

PETER BAINES OAM TOGETHER WE CAN



33 MARATHONS IN 26 DAYS
A RUN TO REMEMBER SO WE NEVER FORGET



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**THIS IS AN UNEDITED SAMPLE CHAPTER OF
PETER BAINES' NEW BOOK AVAILABLE AT THE END
OF SEPTEMBER 2025.**

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A RUN TO REMEMBER SO WE NEVER FORGET



MAJOR
STREET



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info@majorstreet.com.au | majorstreet.com.au

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The hardest day

Since the morning of day nine, I had been running solo. Greg had succumbed to a soft tissue injury to his right leg, and he quickly arrived at the decision that the best thing for me and for the success of the tour was to take time off the road, allow the injury to heal and return when he could. It was a completely selfless act.

I ran solo for the next week (aside from CT running her one extra kilometre each day), with Mae Thiew, my guardian angel, always a few metres behind. Running alone didn't concern me, as seldom in training had I run with a companion. And it wasn't as though I was a real conversationalist when Greg was on the road. It had become a bit of a joke that I didn't really speak to anyone from 4.30 a.m. until we finished the run for the day, so Greg was probably happy to be in the vehicle with people who could hold a conversation.

The morning of 14 December, I woke up in a really shitty mood for the first time on tour. The day before had been my birthday, and we had held a fundraising event in the town of Hua Hin with local expats. The timing of the dinner meant that it was a pretty quick turnaround from when we arrived at the hotel to when we had to be back in the foyer and on our way to the event.

Through the support from one of our sponsors, we were booked into the Anantara Hotel, which is a stunning property and way above the standard of the rest of the run. To try to make the most of the resort facilities on offer – a swim in the pool at minimum, and perhaps a massage – we agreed that I would push the pace during the day and reduce the length of the water and rest stops to get to the hotel earlier. We did get to the hotel with a bit more time than usual, but for some reason that didn't translate into a massage, a swim or even my normal post-run recovery. There was no ice bath and no 45-minute session in the compression boots. The time just evaporated as we met with sponsors at the hotel and got ready for dinner, and we even found ourselves having to rush to get there on time. It was the first time during the run that our post-run process went out the window, and it is probably no coincidence that the next day, things turned ugly.

The evening, which I attended with CT, Chris and Wendy, began with pre-dinner drinks on the lawn of a beautiful beachside hotel, which would normally be delightful. However, this involved talking, mingling and networking while standing. Standing. I could see chairs, and I so wanted to go and sit down, but no – stand and mingle was my task. This was made more uncomfortable by the fact that I was wearing R.M. Williams boots, which are my go-to for such an event, but normally my feet aren't covered in blisters and dressings. I thought about going to dinner in my Hokas, but CT was never letting me out of the hotel in running shoes. And just to top it off, I had to tie a dressing-gown cord around my jeans to keep them up, as I had by this time lost sufficient weight that they would otherwise have dropped down to make me look like a wannabe 1980s gangster.

It was difficult to make a quick exit given the event was being held to raise funds for the run, so when we left at 10 p.m. it was

well past time for me to be in bed. I was a bit jealous of the rest of the crew, who'd had room service and a night in.

Waking up at 4.30 a.m. for what was now the 14th day in a row, we went through the normal routine, none of which was fun by this stage. As I dressed and prepared to head to the Mothership for breakfast, I realised that my watch hadn't charged overnight and was sitting on 0% battery, meaning I had no way of tracking the run distance for the day – not that big a deal upon reflection, but it was enough to send me into a mini meltdown at 4.50 a.m. Part of my daily routine was knowing how far I had run, how far I had left to go for the day and how far the next water stop was; I didn't want to be guessing that stuff, and I didn't want to change the routine. CT headed to reception, and I sat in the room to charge my watch. Of course, due to the early start we couldn't enjoy the exquisite buffet breakfast that was on offer, and because of the state I was in I hadn't listened clearly when CT left the room to take the luggage to reception: I thought she was dropping off our bags and returning to the hotel room with breakfast, but she had said she would meet me at reception and we would have breakfast at the Mothership. I sat on the bed, watching my watch charge and waiting for breakfast, and CT was waiting in reception for me to arrive, both of us wondering what the other was doing. I eventually headed to reception to check what was going on and found Chris, CT and Mae Thiew waiting for me to hit the road. I grabbed whatever breakfast I could carry, and we left.

