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This is the next in a series of interviews with individuals who have run across the United States. Rainer Koch won the 2011 TransAm Race, covering 3,200 miles in 70 days, with a time of 522 hours, 55 minutes and 56 seconds. Learn more about Rainer in the interview below.



Rainer running on Day 15 of the TransAm

Name: Rainer Koch

Age: 32

Hometown: Dettelbach, Germany



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Rainer's Big Races:

- JOGLE Ultra (John O`Groats – Lands End): Trans Great Britain 2011; 860 miles in 16 days, Time: 146:25:18 h
- LANY Footrace (Los Angeles – New York): Trans America 2011; 3,200 miles in 70 days, Time: 522:55:56 h
- TEFR Footrace (Bari (I) – Nordkap (N)): Trans Europe 2009; 4,500 km in 64 days, Time: 378:12 h
- Deutschlandlauf (Kap Arkonah – Lörrach): Trans Germany 2005; 1,204 km in 17 days, Time: 108:13 h
- La Transe Gaule (Roscoff-Narbonne Plage): Trans France 2002; 1,145 km in 18 days, Time: 94:04 h
- Spreelauf (Berlin Spandau-Eibbau) 2001; 420 km in 7 days, Time: 33:39 h
- 245 km Spartathlon (Athen – Sparta) 2000 and 2007

Rainer's Personal Bests:

- 5 km – 17:29, New Year's Eve Run 5K (Berwyn/PA/USA)
- 5 miles -27:54, Asbury Park Polar Bear Race (NJ/USA)
- 10 km – 35:34, Chester County Open (Reeves Park/Phoenixville/NJ/USA)
- 15 km – 55:32, Frühjahrslauf (Kitzingen)
- 10 miles – 59:10, Chill Out (Seaside Heights/NJ/USA)
- Half-Marathon – 1:17:19, Würzburg/Herrenrieden (Germany)
- Marathon – 2:39:28, Frankfurt (Germany)
- 50 km – 3:19:00, Bottrop (Germany)
- 60 km – 4:01:18, Vöhl/Edersee (Germany)
- 100 km – 7:05:24, Leipzig (Germany)
- 100 miles – 16:02:10, Rocky Raccoon (Huntsville/TX/USA)
- 6 hour – 84.273 km, Troisdorf (Germany)
- 24 hour – 220.094 km, Hamburg-Neugraben (Germany)
- 48 hour – 262.759 km, Köln (Germany)

1. Why did you decide to join the Trans-Am race? What was your goal? What was going on at that time in your life? Were you searching for anything in particular?

In 1996, as a teenager, I completed my first 100 km volksmarch (www.ava.org). During the race, at the 70 km mark, I met Martina Hausmann. At that time I still did not think about doing races, ultras or multi-day events. She told me about her accomplishments, about 6-day races as well as the TransAm. So Monday morning the first thing, I got Tom McNab's book "Trans America". While reading it, I grew more and more sure that this is what I have to do – the TransAm. I wanted to see and discover the land on my own feet. Because of many barriers it took me 15 years until the dream came true. On the one hand the race is not organized very often. On the other hand I needed the time and the money.

2. What was the thing that comes to mind today when you think back to that time?

As you can imagine many things happened during the 70 days it took for me to cover the USA. Surely, concentrating on the nice ones is most important. During

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TransAm we crossed many different areas and landscapes, but the most beautiful was the Mojave desert. It was a very rough and hot area without much population. I found it the most beautiful.

3. What is it like to day after day cover 3,000 miles from LA to NY in 70 days?

I see it as a job. Getting up in the morning, working 8-10 hours and then take some rest to recover for the next day. Besides running, there are many other tasks that must be completed. But it is definitely a difficult project. Running too fast, taking too little time to recover or consuming the "wrong" food will take its toll. And the race and your body knows no mercy. There is no time for mistakes. You will pay for each one of them. A single mistake can cause you to drop out.

4. What was the high point in the entire journey... other the finish?

As I already said. Seeing the countryside and the huge variation of landscapes was the most interesting part of the journey.

