

World's Toughest Race

Every year, Australia hosts a 544-mile endurance run from Sydney to Melbourne. It is considered among the world's most grueling ultra-marathons. The race takes five days to complete and is normally only attempted by world-class athletes who train specifically for the event. These athletes are typically less than 40 years old and sponsored by large companies such as Nike. In 1983, a man named Cliff Young showed up at the start of this race. Cliff was 61 years old and wore overalls and work boots. To everyone's shock, Cliff wasn't a spectator. He picked up his race number and joined the other runners.



The press and other athletes became curious and questioned Cliff. They told him, "You're crazy, there's no way you can finish this race." To which he replied, "Yes, I can. See, I grew up on a farm where we couldn't afford horses or tractors, and the whole time I was growing up, whenever the storms would roll in, I'd have to go out and round up the sheep. We had 2,000 sheep on 2,000 acres. Sometimes I would have to run those sheep for two or three days. It took a long time, but I'd always catch them. I believe I can run this race."

When the race started, the pros quickly left Cliff behind. The crowds and television audience were entertained because Cliff didn't even run properly; he appeared to shuffle. Many even feared for the old farmer's safety. All of the professional athletes knew that it took about 5 days to finish the race. In order to compete, one had to run about 18 hours a day and sleep the remaining 6 hours. The thing is, Cliff Young didn't know that!

When the morning of the second day came, everyone was in for another surprise. Not only was Cliff still in the race, he had continued jogging all night. Eventually, Cliff was asked about his tactics for the rest of the race. To everyone's disbelief, he claimed he would run straight through to the finish without sleeping. Each night, he moved a little closer to the leading pack. By the final night, he had surpassed all of the young, world-class athletes. He was the first competitor to cross the finish line, and he set a new course record. The Sydney to Melbourne race is still run today and modern competitors do not sleep. Winning the race requires runners to go all night as well as all day, just like Cliff Young.

Affirmation: I step up to the challenge and my body responds.

To think about:

1. What sacrifices are you willing to make to be successful?
2. When things get tough, what keeps you going?
3. Are you persistent enough to reach your goals? If so, why do you think so.

Crossing the starting line may be an act of courage, but crossing the finish line is an act of faith. Faith is what keeps us going when nothing else will. -John Bingham