There was a bit of urgency as CT and I headed out on the road: the local run club was joining us at 6 a.m. at a designated point on the route, and that meant we had to get our skates on. Again, this urgency was not part of the morning routine, and this added to my deteriorating mood. To make up the time and cover the distance

necessary to meet the run club, we ran through our normal water stops, eventually catching the runners at the 12-kilometre mark. I didn't want to be caught up in the five-minute-kilometre pace they ran at. They would run whatever distance they had in mind and then return home for showers, all before 8 a.m.; my day was going to be long, and when I eventually finished running for the day I would need to make the four-hour return trip to Bangkok to be ready for the fun run the next morning.

As it turned out, the runners were entirely respectful of what I had done in my 13 days on the road and were happy to run next to me and behind me, and at my pace. It was nice to have the support of the dozen runners, most of whom were running in our Run to Remember singlets. They would run a few kilometres with me before pulling up for photos and well wishes. I appreciated their contribution to the awareness we were striving for, but I also appreciated the opportunity to settle back into my rhythm after a hectic, almost chaotic start to the day. We had broken with routine, and it was time to return to what had served me so well over the previous 13 days.

As it was the 14th day of the run, CT's running finished at kilometre 14. After that, she went back into the Mothership to take care of marketing and run logistics, and I was on my own.

I have suffered from shin splints once before, but that was at least 20 years ago. I remember how quickly they came on. I was travelling for work at the time and had gone for an afternoon run. Feeling the pain in my leg, I had turned around and headed back to the hotel, where I took cans of soft drink out of the minibar and held them against my shin to offer relief. I certainly didn't head out for a run later that evening, or the next day, or, I suspect, the week after.

It was around the 28-kilometre mark that I felt discomfort in my left shin as I ran down a small incline heading to the next water

stop two kilometres away. My immediate thought was, *Hello, where did you come from?* I made it to water stop and told Jules of the pain. I took some pain medication in the form of tablets and rubbed some Voltaren gel into the leg, and then headed back out. As soon as I left the water stop, the pain was immediate and intense. It felt like someone was driving a screwdriver into my shinbone each time my foot hit the pavement.

I continued to run, albeit quite slowly now. Walking didn't really relieve me of the pain – it just meant I was a whole lot slower, and that meant I was going to be out on the road and on my feet for longer. As I ran, the pain increased. I ran with a steady stream of tears running down my face and snot running out of my nose. I had gotten myself in a right old state, but I continued to run.

Until I couldn't. For the first time in 14 days of running, I stopped. I leant against a light post on the side of the road and wondered how I could finish the day.

Mae Thiew, who had been witness to this, immediately stopped her bike and started pouring cold water onto my head. She called the support team on the phone and told them I had stopped and they needed to move the lunch stop to where I was as I couldn't continue. Hearing Mae Thiew on the phone was enough to push me forward, to take the next step, and to follow that with another. I would later learn that the team had told Mae Thiew they wouldn't move the lunch stop and I had to get to them. It was exactly the call I would have wanted them to make. This was evidence of the importance of having those communication protocols in place prior to the run. No doubt CT, as my wife, hearing for the first time in 14 days Mae Thiew call to advise that I was in pain and needed the crew, would have wanted to come to me. However, that wasn't what we had agreed

during planning. The role of the team was not to abandon plans because I was in pain or to change things because I was doing it tough – it was to give me the best chance of making it through each day and, ultimately, to the end of the run. I needed to find a way to get to the crew. This was my choice, and these hard times were always going to be part of the journey. This was a defining moment of the run, and I would be defined by what I would do over the next couple of hours.

