

Mike Buss

Mike Buss has become a self-styled record fitness record breaker. The former soldier narrowly escaped death when he was caught in a bomb blast. After being discharged from the services, he found it difficult to adapt to civilian life. Eventually he found direction in fitness and raising money for charity, notably for Help for Heroes. This year he attempted to break the world record for 50 consecutive marathons – an incredible stand-alone feat, thing was it was on his way to running 100 consecutively! He aims to break as many other fitness records as possible. Could Buss be the fittest man who has ever lived!



UF: Where did the idea come from for doing the 100 marathon challenge?

MB: It started out as a 50 marathon challenge back in November 2009 when I was looking at a challenge to do that was long enough to take me out of my home town of Swindon and travel around the country a bit. I wanted to both increase the level of money raised for my chosen charity 'Help for Heroes' and to raise my profile as a new professional endurance athlete. I realised that there was a record for running back-to-back marathons on a treadmill. This was 50. I then decided to go for 55. The 100 marathons challenge came along when I found out that

Eddie Izzard (TV personality and comedian) was running his marathon challenge for the charity Sport Relief. He ran 47 marathons in 53 days if I remember. And I just thought to myself, if he can do that - even if he did walk most of them a handful more would no longer capture the public's imagination, so the 'HERO 100' was born, '100 marathons 100 days, 1 man, 1 passion, 1 Jeep'. I would run a marathon every day for 100 consecutive days and double the existing world record. And with my main sponsor Jeep supporting me with a massive PR Campaign the challenge became a reality that was seen on TV and in newspapers/magazines globally.

UF: How did you motivate yourself to keep going?

MB: Motivation was easy! Two things motivated me, firstly the challenge itself. This was mentally the toughest challenge of my life. I thrive on challenges. And secondly it was the cause – Help for Heroes. You just have to switch the TV on for 5min a day and you will see the heroic work our armed forces are doing in Afghanistan and previously Iraq. Seeing the coffins coming back to the UK and the injured soldiers with extensive injuries like Mark Ormrod a marine that lost both legs and one arm... I saw how Mark and others don't let their injuries stop them from living.

When I was doing the challenge I felt that it would be insulting to him and the others, just to stop and give up just because I was feeling tired, or suffering from a blister!

UF: Did you think that you were slightly 'mad', let alone your family and friends - to take up such a challenge?

MB: Mad yes! To take over 3 months of my life and run on a treadmill for 4 to 5 hours a day and then spend the rest of the day in a shopping centre promoting and fundraising for Help for Heroes was definitely the most boring thing I've ever done in my life, to the point of becoming soul destroying! However, I love running and it has now started to become a successful career for me but even I find running on a treadmill longer than 30mins boring!

All my mates think I'm mad, and my fiancée thinks I'm just a freak and funny I thought she was supposed to be my number 1 fan! I have to admit though that I am a lunatic, I am a fitness fanatic, I can't go more than 2 days without a hard workout, I love the feeling of truly 'beasting' myself!

When I'm not doing exercise I'm writing or reading about it, I am always looking at or finding the next challenge and then thinking of ways to make it tougher! I've already worked out how to make the HERO 100 tougher (!) and it's going to really put me through some pain, but that's also why I am looking forward to it next summer, so yes I am mad!

UF: What was the hardest of the hundred and why?

MB: Marathons 30 to 35 were the toughest, I had already been travelling around the country for a month living out of hotels and was cut off from friends and family, except via the phone and facebook, I felt I was in a bubble and mentally it was becoming really tough. Physically I was coping really well but all I saw ahead was another 70 marathons and another 2 months of being on the road. It got really depressing and I started really hating the challenge. I had to get over it and I had to remember why I was doing it - for the charity and the troops it supports.

UF: What injures did you carry and how did you cope?

MB: Surprisingly I had no injuries, I went blister free all the way until the final 4 days when I decided to carry an 18kg/40lbs pack and run in army boots! I only had 4 sports massages for the whole 100 days, so I had to rely on devices and self massage from my sponsors for help between marathons. I used muscle rollers and my circulation booster, which helped to circulate the blood around my body and help oxygenate my body. I also used an ultra-sound device (supplied by Ultralieve Pro). This assisted me with dealing with my only real injury - a long-term shoulder problem. The repetitive motion swinging my arms backwards and forwards for 100 marathons antagonised the injury and the ultrasound kept the pain away.



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UF: How did you get up each day?

MB: Some days I heard the alarm at the usual 6am and I just wanted to roll over and go back to sleep, it just began to feel like Ground Hog Day, it really was horrible at times, but I just had to get on with it, put up, shut up and crack on with the job 'army style'.

UF: Who was involved in your support team?

MB: Well, I didn't really have a dedicated support team, if I had I don't think the challenge would have been half as bad. Eddie Izzard had a whole team of physios, nutritionists and others around him for the whole challenge - I couldn't afford that. For me it was about the fundraising and my needs were put very much on the back burner. At each venue I would have support from venue staff, such as the trainers from Virgin Active and Esporta who were great and then there was the security personnel from the shopping centres. Whenever I was local to my hometown friends would come along to support when they could.

Facebook became my main support and I gained over 800 people following me over the 100 days. The support was overwhelming! Facebook really kept me going when times got tough!

UF: What nutrition programme did you follow?