5. What was the low point in the journey?

Luckily, I did not have any physical or emotional problems. So from this point of view, I had a very relaxed and easy time. On the other hand I had some problems with my support. Peter Barthel and I decided to group and managed our things (accommodation, support, etc.) together. It was a perfect team and we both saved a lot of money. At the end of the race we just had some problems with our support. This person was often not at the assigned point or missing it altogether. So I decided not to rely on her anymore. Because of that I decided to do the last days on my own. I had to stop at a market to purchase the things I needed. I carried my drinks and food in my camel bag.

6. What are the two or three pieces of advice for runners of the Race Across USA (2015) for a successful crossing beyond simple perseverance?

I think the two biggest mistakes at multi-day races are to run too fast or not taking care of issues immediately. You should not push yourself too much. I tried to run the same speed as I did during my training runs. This kept me very relaxed. Upon recognizing a problem (e.g. a blister), make sure that you take the time to fix it. You will not lose time — you will get it back in the end. You will lose much more time if you suffer for days and days because of an infection. It might even cause you to drop out.

Food and drinks are always a very critical thing. Your body needs minerals, vitamins, carbohydrates and fat. Depending on your speed, your body burns more fat and more carbohydrates. Most of people forget that they are actually running slow and need more fat. Personally I do not take any dietary supplements, power bars or energy drinks. I prefer the "real food". I recognized that listening to my body will guide me very well. On the road most time I prefer tea, milk, coke, nuts, olives, melon, yogurt and chocolate. After finishing my run I eat and drink as much as possible to fill up my resources.

7. How should racers prepare? How will they know that they are ready (or at least have done all they can)?

Hmm, good question. Actually I never felt 100% ready or well prepared when I started. Sure I did many miles before and already running for many years, but really preparing or training for such a transcontinental race is in my opinion impossible. But I figured out, one can compensate for a deficit in training and

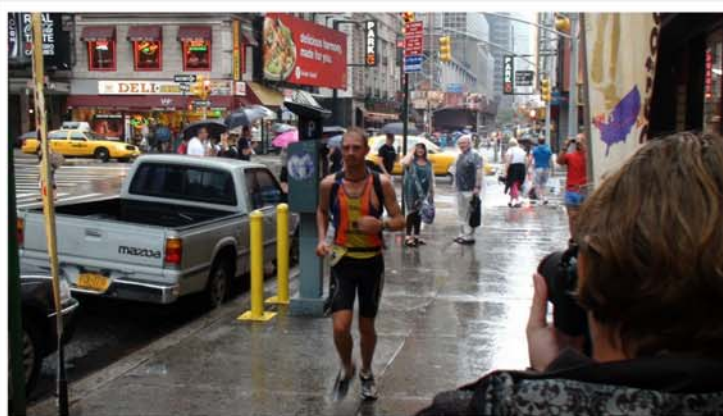
many other things. I always like to compare it with a job. Somebody doing piece-work will face the same problems as a multi-day runner. His goal is to earn as much money as possible. However, if he works too hard, he could collapse in exhaustion. If he works too slowly, he will be fired. Thus, the runner's goal should be a good position with the minimum amount of effort and stress on his body. Most important is the will to do it... to have a nice time and to finish it. The mental strength can push your body to accomplish great things, but you have to have the will. I think Laure (our Race Director) absolutely hit this point when she printed three simple words on our finisher shirts: Dream, Dare, Do!

8. How did winning the Trans-Am change your life? Did you have a new level of confidence or ability as a result?

First over all it is not about winning, more it is finishing the race. As soon as you finish you have won — you won against yourself and the race. Maybe the only difference between the winner and any other finisher is to be named in the books. Thinking you will have thousands of fans cheering you all over is just a dream. We are not playing professional sports such as baseball or football. In a way, nothing will change except returning to "real life". I think about the TransAm often, and it helps me have the confidence to take on and complete new projects. I find that I now push even harder because of how I tested myself during this event.

9. Do you have any further advice for runners contemplating a coast-to-coast race?

Take it easy and don't push to be first or to keep a certain pace. The goal should be to bring as many people from one side to the other. Together with your teammates, you can accomplish it. Almost everybody will face the moment when he depends on somebody else. Then it is nice to get a helping hand. Just be yourself.



Rainer at the TransAm finish line – New York City

To learn more check out Rainer's website: www.ultrakoch.org.

Note: If you are interested in learning more about becoming part of the core team for the Race Across USA, please send a contact request [here](#).

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Erskien Lenier August 30, 2013

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