

Lihastivedi

The Ultimate Challenge-Comrades (The Ultimate Human race) 2012

Just when he started thinking of what next ??? Friends suggested him of Comrades-The Ultimate Human race as it is known. The challenge is simple run 89.3 kms in the hills with an elevation of 1100 meters going up & down Big five (5 Big Hills on route-Pollyshorts,Inchanga,Botha's Hill,Field's Hill,Cowies Hill).

The event was in July,2012 & he had used Mumbai Marathon Timing certificate to qualify for Comrades. He had no clue how to train for this challenge where at every cut off point they pull you out of race if you do not reach there in time. This was his second time bound event & that too an Ultra Marathon in the hills.....

Lihastivedi started training vigorously for the challenge he had taken. Within a month of practice, he started clocking 100 kms per week which went as high as 160 kms per week then he started tapering down. During the course of training when he reached the maximum distance of 160 kms that week he did something unusual, he achieved something unusual.....

He ran approximately 80 kms through the night till morning in about 9 hours 15mins.He ran the 200ft ring road of Ahmedabad!!! He ran confidently that night which gave him a glimpse of achieving the unbelievable.

He went to South Africa for the competition 3 days before the event, it was too cold there as it was winter time. **His only weakness is of not being able to run long distances in cold conditions.** He had no choice but to run as he had come all the way from India to compete in Comrades. The atmosphere at Comrades Expo was stunning. There were runners from all around the world, this was a unique race which one would like to run once in his/her lifetime.

This time it was a down run from Petermaritzburg to Durban, so we had to reach Maritzburg in the morning before 4am. He got up at 1am to catch the bus for Maritzburg at 1:45am. The roads of Durban were full in the middle of night with runners on the streets waiting to reach Maritzburg. He reached there at 3:30am it was very chilly & windy as well. With 1 jacket and shorts for run it was no way going to be enough to stop the chilly winds. The race was to be flagged off at 5am, he felt like all his energy going out of him, he could barely stand in the crowd, so he sat down as all runners were doing. The run was flagged off with Theme song of Comrades playing loud(Chariots on Fire) this encourages every runner to finish Comrades.

The journey began the kilometers passed by and he started thinking of the first cut off. This was easily achievable as it was not so tough. He ran about 30kms that is when a major setback came in form of injury in the sole of the right foot. He was devastated & as he asked for help there was no one to address his problem, they said it could not be strapped as it would stop circulation in the foot. He ran with agony & pain, then he stopped completely at one of the water/aid station removed his shoes & socks asked a paramedic to apply pain relieving spray this gave him confidence to continue. He passed the half way stage of the run with confidence but was losing out on pace now. Running in such conditions without prior exposure to such conditions is a very very difficult task. On the way was Arthur's Seat a very respectable figure in Comrades Marathon this was the place where he would sit on a chair for a while before going for the finish. This was followed by wall of Fame a famous wall where a ten time comrades finishers names are carved in a plate which remains there permanently. He felt nostalgic on viewing hundreds of names on the wall & somewhere in his mind passed a thought, when will my name appear on this Great wall.

Lhas kept on applying ice & sprays where ever it was available now only one thing was going on in his mind & that was to finish Comrades with respect. One after the other of the big five were conquered as the finish line was nearing so was tension building up for him. Lhas wanted to desperately finish the race in time. This was the time when running buddies encourages one another to the finish, that was exactly what was happening there too. Each one started taking lead as others followed the lead runner. As he entered Durban there was a sigh of relief but the Destiny was far. At 4:25pm he thought he was about to reach the stadium but some one told 3km to go buddy. The clock was ticking the heart was thumping and he was out of breath, now he could see the stadium and as he wanted to speed up for the finish the body didn't allow, but now he knew he is

gonna make it. As he entered the stadium with a houseful crowd. Lihás felt like a champion at finish line. After that he could barely walk, there were severe cramps in both the legs. He could hardly stand to receive the Comrades Vic Clapham medal for a finisher- a prestigious moment which he will never ever forget. All the pain & tough time was converted into cheers as he accomplished what he wanted.

He said **“There is nothing Impossible if one has courage & determination to Just Do It”**