The lead support vehicle with Chris and Jules drove behind me to offer anything they could. Chris' message to me was clear: "We are here behind you, mate, and you just stop whenever you need to". I took on more pain medication and continued to push forward. Jules would tell me later that she could see from the passenger's seat how the injury was impacting the muscles in my leg and changing my running form.

I somehow got to lunch and just lay on the concrete ground. The relief, while not complete, was certainly welcome.

This lunch stop was pretty impactful for the entire team. They certainly hadn't seen me in such a state of distress; I had been in pain previously, but nothing like this. CT consulted with Matty, and everything the support team could do, they did. Laying on the concrete, I regained composure, and with pressure off my leg I could take in food and rest.

This was, without question, the lowest point of the run. I was in more pain than I had ever experienced in my life. Despite this, though, never did I consider withdrawing from the run. It never even occurred to me that we should call it a day and return tomorrow. My only thought was that I needed to get back up and start running. I knew it would hurt, but that was something I just needed to embrace.

The lunch stop had no timeframe attached to it; I could stay for as long as I needed to. I had 18 kilometres to go in the day,

and they could wait. The only pressing issue was that as soon as I finished running, whenever that might be, CT and I needed to get into the car and drive back to Bangkok. Several hundred runners would be turning up to the fun run, along with sponsors and their teams, the Governor of Bangkok and the Australian Ambassador to Thailand. Not attending wasn't an option.

So, while the team gave me all the time I needed to try and get back on the road, I also knew that the longer I stayed, the later we would get to Bangkok and the later we would be in bed. We still had a 4.30 a.m. alarm to meet.

I'm not sure where the motivation came from during that lunch stop, the willpower to rise up and start changing clothes and getting ready to head back out. I don't know what conversations the team had, whether they feared the rest of the day or even the whole run was in jeopardy. As you'd expect, they kept all of that from me. I know now that it pained CT to see me in so much pain. How could it not have, seeing your person, the one you love, in pain and then going back for more?

The act of pulling on my shoes and socks was the trigger that I was committed to going. In the lead-up to the run, I found excuses not to go for a run probably more often than I should have, but never did I put my shoes on and then not go. That was always the action that there was no coming back from. So, as I sat there slowly tying my laces, in my mind at least, I was committed.

When I stood, that screwdriver returned, driving into my shin. Bew held me upright as I struggled to put weight on my leg. At this point, all that mattered was I needed to move forward. As I took the first couple of steps, I knew I had to run – walking at that pace just wouldn't get it done. Starting was the most painful part, but at least it gave me momentum.

With 18 kilometres to run for the day, I would have normally had three water stops to go, but once I started running I just

didn't want to experience the pain of stopping and starting again. Actually, I was afraid that if I stopped, I wouldn't be able to start again. Chris and Jules had resumed their position behind me rather than driving on to the next five-kilometre mark, and the agreement was that I would just stop when I wanted to and that would be the next water stop, irrespective of the kilometre marker or the number of times I needed to stop.

There was no doubt that the "why" of the run was important to me, but among a number of lessons I took from those 18 kilometres on the road was the importance of "how". The "why" just seemed too big and too far out of reach at this time, so focusing on the "how" was what got me through and would, of course, ultimately get me to my "why".

I had a soft half-litre flask in my hand and would drink from that between water stops. When I emptied it, I looked around, and Mae Thiew rode up and took it from me, returned to the car, exchanged it for a full one and returned. It meant I didn't have to break stride, let alone stop. It was almost like the Tour de France, when the riders simply raise their arm to call their team car forward and it arrives to meet whatever need they have. I just kept running, and each time I emptied the flask, I held it out to the side and Mae Thiew got me a full one. Not a word was spoken other than when I said "khop khun mak khrap" (thank you very much) each time she returned.

