

HIGH COUNTRY RUNNING

The people who help us become more: Part 2

BY JAY BOWERS
Special to the Daily Sun

Who we surround ourselves with

By mile 80, I had fallen 23 minutes behind schedule. We clawed some of that back, but at mile 88 I was still 16 minutes behind. That’s when my own story about what was possible started changing. Adam’s didn’t. He wasn’t pretending the situation was easy. He wasn’t telling me everything was going to be fine. In that moment, he simply had a different perspective on what I was still capable of.

That’s an important distinction. Sometimes the people who bring out the best in us aren’t the ones who tell us we’re going to succeed. They’re the ones who know us well enough to remind us what we’re capable of — and then quietly expect us to live up to it. By mile 95, we had made up almost all of the deficit. We were only about two minutes behind the 30-hour schedule.

There were 6 miles left, almost entirely downhill. That might sound like good news. For me, it wasn’t necessarily. Downhill running has always been a mechanical challenge. I’m much more likely to lose time on a descent than make it up, and after 95 miles I had no reason to believe that would sud-



COURTESY OF THE AUTHOR

denly change. Adam never focused me on the finishing time. Instead, he kept bringing me back to effort, capacity and commitment. One foot in front of the other. Stay with the process. Something inter-

esting happened. The more I focused on the effort, the less I noticed the pain. And the more immersed I became in simply doing the best I could with the mile in front of me, the less important the outcome became. My final full-mile

splits got progressively faster: 13:29, 11:25, 10:34, 9:41, 9:39 and 9:27. What I didn’t know was that we’d built a cushion. Adam knew. He could have told me. Instead, he let me stay in that moment. One foot in front of

the other.

More than a finishing time

Eventually I realized I was going to break 30 hours. I expected that realization to feel like victory. Instead, what I remember most is a sense of peace. I was grateful. Grateful for Adam running with me. For Nate getting me through a long and difficult night. For Laurel and the months of patient preparation that helped make the moment possible. I thought about my wife, who supports this slightly ridiculous passion of mine and all that comes with it. And I thought about home. One of the great gifts of being a runner in Flagstaff is the community we get to be part of. We live in a place filled with extraordinary athletes, but what impresses me most isn’t how fast people run or the races they finish. It’s how often people show up for one another. They share miles. They coach. They pace. They encourage. They challenge. Sometimes they believe in someone’s capacity a little longer than that person is able to believe in it themselves. That extends well beyond running. We become, in part, a reflection of the people with whom we spend our time. Their

expectations influence ours. Their attitudes become contagious. They can reinforce the limits we’ve placed on ourselves — or quietly challenge us to reconsider them. At Run Rabbit Run, I crossed the finish line in 29:45:26, earning the gold buckle I’d hoped for. I’m proud of the buckle. But what I’ll remember is something Adam helped me understand during those final miles. The outcome wasn’t the whole point. The point was giving everything I had to the process, one step at a time, surrounded by people who helped me become a little more than I might have been on my own. And I’m increasingly convinced that’s one of the best reasons to choose carefully who we run with — and who we walk through life with.

GRATEFUL TO HAVE CALLED FLAGSTAFF HOME FOR 36 YEARS, JAY BOWERS IS ENDLESSLY FASCINATED BY THE EXTRAORDINARY POTENTIAL IN EACH OF US — AND BY HOW BIG GOALS HAVE A WAY OF REVEALING IT, ESPECIALLY WHEN WE KEEP PUTTING ONE FOOT IN FRONT OF THE OTHER AND HAVE GREAT PEOPLE BESIDE US. RACHEL SMITH IS A MOM TO TWO WONDERFUL GIRLS, A PROFESSIONAL RUNNER, AND FEELS LUCKY TO CALL FLAGSTAFF “HOME.” SHE IS ALSO THE COORDINATING EDITOR OF THIS COLUMN AND WOULD LOVE FOR YOU TO CONTRIBUTE TO IT BY SENDING YOUR RUNNING-RELATED STORY TO HER AT RACHSCHNEID18@GMAIL.COM.

TRENCH LOOKS UNSAFE?

DO NOT ENTER IT.

Make sure proper trenching safety measures are in place before you start working. Learn more at AZICA.GOV

INDUSTRIAL COMMISSION OF
ARIZONA
ADOSH

Please vote for us AGAIN for Best of Flag! 2026!

DARREN LANCE ELECTRIC LLC

Locally Owned & Operated

Professional Electrical Service

- Specializing in Troubleshooting and Repair
- Electrical Panel Upgrades
- Home Inspections and Corrections
- Dedicated Circuits
- Fixture and Fan Installation
- Remodels
- Generator Power Systems
- Commercial and Residential Electrical Service
- Heat Tape Installation

Serving Flagstaff & Surrounding Areas

**TEXT 605
TO (928) 494 - 2394
TO VOTE US “BEST ELECTRICIAN”**

www.darrenlanceelectric.com

928-853-9594
email: dlectric74@yahoo.com

SALES & SERVICE DEALER

AUTHORIZED DEALER

ACCREDITED BUSINESS