



Find this page online at: http://www.coolrunning.com/engine/6/6_1/the-ultra-life.shtml

The Ultra Life

An interview with Lisa Smith Batchen

By Jennifer Bostwick

Posted Wednesday, 7 January, 2004

Introduction by Jennifer Bostwick - SheRuns publisher

I have created SheRuns because I believe women runners need a voice and a space for expressing themselves. Although more women run than ever, there are limited magazines for running, in general, and insufficient magazines and articles aimed at women, in particular. Running is individual, for certain, but as a group, I believe women make up an amazingly connected presence with unique perspectives, goals and lives. With SheRuns, I hope to address issues that directly relate to running and how it fits into our lives as women. Excerpted articles for the current issue of SheRuns will be posted here monthly. This is the second article to be published. Be sure to come back and check out next month's article! Send me a note, let me know what you think.

Happy Running!

Jennifer Bostwick

email: sheruns@cox.net

subscriptions: sherunssubscription@cox.net

Lisa Smith Batchen runs long, hard, hot races that take her to the depths of her soul and to the highest highs life has to offer. Not only has she committed to pushing herself physically and mentally for over 23 years, she has also raised hundreds of thousands of dollars for starving children, is a personal trainer, massage therapist, Spa Director, owner (with husband Jay Batchen) of DreamChasers, coach and mother of two children under the age of four. Her motto: "Find a dream and chase it down."

Lisa's history and achievements in marathoning, ultramarathoning, triathalons and adventure racing is long and impressive. Some highlights from her career include: six Badwater Ultramarathons, two Marathon des Sables (first American to win this event, male or female), seven Hawaiian Ironman Triathalons and numerous others. The covers of The New York Times, The LA Times, The Washington Post have featured Lisa's athletic achievements. Additionally, she has appeared on ESPN, Discovery Channel, ABC's Wide World of Sports, NBC

Nightly News with Tom Brokaw and Good Morning America and the Outdoor Life Network. She is a main character in *Running on the Sun*, a feature-length film (out on DVD July 22, 2003) about the Badwater Ultramarathon.

I emailed Lisa some questions for an interview with SheRuns. Despite her full schedule and multiple races this summer, she offered candid, inspirational answers that illuminate her strength, diverse talents and balanced life. Prepare to be amazed!



What are your latest endeavors, in running and in life?

"Wow" is all I can say! In the last eight months, my husband, Jay, and I have adopted two children. We have a four-year-old son and a three-month-old daughter. Life has changed fast! God has been so good to us and we have a new set of challenges and goals ahead of us. Running is what gives me the energy to stay up at 3:00 am feeding our daughter.

I'm also the Spa Director at Grand Targhee Ski and Summer Resort in Alta, Wyoming. We are about to have our first camp on August 20th, 2003 for women only! My vision in life has been to have camps of all sorts. I have found the magic spot to have them at Targhee Ski Resort. **THE DREAMCHASERS**. "Find a Dream and Chase It Down" We can do anything we set out to do in this life. Our limitations are in our mind!

I'm also a personal trainer and coach many athletes of all levels. In addition, I'm a massage therapist. My life is full and I continue to reach for the stars and work toward realizing my dreams. My family life is very important to me: I feel very blessed to have such supportive family and friends.

I have taken on a very challenging summer, it's underway as I write:

June 7, 2003 Completed Squaw Peak 50 Mile

June 28, 2003 Completed Western States 100

July 19, 2003 Vermont 100

July 22, 2003 Badwater 135 Ultra I will then continue on, Summit Mt. Whitney, turn around and run back to Badwater. This is a total of 300 miles, 400 miles in less than a week.

August 16, 2003 Leadville 100

September 6, 2003 Wasatch 100

This is called the Grand Slam of Ultra Running and the Badwater Double. I'm doing this to raise \$135,000 for Religious Teachers Filippini (

http://www.filippiniusa.org/page.cfm?Web_ID=4) who, help feed children all over the world that may starve to death if we don't try to save them. Last year, I raised \$78,000. So many may ask why? I believe this is my calling from God. My purpose is to give back to a world that has been so kind to me and to try to save the little ones that mean so much. Every three to five seconds a child dies of starvation! I will suffer, I look forward to it, but there is no comparison to what these kids go through every day. My goal is to finish each race: all 750 miles!

Why is distance running so much more than an athletic event?

It's an athletic journey that takes the athlete to higher levels in all aspects of life. There is a lot of time spent training, doing long runs that leave you with hours to think, meditate and figure life out.

