

Failure: We Plan For It

by Koach Karl

Why do we plan for failure? I know you are saying to yourself that you don't, but it's true. Not all of us not all of the time, but if you really think about it, you know it is true. Whether it is a career move or an endurance event, sometimes you think to yourself, "I cannot do that but I will try. " RIGHT THERE YOU ARE PUTTING FAILURE INTO MOTION.

Self-doubt perpetuates failure. NO, you don't have to be arrogant but you do need to be confident in yourself and your abilities. There is a fine line between arrogance and confidence as you will see. We are all guilty of this from time to time, some less, some more.

For example, take training for an event that quite frankly scares you, and you become overwhelmed. I think this happens to most of us as we venture into the unknown. It is how you handle that fear that defines you. There is nothing wrong with fear, and anyone who says he is not afraid at times is a liar. It is dealing with and overcoming that fear that makes you successful. In endurance events, as well as life and business, fear can keep you from the success GOD has in store for you. Don't worry I'm not going to preach!

This quest for failure also has friends who want you to fail. You know them. They surround us. This is the person who says, "Why do you do that stuff, it can't be good for you," or "There's no way you can do that; it's just too hard." Then you have the self-loathing ones who whine, "I could never do that," "I wasn't built to run, bike, swim, move..." Unless you are your own powerful source of positive energy, you need to shed these people and move on. This is a harsh reality, but negativity begets negativity. If you are a positive force, try to help them, because they need you. But remember these people want you to fail so they will feel better about themselves. If you are successful, they have NO excuses!

I run into these people every now and then, and I try to inspire them as best I can. If not, I move on. I am blessed with a great support team starring my beautiful wife, Paula, who was sent to me straight from GOD (still not going to preach). I also have many team members from my running group, Runners In Touch www.koachkarl.com/RIT.html (first plug) who are all very supportive and believe I can do anything. No pressure, because I welcome it. I like to prove to them that anything is possible.

Back to planning for failure... Last September, I had a very successful 100-mile run to raise money for The Touched By Cancer Foundation at www.touchedbycancerfoundation.org (shameless plug). We raised some money and had a great time. It was also to test my back after crushing a vertebra one year earlier. After that event I on was on a high, as everything went like clockwork. Yes, we had a few problems but you always do when you run that far. I was scheduled to participate in the Silverman Iron Distance Triathlon, www.silvermannv.com, eight weeks after my 100-miler. I was feeling great and thought I would just need to focus on the swim and bike for the next six weeks and then taper for two. I did have a good base, as I incorporated tri training into my ultrarunning for cross training. But the Silverman is billed as the

hardest Iron Distance in the world, and they weren't kidding, with the bike being the hardest part.

I trained the next six weeks haphazardly, thinking the endurance I had acquired training for my 100-miler would carry me through. Here we move from confident to arrogant. I had completed the Florida Ironman three times without too many problems, so I figured I would incorporate a little more hill training and everything would be fine. WRONG! I was planning for failure by not taking the event seriously and not making it a priority; it was secondary to my 100-miler. My mistake was first taking an Iron Distance event lightly and second not making it a priority since I had never participated in the event. I really didn't know what to expect. To make a long story short, it KICKED my ass! I didn't make the bike cut off and was unable to finish.

Moving forward, I planned to participate in the 3 days of Syllamo, www.3daysofsyllamo.org. This is a three-day trail event consisting of a 50K day one, followed by a 50-miler the next day and finally 12 miles the third day. All of this is run on mostly single track trails through the Ozark Mountains in Arkansas. I completed the 50K last year and had a great time, so I was looking forward to the challenge of all three days. Or so I thought... as time went on, I maintained my endurance by running 4-6 days per week but my mileage was lower than planned, with very few runs longer than 10 miles. As January approached, and the event was in March, I had not completed even one 20-miler. I usually run a lot of back to back 20 milers to prepare for ultras. I knew I was running out of time but thought I could BS my way through if it got too tough.

My longest run was a 28-miler, and I only completed two other runs in the 20s. Of course, this was not nearly enough to conquer the Ozark Mountains, but I thought I had already paid for it and made travel plans, so let's see what happens. PLANNING FOR FAILURE again! The first day went OK. I was tired at the end and was a little worried about the 50 miles the next day. The cutoffs were hard, so I knew I would have to push it all day. Well, again, I got my ass handed to me; my legs just said NO MORE. NO SHIT! That is what happens when you don't train properly. I did run the final day and had a good time, but I didn't make the distance on day two so it was again a DNF!

Going back a few years to my first DNF in 2002, I was at Badwater, www.badwater.com, which is my favorite ultra. I had completed the Badwater Ultra in 2001 on my first attempt and had a wonderful experience and relatively no problems. Now when talking Badwater, everything is relative. I had blisters, and basically the skin on the bottom of my feet was peeled off to alleviate the problem. Thanks to Jeff Quint and a great crew, we persevered and finished. I had trained relentlessly and read everything I could get my hands on, including a must read by journalist Kirk Johnson, *To the Edge*. It was great to get the perspective from a normal runner who just wanted to finish. Better yet he was a REAL writer, not an athlete pretending to be writer like myself and others out there. He painted a vivid picture that scared the hell out of me. After taking in his experiences, I was running around in May, June and July in three layers of clothing in the heat and humidity of Kansas and Missouri, anticipating the grueling heat of Death Valley. I had fear, but I let it drive me rather than relax me.

