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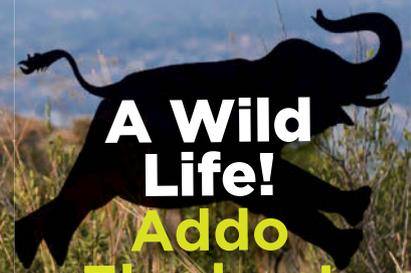


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COVER NAOMI BRAND, HEDIANGA FARM (p36)
PHOTO SVEN MUSICA / PHONIX CAPTURE



Your 100 Miles

Running a 100 miler trail race remains the gold standard of trail running. COACH NEVILLE outlines the training, kit, and planning needed to complete this beast.

You may be surprised to hear you don't have to be super-human to finish a 100 miler. It is doable for most runners, provided you have a long build-up.

The Loneliness Of The Long-Distance Runner was a catchy title for the 1962 film. It told the story of a rebellious youth who gained recognition for his running ability. The film opens with him running alone, along a bleak country road. In a brief voice-over, he tells us that **in the end, the runner is always alone** and cut off from spectators, left to deal with life on his own.

The film byline was: *You can play by the rules... or you can play it by ear... what counts is you play it right by you.*

We are all rebels, trying to follow our own path and be our own authentic selves, and this resonates with runners. But for most of us there is generally little of the loneliness to be experienced... unless of course you step up to the 100 miler.

There is a simplicity about using round numbers that appeals to our sense of orderliness. Despite our metric system, races are advertised as 100 milers. For the record, that's **160.934km**, or to put it more plainly; that's like running Comrades Marathon almost twice, but without water tables every 2km, and without thousands of supporters cheering you on.

Even me?

For years, 100 milers have been for the crazies on the fringes of trail running, those scrawny pony-tail runners who think losing toenails, popping blisters, and going without sleep in extreme

weather is fun. But there has been a resurgence of interest in 100 milers.

The question is: **Can I do a 100 miler?** Before answering this, let's consider a typical profile of a successful 100 miler. Speed is the enemy in extreme ultras, so *no speed* is needed and is not a requirement.

- Endurance is a must
- Mental toughness is a must
- Patience and fortitude is needed
- You need to enjoy solitude
- Sense of humour to cope
- Ability to plan and strategise

Looking at this list, we see that successfully running a 100 miler is within the reach of many trail runners, provided they have the right mental attitude.

Perhaps you are such a person?

ANDY WESSON has completed three 100 milers (two Addo Elephants, and a Cederberg Traverse) and a 250 miler (The Munga), making him the most experienced trail runner for this distance in South Africa. So why does he do it?

"No single thing draws me to ultra-distance running, but it's a deeply rewarding and personal experience.

"The challenges of preparation and the necessary lifestyle adjustments are an enjoyable external process.

"However the main drivers are all internal. The solitude, the practice of patience and perseverance, the essential belief in self.

"Ultimately I crave the silence, when all my reasoning and arguments are exhausted, and footsteps and breath prevail.

"A place I can escape the clutter of urban life. I crave the freedom; the simplicity of it."

Time on your legs

The first principle of training for an extreme ultra is, well, that you can't.

At least not in the sense that you will ever do a 100 mile long training run. It would simply break you down. However, some big mileage is needed. The challenge lies in balancing the needs for time on the legs with recovery.

On programmes for those training for races up to 100km, my runners would typically do two blocks of high mileage, each lasting several weeks with a rest week between the blocks.

But my 100 milers will use **micro-blocks, alternating a high mileage week with a recovery week in a two-week cycle.** This enables the runner to hit big weekend runs every two weeks, and yet recover.

Speed is the enemy when training for a 100 miler, and all long runs are a mix of slow running and power walking to get as much time on the legs as possible, and to replicate race conditions.

For this reason, I don't give my runners a set distance on the weekend long runs, but instead a time target of four, six, or eight hours. The actual distance covered is not important and will depend on the runner, terrain, and weather conditions. Strong runners can expect to hit around 70km on the biggest eight hour run, and around 50km on the six hour run.

In training for Addo Elephant 100 miler (see page 85), I had **Rosie Carey** do several runs to replicate the expected Addo conditions. On one back-to-back weekend, she started at 3am on Saturday and did 70km. Then on Sunday she did 50km late in the day, running in 38-degree heat.

This paid off with a second place in Rosie's first 100 miler.

(It is also important to train with a pack that weighs similar to what you



PHOTO: DEON BRAUN/TRAIL MAGAZINE

Ras Jabulani Dube ran the Addo 44km in 2015, then tackled the 76km in 2017. The 100 Miler is on his to do list for 2018.

will carry in the race. Sore shoulders became a problem for Rosie.)

A typical build-up would be to gradually increase the time spent on your legs on a single run, until you can do four hours running and walking comfortably. Once this has been achieved, it is time to start adding the back-to-back runs.

The keystone is the back-to-back weekend session, and these are the sessions that will get you safely through a 100 miler.

There should ideally be three such back-to-back weekends, spaced two to three weeks apart, with the last back-to-back weekend four or five weeks before the race. The time spent on your legs will gradually increase, with the last back-to-back being the longest.

A typical training programme for the key six weeks would be to repeat the below two-week cycle three times, finishing it four weeks before the race.