MB: Nutrition sort of went out the window, as

I did not have a great deal of financial support. I just had to just eat what I could afford or scrounge if I was in a health club they would feed me and in the shopping centres I scrounged free meals where I could from the local cafes. Evenings were a combination of pubs and fast food.

However, during training I do follow a well-balanced diet week to week that consists of:

- 2 evening meals of fish**
- 2 evening meals of white meat**
- 1 evening meal of red meat**
- 1 roast dinner**

And finally one night where I eat anything I like from pizza to Chinese.

UF: How many calories do you think you expended daily?

MB: I worked out that I was burning on average 6000 calories per day, but was only able to take in about 4000 from food and supplements, so I lost about 9.5kg/1stone 7lbs. I just wasn't able to eat any more than I was eating.

UF: Did you supplement?

MB: Yes, I needed to, burning so many calories I couldn't eat enough to keep going and I'm not a heavy eater when I workout anyway which in my sport is my biggest downfall. Funny it's one that I have found in many other ultra marathon athletes.

I used the following from my nutrition sponsor ISO2 Nutrition:

ISO2 Complete Energy
ISO2 Complete Protein
ISO2 Complete Recovery
Gatorade Energy Drinks
Elete Water

Energy drinks were a combination of ISO2 Nutrition Complete Energy and Gatorade, which kept me fuelled whilst running and hydrated.

Elete Water is a supplement that replaces electrolytes in your body. ISO2 Nutrition Complete Protein also played a major role in fuelling my muscles and giving me the calories I lacked from my daily food intake.

And ISO2 Nutrition Complete Recovery worked with the Elete Water to help replenish my body after each marathon as much as I could.

UF: What was your fastest marathon and what was the slowest?

MB: My fastest marathon was 3hrs 19min, which was on the day of the England Germany Match during the World Cup. I wish I had just carried on running and not bothered pulling out such a fast marathon so I could watch (England of course were convincingly beaten by Germany)! I suffered the next few days for that. My slowest marathon was 5hrs 17min and that was the next day. My legs had turned to lead.

UF: What's it like running on a treadmill?

MB: Running on a treadmill isn't like running on the road and is much slower and tougher on the legs and on the mind for that matter.

UF: What advice have you got for someone wanting to run just one marathon?

MB: Train, you can't just rock up at the start line of a marathon and expect to complete it, let alone pull out a good time... Build up your training gradually and start to increase the distance of your long run at the end of the week. By the time you reach the start line you should have completed around 18 to 20 miles a couple of times on your long runs at race pace. You don't need to run the full distance prior to the marathon as it's more about 'time on your feet'. Most people who have put time into their training will take around 5hrs to complete the distance and will probably have never spent so long on their feet, let alone running for that time.

Also do a couple of organised half marathons in the later part of your training build up - this will give you an idea of how it feels to compete in an organised event and also an idea on how your training is going.

UF: How much money did you eventually raise?

MB: The HERO 100 raised about £34,000,



I will have to run in temperatures of 50°C, where if you don't run on the white line of the road running through the desert your trainers will literally melt!

I'm pleased with the outcome, I've learnt a few things along the way that will help raise more on my future challenges.

UF: Do you consider yourself to be the world's fittest man?

MB: When I started this series of challenges, I was determined to become the world's fittest man, but over the years I lost interest in this. There are so many people claiming to be the world's fittest man, there is no official title, but in the past 9 months a lot of the press have been dubbing me the world's fittest man. I will leave this one to everyone else, if they believe I'm the world's fittest then so be it, it's best to come from others than myself anyway, as far as I'm concerned I just love the challenges I put myself up against, it's a true rush.

UF: What does your training comprise of?

MB: I run 70 to 100 miles a week and do 3 to 4 (1hr) gym sessions working on low weight, high rep workouts.

I also do one spinning session a week and also incorporate hill rep sessions, interval training and sprint track session for running power. I'm a true believer in X-training and the power of mixing it up.

UF: What's the toughest challenge you've ever done or are thinking of doing?

MB: The toughest challenge for me is what is coming up in 2011... a series of endurance runs that will take me to the harshest environments on the planet. I plan to cover

over 3200 miles in 120 days, something never attempted by anyone before!

It starts in March 2011 where I will compete in the toughest footrace on the planet, the '6633 Arctic Ultra', a 350mile footrace in the arctic in temperatures of minus 40c, then only a few days after that, I will be in the Sahara Desert competing in the Marathon des Sables, a 256km footrace across the Sahara in temperatures of 40c. I'll have no time for acclimatisation between the arctic and desert.

I will then run the London Marathon 5 days after the Marathon des Sables. Then I fly out to Nevada to run the HERO 100 again but this time I have made it tougher! I will carry a 18Kg/40lb back pack. One marathon will be in Badwater, Death Valley. This is home to the infamous 'Badwater Desert Ultra'. I will have to run in temperatures of 50°C, where if you don't run on the white line of the road running through the desert your trainers will literally melt!

UF: What else are you lining up next?

MB: January 2011 – to become the first person to have ran across the English Channel along the surface of the water in a specially designed ball.

September 2011 – I will look to test sleep deprivation to the limits and aim to run continuously without sleep for 6 days whilst carrying a 18kg/40lb pack. **UF**

For more information about Mike Buss go to: *Beyond Impossible*
www.mike-buss.com