I passed what should have been my next water stop at the 13-kilometre mark, then the next at the 8-kilometre mark, and at that point I was committed to running without stopping until I reached the hotel. It was such an important turnaround for me and the team to have limped into lunch in such a state of distress and to now have the end of the day in sight. I wasn't just limping, either – the closer I got, the stronger I got. I was sending a clear

message, most importantly to myself, that there would indeed be incredibly tough times, but they would pass. As long as I stayed on the road and continued moving forward, I was giving myself a chance to finish not only the toughest day I would face but, importantly, the whole run.

Running into the small villages dotted along the coast of the Gulf of Thailand, the first sign that you are getting close is the houses that appear on the outskirts. There is one on its lonesome to start with, and then another, then they are side by side, and then you start to pass the restaurants and hotels. This was a very familiar road to me from the rides, but I wasn't sure which hotel this particular leg finished at. All I knew was that my watch was telling me I was inside the last couple of kilometres, and then it was down to the final kilometre. In six and a half minutes, the day would be over. I ran with such conviction, so bloody proud of my efforts since lunch. For the first time, I had run with music, listening to a playlist I had built for exactly this moment containing the likes of the Foo Fighters, Silverchair, Wolfmother and Eminem, and it had done what it was supposed to do.

As I ran the last kilometre to the hotel, I was loving the feelings I was experiencing. I loved where the pain of the run had taken me and that I had risen above it all. I had responded to the conditions I had found myself in, not the ones I was hoping for. Greg had come out of the hotel and met me a couple of hundred metres out from the finish in what would be his first time back running since the injury. "Keep your head up, mate," he was saying to me, but at that point I didn't need the encouragement – the euphoria that this run offered had been delivered.

I turned into the hotel and could see the crew, who came to meet me one by one. It was one of the most emotional finishes of any of the 26 days on the road. I had run 18 kilometres without

a shirt change and I couldn't have been wetter if I had just risen from a swimming pool, but that didn't matter to any of them. There weren't just a few tears – there was genuine sobs. Each crew member had ridden the highs and lows of the tour up to this point and had been with me every step of the way.

The embrace from Chris that day was something special, and I am so grateful it was captured on video.

“That was toughest thing I have ever fucking seen,” he told me as he slapped me on the back. “If you do nothing else this run, that was worth every fucking minute. Well done. Well done.”

Chris's approval matters to me a lot, and I know that day, on the back of the efforts he had witnessed on the road, I had it. He had driven every one of those last 18 kilometres with me and witnessed each step I took. I had felt his and Jules's presence and the proximity of the car, and knowing that were literally behind me spurred me on. Who knows how the day would have ended if I had been out there on my own, but I wasn't. This was another day when the team got me home; together, we got the job done.

That day could have turned out a number of different ways. I could have surrendered to the pain at lunch or against that light post, promising myself that I would return and pick it up the next day. If I had done that, I would have gone to bed that night defeated. I would have had questions around my ability to finish, and I would have been 18 to 20 kilometres behind where I needed to be.

I knew when I finished that day that it was something special, and when I look back on it, I consider it a clear defining moment of the run. I can't think of anything in my life that was harder on a physical level. I think finishing that day and rising above the adversity was a clear sign of the importance of the run to me and how deeply committed I was to it.

I had originally planned to overshoot the hotel by five kilometres, so I ended up five kilometres short of the planned distance for the day, but given the state I was in at lunch it definitely could have been a lot worse. I could easily pick that up the next day once we returned from Bangkok. It was now time for a shower and to get into the car for the four-hour car trip back to Bangkok to attend the fun run the following morning.

The car trip turned out to be a godsend. I was able to lie flat the middle seats of the loaned Ford Explorer so I could sit in the rear and have my legs elevated and fully extended for the entire journey. As well as allowing me to be out of the heat and to recover, the trip also gave CT and I the chance to catch up, and it allowed me to catch up on some of the messages of support that had been coming in. Despite the significant discomfort I had been in, it was a great finish to a really hard day. It gave me confidence that I could overcome sustained pain and continue to run, and it gave me the self-belief that if I faced further difficulties, I could overcome them as well.