Getting strong

Although there is no speedwork needed on a 100 mile training programme, hill work remains important. The best leg strength training is running hills, and the leg strength gained from this will not only help you on ascents, but also help you fight fatigue in the late stages of the race. But instead of doing high intensity hill repeats, rather incorporate slow, big climbs in your training once a week.

One of the big challenges is learning to run at night while fatigued and perhaps cold and hungry. This running at night in the mountains on tired legs is what differentiates a 100km and a 100 miler from other races. It is easy to become disorientated and lost in the dark when running with a head torch.

Power naps of just 10 minutes can help if you do go into a second night. But limit that sleep as you go into REM sleep after 90 minutes and then

	WEEK 1, 3, 5	WEEK 2, 4, 6
Monday	Rest	Rest
Tuesday	am: 12km easy (pm: optional easy 8km)	Rest
Wednesday	30km easy effort	5km easy effort
Thursday	am: 12km easy (pm: optional easy 8km)	5km easy effort
Friday	Rest	Rest
Saturday	6 hours easy walking and running increasing to 8 hours in week 5	20km easy effort
Sunday	4 hours easy walking and running increasing to 6 hours in week 5	12km easy effort

you will feel groggy, finding it difficult to get up and run again.

You can expect extreme fatigue with this type of endurance event. You may hallucinate and experience a blurring of time. It is how you cope with this which will determine whether you reach the finish line or not.

When planning your 100 miler, you need to plan like a General and think of every small detail, as your life may depend on it. **Peter Purchase** will freely admit that he is one of my slower runners. But when it comes to meticulous planning, attention to detail and mental strength, he is a giant. At the Cederberg Traverse 100 miler last year, a tough self-navigation route with little support, he finished joint first with **Andy Wesson** in 51h13min. That's two days, two nights, and some change!

"Do your long runs on your own, since you are likely to be running alone in the race and need to develop mental strength. In the race, it is easier to stick with another runner, especially at night, as you can pull each other through bad patches." **Peter Purchase**

Essential gear

Be prepared to spend money – and a fair amount of it – on good gear. Running a 100 miler is worlds apart from a short trail race. There are few aid stations, often no cellphone reception and delayed emergency services.

This can be partially offset by using the **drop-bag system** in which you pre-pack a bag with additional gear and nutrition. The organisers leave it for you at a designated aid station. Different races have unique needs, and a race like Cederberg Traverse will

have different requirements to Addo Elephant.

Plan to have a complete second set of running kit in the drop-bag. Changing into clean socks and warm top can make you feel a lot better.

Add a variety of foodstuffs. You never know what your body will be craving after 12 hours: it may be chocolate, it may be salted nuts. At this stage, you will want to eat some solids.

The organisers will have a obligatory kit list, but this is just for starters. Your final list will be quite intimidating, given that you must carry everything.

A typical compulsory list would include: rain jacket, hydration pack (with sufficient capacity), food, base layer, beanie, buff, head torch with spare batteries, space blanket, whistle, cellphone, and GPS.

A pair of trekking poles is very useful for ultras, but make sure you first practice thoroughly with them.

Peter Purchase's checklist for his Cederberg and Addo 100 milers (other than compulsory gear, including GPS) makes for interesting reading:

- Powerbank
- Toilet paper
- Ziploc bags
- Cellphone charger adaptor
- Hand torch
- Cable ties
- Sunblock
- Spare socks, shoes, socks, pants, top
- Medical: Immodium, Panado, nausea meds, Spasmod, plasters, Gaviscon
- Food: Potatoes, bananas, oranges, nuts, raisins, salami, droëwors, chopped biltong, gels, jellies, sweets, chocolate, honey, electrolytes

Foot management is incredibly important, so make sure you have tested your shoes and socks in a variety of conditions. Gaiters can help prevent sand getting into your socks. If at any stage you

feel something is not right with your feet, stop and check, and change socks if possible. It takes just a grain of sand to create misery after a few hours. Antichafe can also help prevent blisters.

"My advice for night running would be to use a head torch as well as a hand-held torch. That way you scan ahead and around, while still maintaining light on the trail directly in front of you." **Rosie Carey**

Time to build

As extreme as it is, 100 miles is doable for most runners, provided they are prepared to allow enough time to build up to it. If you have already run a trail ultra of 50km or further, or the Comrades Marathon, then you could do a 100 miler after a **four-month training build-up**.

However, if you have never run an ultra, it would be wise to first run something like the Addo 76km. This stepping stone will also give you a feel for whether you enjoy such extreme distances.

Of the 102 runners I train, I would probably only let about 50 of them tackle a 100 miler in the next six months (36 of them have done Comrades). Maybe another 30 could tackle it next year. I wouldn't recommend that the rest do it at all, because they struggle on a 20km trail run.

A 100 miler will exhaust you physically and take you to dark places in your mind, but you will emerge with a new confidence in yourself and a greater appreciation for this wonderful thing called life.



SOUTH AFRICA'S 100 MILE RACES IN 2017

Addo Elephant Trail Run	EC	March
Cederberg Traverse	WC	April
Karkloof 100	KZN	September
Washie 100 (road)	EC	July
100 Capital Classic (road)	KZN	September
Golden Reef 100 (road)	GP	November

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