

The Warrior: David Goggins

A Navy SEAL pushes himself to maniacal lengths to raise money for veterans' families.

By Peter Flax

David Goggins lives in a world where there is no easy button. This is a man who says he "hates" running—but then wakes up to bang out a marathon before sunrise. The 33-year-old from Chula Vista, California, has recast himself as an elite ultramarathoner, a philanthropic machine, and an accidental role model by pursuing a running life that's truly unrelenting.

The transformation began in 2005. He was a 280-pound powerlifter who never ran more than 20 minutes, a Navy SEAL finishing a nasty tour in Iraq. But after losing some buddies in a "mission gone bad" in Afghanistan, Goggins vowed to help the families that now lacked a father and a husband. Though he knew he wanted to raise money, he also knew he wasn't a bake-sale kind of guy. "So I went online," he says, "and Googled the 10 hardest things to do in the world."

That's when he discovered the [Badwater Ultramarathon](#)—the legendary 135-mile race from the floor of Death Valley to Whitney Portal. He called race director Chris Kostman to see if he could get in. Kostman asked Goggins how many 100-milers he'd run. None. How many marathons? None. Kostman told him to get some ultramarathoning experience if he wanted to run Badwater.

Days later, he entered a 24-hour race in San Diego. The ordeal left him with broken metatarsals in both feet and a case of kidney failure, but he did crank out 100 miles in less than 19 hours. Ten days later, he ran the Las Vegas Marathon in 3:08. And for ample measure, he entered the H.U.R.T. 100-Mile Endurance Run, one of the hardest ultras in the world. Goggins finished ninth. All this was in the span of two months.

In July 2006, with 50 pounds off his linebacker frame, Goggins lined up in Badwater with 84 other entrants, and finished fifth. Then he took second at the 2006 Ultraman World Championships (a

double Ironman triathlon held over three days), though he didn't yet own a bike. He returned to Badwater in 2007 and came in third. He won the Ultra Centric 48-hour run (covering 203 miles), and won the 2008 McNaughton 150-miler by three hours. "When I get to mile 75 of a 150-mile race and I'm completely trashed—that's the only way I can see what David Goggins is all about," he says.

These existential quests unfold daily. Goggins often covers 15 or 20 miles before breakfast and bikes 50 miles round-trip to his Navy job. He swims, lifts, and goes "long" on weekends. "Other than being crazy, David's just self-motivated," says his wife, Aleeza. "I'm certain that he hasn't taken a day off in three years."

His exploits have raised more than eyebrows. In three years, Goggins has netted \$200,000 for the Special Operations Warrior Foundation, which gives full college grants to children of Special Ops personnel killed in the line of fire. He also helps nonprofits that build handicap-accessible homes for disabled vets. "I keep thinking that there's more I can do," he says. "I guess I'm pretty hard on myself."

Uh, yeah. But what makes Goggins push himself so relentlessly? For sure, he's driven by his charitable mission, his infinite discipline, his superhuman gift to endure. And yet there is more.

"I'm different than most people," he says. "When I cross the finish line of a big race, I see that people are ecstatic, but I'm thinking about what I'm going to do tomorrow. It's as if my journey is everlasting and there is no finish line."