments. I could have done without a lot of the extra fluff though.

Vanessa says

This memoir was one of the most poorly organized and unpolished books I've read. As other reviewers have said, Pam Reed is a runner, not a writer, but still I'm surprised that the editors didn't reorganize her ideas, jazz up her descriptions, and give more coherence to her musings on personal subjects. I read the book to the end and appreciated learning about ultrarunning, but Reed ultimately doesn't provide the reader with the kind of vicarious experience and understanding that a book should.

I would almost recommend this book to people who are interested in ultrarunning simply because it will provide some understanding of the sport while being a really weird reading experience.

cory says

pam reed is bad ass!

the literary quality of this book might only warrant two stars and i think that's fine; pam spends a lot of time practicing to be a good runner, not to be a good writer. With her multiple badwater wins, 24-hour records,

myriad other running accomplishments, plus being a mom and small business owner/operator (tuscon marathon), how could she find time for the thousands of hours it must take to hone one's writing skills? to me this ends up feeling more real than something sensationalized, exaggerated, and embellished (think laura hildebrand).

Brian Burk says

Enjoyed the look into Pam's life...would have liked more insight into the races she has run, the drama, the story of the race within the race.

Brian

I'm a runner who enjoys telling a story, a shameless plug for my book: Running to Leadville
<https://www.amazon.com/Running-Leadville...>

A captivating account about a lost soul, a small mining town and a 100-mile trail race that changes lives.

Kun says

As a middle-pack runner, I really admire what Pam Reed has archived. But it is hard to appreciate her writing style. Maybe just me, but there is just too much complaining in the book.

Christine Grant says

My library is running out of titles that I am interested in reading or haven't read on Overdrive, so I picked out "The Extra Mile." Granted I know nothing about ultra-running, but how bad could it be? The answer is...bad. Ms. Reed's book is a mixed up mess that should have been article or two. I found her reference to her ongoing battle with anorexia slightly offensive--she says that anorexia actually helped her because it taught her body to thrive on very little. Not okay to say. Dangerous, even.

Yitka says

This was a pretty good read overall, but mostly because I'm a junkie for running memoirs, and I'm impressed as heck with Pam Reed. She writes with great honesty about her life, her struggles (including anorexia), her triumphs - and I wasn't as put off as other reviewers of this book were by her "defensiveness" at times. I think she has some good reason to be; for someone who's as remarkably accomplished in the sport as she is, few people even in the uber-geeky community of ultrarunning have even heard of her, which is a shame. I agreed with her in tending to wonder how much of her relative anonymity (again, I'm just talking about within the running community; I understand that most of society doesn't give a darn about runners :P) has to do with her being a woman. But holy cow, Pam Reed beat even all the male competitors at the 135-mile Badwater race through Death Valley in 2002....BY FIVE HOURS. People should know about this woman! What other competitive athletic feats in the world can women be so competitive with men? Ultrarunning is still a sport largely dominated by men, so I was duly inspired by Pam's incredible accomplishments and contributions to the sport.

The writing itself was less impressive - again, not quite as disorganized as other reviews led me to expect,

but overall fairly unpolished. Most of the pull quotes from other people seemed oddly placed and often unnecessary or redundant. I found myself wishing at many points the writing could be a little more self-reflective, a little more compelling, and perhaps combed over a little more finely by an editor. Often it felt like a conversational and relatively superficial rehashing of the many races Reed has run over the years. Obviously, though, I was still riveted enough to plow through this book in just a few days :)

Kristen says

It was interesting to read, but just the parts about running (not other parts of her life). I didn't think it was very well written, especially at the end. I actually turned the page back to double check that I hadn't missed something.
