

A Father's Journey: Running with a Cause for 33 Miles



Two adorable beautiful little girls make their way running with their mommy coming right for me. From their mouths come the sweetest words of all, “Daddy, Daddy.” These beautiful girls are my identical twin daughters Ashley and Aspen. Tears begin to swell in my eyes. Was it the fact it was eighty-five degrees and I had been in the heat for the last couple of hours? Was it the fact that I had just run thirty-three miles? No, it was not any of these factors for my tears. My tears were the result of knowing how fortunate I am to have my daughters at all; to hear them say, “Daddy”, to get to hug them and kiss them. If not for the life saving in-utero (fetal) surgery, I would never have had this experience. My daughters are survivors of Twin-to-Twin Transfusion Syndrome (TTTS). Surprisingly, TTTS kills twice as many babies per year as does SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome).

This challenge was about them. Oh sure, I am a crazed runner and love challenges, so running my soon to be age of thirty-three seemed like a good idea. Sure it was fun to run what many

would not even bike, especially since I live near the mountains in Colorado where altitude and inclines make things challenging. Yes, those of us that love running challenges drool at these types of insanities, but today was something greater than myself .

It started four years ago, after our battle with TTTS, I knew more had to be done. I left my job as a CFO and created the TTTS Race for Hope and from that the Fetal Hope Foundation. An organization dedicated to providing support, medical education and information and research on fetal distresses and syndromes. Running gave me this opportunity to do more; my daughters gave me the inspiration. This day I would run thirty-three miles because I could. I would run and raise funds for the Fetal Hope Foundation by challenging anyone to pledge. I would put my money where my mouth and feet were. If I failed to make the thirty-three miles for any reason, I would refund their money and make the donation in their name. I had many incentives to take on and conquer this challenge.

It was 6 am and I was ready to start my daunting task of running thirty-three miles. For some, this may not be a big deal, but for most of us it is. I started out the first few miles, trying as best as I could to keep a slow pace so I would have energy for the next 20 some miles. My mind wandered to my girls and how each day they fill my life with such amazing joy. My mind quickly turned from this thought to one of some sadness as I thought of all of those families that lost their battle with TTTS and other fetal distresses. I was running for them too; to remember their precious angels. I was running for all those that beat the odds and for many of those that still had hardships to face such as heart surgeries, kidney transplants and many other ailments that plague them throughout life. The miles to my surprise actually rolled easily.

My wife was a wonderful support person for me. She rode her bike carrying all the necessary Cliff Shots, Gatorade and water I would need. I never stopped. At mile 20 I met a wonderful female runner who asked me what I was doing. She was very inspired by what I was doing and even donated to the cause. It was just the uplift that I needed then. Next up was a large hill climb at mile 21 that took me up over a steep damn. This part really got to my legs, but I kept on putting one foot in front of the other.

I finally made it to mile 26.2; marathon distance! Then I thought, "What the heck was I thinking? I still have seven miles to go. Who wants to run seven more miles with three miles of climbing still to go"? The last few miles were difficult. Then my wife called home to our au pair to have her bring the girls to the finish line. I had resurgence. I pictured my girls being there and I started to get some pep back. I was met by a good friend near mile thirty-two. Her original intent was to walk with me the last bit. I however would have none of that. I picked up my pace and began to run like I was freshly starting a morning run. Honestly, everything was so numb, I couldn't feel if I was in pain or not.



Running has allowed me the opportunity to create awareness and save babies from these horrible fetal distresses and syndromes. In fact, the money I raised today went to help a family having life saving fetal surgery to save their twin girls, who otherwise were facing certain death. Is this all a greater calling? Perhaps, or just wanting to do more in my life than just survive; I want to achieve something great!

There at the finish were my daughters holding their celebration signs for me and yelling, "Daddy". No finisher's medal needed; no prize money required; this was the greatest reward of all.