

Ultrarunning: My Story: Personal Accounts of 25 Ultramarathon Events

Mike Bouscaren doesn't run for his health. And he doesn't really run for sport, either. He runs more for the spiritual uplift that comes with going very, very long—out there in ultramarathon land, where the hype is minimal and the spiritual highs are maxed.

He's a graduate of Yale and of Harvard Business School, and running long distances was one more form of competition, of trying to be first, trying to be best. But when Mike moved beyond the standard marathon, as he puts it, he was no longer a pusher, always pushing to be first, but rather he became a puller. "Pullers put resistance behind them; leaning forward in the running stride, pullers allow gravity to help," he writes.

Ultramarathons were no longer competitions, but rather they became opportunities to meditate on life, opportunities to allow the miles to mellow him out, to find the self hiding behind the daily grind.

Mike put together accounts of 25 of his ultras in a self-published book titled simply *Ultrarunning: My Story: Personal Accounts of 25 Ultramarathon Events* (210 pages, \$13.99, at amazon.com). He breaks his ultra experiences—of which, by the way, I counted 39—into seven chapters, beginning with "Flashback" and ending with "Heading Home." You can get the gist of Mike's approach to ultrarunning by grazing through his bibliography, which he breaks into five categories: Running, Adventure, War, The Edge, and The Center (*Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind* by Shunryu Suzuki, for example).

It is pleasant to travel with Mike from one race to the next, to listen in on his insights, and to anticipate what revelation will come next. For the runner who wants more from his running experiences, Mike is a good guide; one of the byproducts of the book is that Mike gives readers a good review of the ultras he has run, their high and low points, and how they may have been improved or canceled since Mike's visit.

The philosophy that Mike has developed from his ultrarunning comes across in this insight: "Now I understand to let things simply happen, that I cannot make them or me into something that isn't, and that circumstances work out better when I remove selfish wishes from imagined outcomes." Amen. —*Rich Benyo*