

INTO

THE

Speed

COLD

V.003

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V.003 — Speed

ALLIED
FEATHER
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When. Speed.

"The will to win, the desire to succeed, the urge to reach your full potential... these are the keys that will unlock the door to personal excellence." -Confucius

Stops.

In this exploration of 'Speed', we ask the question - what happens when speed suddenly comes to a halt?

We're not talking about circumstances beyond our control such as weather halting a race, but when the physical body of the participant breaks down.

How Do We Deal with Vulnerability?

This story written by Aaron Bible featuring runners Hillary Allen and Norma Bastidas and Stacy Bare, an Iraq war veteran and outdoor enthusiast, who share vulnerabilities around injury and speak to the implications of recovery, rehabilitation, prescription drugs and addiction in an industry that almost solely focuses on speed and heroism.





Almost every athlete has experienced the internal struggle that comes with being injured.

What Keeps Us Moving When Speed Comes to a Standstill?

The sound of a train wreck happening in real time

By Aaron H. Bible



Screeching breaks. Grinding metal. Screaming. Breaking. The sounds of complete collapse and physical chaos, followed by extreme confusion. Frustration leads to sadness to depression and hopelessness. The grieving process must be allowed to take place. But somehow we always come back.

I've been exploring athletic injury in a time of high momentum and anticipation for more years than I care to admit, for as long as I've been pushing myself outdoors really, including many near death episodes, losing friends, and listening to learn from everyone I can. What are we running from, or is it for?

We've all been there,
especially those that
really push it, the ones
you hear about.

Trail running's Rob Krar,
Hillary Allen and Norma
Bastidas. Cycling's
Tom Danielson.
Climbing's Renan Ozturk.
Even wanna-be's like
myself, every damn
season with broken
bones, head injuries,
and disease.

Just scratching the
surface, some of the
most incredible athletes
in the world live on the
knife-edge of triumph
and depression, between
elation and insanity,
tipping dangerously over
one side when things go
wrong.

What motivates us to push these
boundaries, and do we even know
the consequences of what might
happen when our speed comes
to a halt, when we hover on the
edge, if we fall the wrong way —
due to the wind, our mental state,
hunger, cold or some other vagary
of nature — how do we know, will
we be able to recover, when we
were pushing to escape that very
thing in the first place? Perhaps it's
the joy in the suffering;

At Least I'll Die Trying.

What happens emotionally and
physically, when you aren't able to
complete the goal? I'll never forget
Renan's voice in the documentary
Meru, repeating "I just wanted to
be part of the team." What do the
months and years of preparation
and sacrifice and tradeoffs really
mean? How do we process it?
There is something so humbling
in these losses, so humanizing, so
depressing, vulnerable, privileged.
But it's real. And we must heal,
and move forward, pulling our
heads from our hands and wiping
the blood off our heart wound
onto our sleeve and sucking up
the tears and putting the blade to
the grindstone one more time, lest
we selfishly take away from the
efforts we began in the first place.

"I was about 12 miles from the next checkpoint when I slipped and heard a pop in my knee," said Norma Bastidas – famed as the fastest female in history to run seven ultra marathons through the planet's most unforgiving environments on seven continents in seven months. Her run across the globe across deserts and rainforests and high peaks has always been in support of the blind and visually impaired – a condition from which her son suffers.

But this time she was in the middle of the Yukon Arctic Ultra, a 430-mile run, bike, or ski along the Yukon Quest Trail, arguably the coldest ultra-marathon in the world, now in its 16th year. "I was ahead of most of the competitors because I had trouble sleeping the night before, so I headed out to the next checkpoint way before dawn. It must have been this decision that ultimately influenced what happened. After injuring my knee, my pace slowed significantly. And when I saw the snowmobile I knew it was over. When I arrived to the checkpoint, there was another athlete that was not allowed to continue either, and the medical crew was busy that evening discussing which athletes were allowed to go on. By next morning we were hearing of other athletes that scratched during the night, and one was being evacuated by air with severe frostbite. It was a long ride on snowmobile back to town."

Unfortunately on the ride home the snowmobile was thrown into the air on an unexpected bump at high speed and came down sideways on Bastidas' leg. "What was a small tear turned into a severe injury, but fortunately didn't break bones. By the time we arrived to the hotel, it became obvious I had made the right decision as more and more athletes were dropping out with frostbite. But it didn't ease the pain that night.

"I was safe and warm in a comfortable bed but utterly miserable. No part of me wanted to be there. The disappointment mixed with self-doubt, and the physical pain sent me into a downward spiral," Bastidas told me. "Yet I'm not disappointed about my performance, or what happens next, because it is in this time of pain that I learn about myself. It is by facing pain and fear head on that I become stronger.

PTSD and Bipolar Disorder aren't going anywhere – and neither am I.

Bastidas suffers from PTSD as a result of childhood poverty, abuse and addiction growing up in a dangerous part of Mexico. "I left a cartel ruled city in Culiacan, Sinaloa, many years ago and found hardship and violence everywhere I went; until I finally moved to Canada and was able to start over." Her next project will take her back across the U.S. / Mexico border.

Human. Broken.

Train Hard, Fight Easy.

About halfway through I suffered a bruised rib during sparring — I had just been tossed in with a monster basically my first time really sparring — and it seemed like everyone was constantly fighting off sickness that winter being inside all the time, but things started to get serious. My trainer stopped the hand holding and started putting the hammer down. I didn't know at the time if this was what I needed or not, but it felt good, and at this point

I Realized I Had Never Been Broken Before.

My parents let me quit everything, and never cared how competitive I was. I'd push myself and been pushed in outdoor sports as an adult, trail running, climbing and skiing, but not like this. I pretty much sucked at team sports growing up but I loved playing ice hockey, and that led me to discover I was a decent skier. After high school, rock climbing, whitewater paddling, backpacking and skiing became my whole focus in life. I finally had found sports that fed my soul, and I could actually see a career happening around being outside, perhaps as a raft guide or a park ranger, or maybe an adventure journalist. We liked to smoke weed and paddle rivers and climb peaks; we certainly weren't racing.

The one thing I know for sure is that to be really good at something you have to give up something else. I blew off my wife's 12-week prenatal appointment because I had to train in the gym with a broken rib.

It's so simple yet impossible to attain as it became a black hole of fitness in a race against the clock. Luckily I already knew how to suffer. But training for a boxing match is like training for a marathon, a dance competition and a back alley brawl all at the same time. I'd never had trouble getting in shape and pulling off a race before, what's the big deal?

When I was into the depths of the suffering I kept thinking back to the night our daughter was born. She did not want to come out and my wife labored for 21 hours. The end was especially hard, she was exhausted, fatigued, completely spent, in pain. I remember promising myself, god, someone, that if we can just get this baby out with everyone not dying, I will never complain again. And I would cling to this thought as I was getting hit in the face and banging my fists against sand filled leather under fluorescent lights in a dingy gym, eking out the last push ups of the day. Evading and counter attacking quickly and brutally, as brutal as the doctors who had to go into my body with stints and cameras and lasers and remove jagged stones from my organs. A complete stop for me and a mind fuck I was even less prepared for than kidney surgery or any other crash or disappointment I had been through yet.

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