The following year I was too relaxed and tried something different with my nutrition, which I will never do again. I had my first DNF as a result. I have since and always will use Hammer products, www.hammernutrition.com, (plug!) during endurance events. In

sum, the DNF was my own doing (I planned for it!), because if I had stuck with the original plan that got me there in the first place, I know I would have finished.

All of these events were well-run, and the race directors did a great job. I would recommend any of them if you want to challenge yourself and go to the next level of endurance events. I could give a race report and have for all three events but that isn't the purpose here. If you want to know details about these events contact me at www.koachkarl.com (I love shameless plugs). I am returning to Silverman and Syllamo in 2010 to redeem myself. So my 2010 is pretty well-planned, and I WON'T make the same mistakes as I did before. I went back to Badwater in 2004 and finished my business there!

It is hard to share this with others, but my job is to insure people are successful in their endurance events. As my good friend and great athlete Jeff Quint says, these are "teachable moments" and if my mistakes can help anyone out there, then the story is worth telling and worth being humbled. That way me getting my ass handed to me isn't just humiliating, it is inspirational.

I have trained people for endurance events for the past fourteen years, and I will tell you if you have a plan and stick to it, you will be successful. Yes, things happen that are beyond our control, but 90% of the time our success or failure is by our own design.

This brings me to the meat of this topic. In endurance events as in life, the things that happen to us are our responsibility. Our success or failure IS by our own design! I know the concept of taking responsibility for our actions is not popular right now. Why take responsibility when we could blame someone else? That seems to be the New American way, but not in the America our Founders had in mind or that I believe in. Hard work and discipline pay off in the long run, which is the work ethic that made this country great. Every choice we make has consequences, whether it is training or every day life.

When you slack in your training and fail, you want to blame anyone but yourself. The course was hard, I got lost because it wasn't marked well, the weather was bad, I had the wrong socks on, and it was too hot.... whine! Whine Whine! You can try all you want, but if you really look at your failures, as with anything in life, it is usually from a poor choice on your part. YOU didn't train right, YOU didn't pay attention to the course and you put the damn socks on! 99% of the time we reap what we sow. I know it sounds too simple, but it is true. We control our destiny in business, endurance events and in life. When we try to take the easy way or the path of least resistance, we will get the results we deserve! The sooner you accept that, the sooner you can start being successful in everything you do.

To make it more confusing, not only do you have to plan and work hard you also have to be able to handle any obstacles along the way. If you work long hours then you are looking at time management to get your training in, it may be tough but it can be done. Some place to train, equipment, time, kids, spouse... You can come up with hundreds of reasons, because it is easier to quit than to persevere. However, quitting is not easier on your character. When you make excuses, it pacifies your need to have a reason for your failure, but you and you alone have to live with that, no one else. Is that the kind of life you want? A life of "what if?" What if I had taken that job? What if I had taken that chance? What if I had trained a little harder?

The bottom line and the reason for the title of this article is that when you try to take shortcuts or doubt yourself, you are in essence planning for your failure. This may be for business, school, endurance events or life in general. When you take shortcuts or become arrogant in your abilities, you predetermine your failure. I believe that we can accomplish anything if we work hard and put in the time. No matter what it is in life, your first marathon, Ironman, career move... you name it, and you can achieve it. You can do it if you plan for it and work hard.

But don't act surprised when you FAIL, as you slack, cut class, come in late for work or skip training. You were planning it all along. No, this isn't some self-help piece. This is a stop whining and start busting your ass piece!

Plan your success, NOT your failure. With the direction we are going as a nation, I'm sure in a few years you can have someone run your event for you and you will get the medal for just wanting to do it and having good intentions. I don't know about you, but I don't want to live like that. I want to sweat, feel the sore muscles and bleed if necessary to finish what I started. The government can't bail you out of everything.

I am not a great athlete. I am a regular guy who works hard to achieve extraordinary things. I don't whine about my failures; I blame only myself. I figure out my mistakes, regroup, and then move forward to rectify the failure. Anyone can do the things that I have done and plan to do in the future. You just need to push forward, set a goal and follow the steps it takes to get there.

If your goals include an endurance event, your best bet is to hire a Coach at www.koachkarl.com (I can't help it), or absorb every ounce of knowledge out there. Believe me, there is plenty of it. Listen to the EP Experts and read everything on Endurance Planet www.enduranceplanet.com (I kill me, I wish everyone thought I was as funny as I do!), because the information on this site is invaluable. I encourage you to also check out *Ultrarunning Magazine* as well as the other industry monthlies out there. As cliché as it sounds, it is true that Knowledge is Power. Get it and use it.

I do most of my training and events for a local charity, so I leave you with this. In these tough economic times there is always someone who is worse off than you, so do what you can to help out your fellow citizens. I remember hearing stories about the Great Depression and how they stood in line for food or how they went barefoot because they couldn't afford shoes. Unemployment was higher than 20%. I can't wait to tell stories to my great grand kids about how tough it is today. You know how we had to skip our extra espresso shot in our latte or even drink BLACK coffee. What are we, barbarians?! How we could only afford one flat screen and one car? I really don't see how we are surviving. Are you sensing a theme here? It isn't that bad out there if we can still afford our lattes and endurance events, in fact, life is pretty good. So give back to your community! If you are looking for a good charity go to www.touchedbycancerfoundation.org (last one, I promise). There are dozens of worthy causes out there, so pick one and be an advocate. BE the difference in this world! Do an endurance event for charity, and you will love the experience even more.