What do you think is the connection between women's mental strength and their ability to run ultra races?

Women are tough!!! I believe it to be true that women have a much deeper capability to suffer than most men. Maybe this is due to the fact that we are meant to bear children. I have been witness to women being able to push the limit when most men would have stopped. Women are able to endure suffering longer and harder than men, which shows the mental strength to push on in many situations.

When you coach, do you coach women differently than men?

Not really. Everyone I coach is treated as an individual. We work everything around their life, work, family, goals and needs. Men have jobs or stay at home with kids, same as the women. Both men and women alike have the same needs, mentally, physically and emotionally. It's really amazing to me. I learn so much about life from everyone I coach. What a gift!

What is your typical running week? Any tips for other women on fitting it all in?

At the moment, I run three days per week. I don't count miles...I go for time and effort. I would say I do eight to ten hours in the three days. I work 60 hours per week and have two small children. I fit it in when I can. I try to hike and cross train at least one or two times per week as well. If I can do it, you can do it. Make out your weekly schedule that includes everything you have to do in your life. Schedule your running time on your daily calendar. If you schedule it from 7:00-8:00 am, then you get up and get going. If someone wants you to do something during this time, you tell them you're sorry but that you have an appointment at that time. It's your time. Don't let it be taken away. Everyone has the time to make time! My motto, "Find a dream and chase it down" is the same as find the time. Write it down and don't let anything stand in your way!

How do you think you have kept healthy and focused for 23 years in such a grueling sport? What keeps you coming back?

My secret is cross training. I only run a few days each week. The others I swim, bike, hike, do lots of cardio training. When I was marathon training, I ran a lot more and did a lot of speed work. I feel I have found a healthy balance in life that has always kept my running balanced and healthy. I have only had one injury from running; it did not keep me out for very long. I don't overtrain. I eat well and take rest days when I need them. [I come back] because I miss my best friend when I'm away from her! Running keeps me focused, energized and excited about life to come. There are so many places I have not run before. The list is endless.

What are your favorite places to run and race?

The desert is my favorite place to run and race. I feel such a spiritual connection when I'm in the heat and the desert. Each year I yearn to go back. I don't feel this way about any other races. The Badwater 135 Ultra through Death Valley and the Marathon Des Sables race through the Sahara Desert are my favorites.

How do you set your goals for running and for specific races?

At this stage in my life, I set three goals for myself: 1. To finish, 2. To do the best I can and be happy with the time, and 3. Place in the top 20 women, if I fall short of this, then I'm happy with 1 and 2!

Do you compete mainly against yourself, the clock or others? Has it always been this way? What do you get out of it?

For many years, I competed against the clock and others. I have always set goals for myself. Now that I have two kids and my training is limited, I am. To finish the race in the best time possible. I will not wear a watch anymore. When another woman passes me, I let her go. In the past, I would challenge her. Running against the clock or others is about setting goals to run a specific time or to try to beat certain people. I used to run against the clock most of the time and try to beat as many women as possible. [Now] I love the feeling of competing mostly against myself. I love to push the limits of the mind, body and soul. In my racing now, I don't wear a watch. I run on effort. If I do wear a watch, it's to tell me when it's time to take a pill or gel. Racing this way has given me a new direction. The goal is to finish, do the best I can and whatever time or place is just fine with me.

Do you ever think how cool it is that you can run like you do? When do you feel most grateful for your ability to run?

I do think about it and how blessed and fortunate I am. As a runner, I have to work very hard for the fitness levels I achieve. I would not consider myself a naturally talented runner. For me, it comes with a lot of hard work. It think it is way cool I have traveled to so many places for running and all the wonderful people that are in my life because of it. I feel grateful for my ability to run every time I put my running shoes on. There is not a time that I go out that I don't thank God for giving me the time I have while running. It's my savior, my best friend at times.

What has running given you as a woman?

Running has saved my life many times when I thought the world was going to fall apart. Anytime I have felt sad, depressed, scared, hurt, really any emotion, running has been there as one of my best friends to pick me up and get me going. During my menstrual cycles, running has helped me deal with any sort of cramps or symptoms that may have come with it. I always tell people that when I run, it's the time I write my books, solve the worries of the world, and when I work out anything that is bothering me. Now, being a mother, I see that my running gives me the extra energy I need!

To check out more information about Lisa: <http://www.badwaterultra.com/lisa/>
<http://www.dreamchaserevents.com>

For more information about her cause:

http://www.filippiniusa.org/page.cfm?Web_ID=4