

Ironmate Special Edition - Bobby Brown Interview

Welcome to this special edition interview with Bobby Brown, Winner of Race Across America 2004, a running race covering 3100 miles, from Huntington Beach on the west coast, to New York on the east coast.

Bobby completed his first half marathon at the tender age of thirteen. He is now 35 and some 22 years later, he has numerous amazing feats of endurance achievements and records to his name. He has competed in the longest Toughest Triathlon in the world, the Deca Triathlon, 10 times the normal distance of an Ironman Triathlon. He has also competed in Ironman, Double Ironman and Triple Ironman events.

While competing in Race Across America he was raising money for charity for C.H.I.C.K.S who provide activity holidays for deprived and disadvantaged children. If the competition was not tough enough, he was made redundant from his teaching job. He lives in Cornwall with his wife Amy.

For more amazing information about Bobby please checkout his web site at:  
<http://www.bobbysrun.co.uk>

Bobby has also written his own inspiring book, The Road to Deca. The book chronicles his life from a child right up until he competed in the World Deca-Ironman Championships in 1997. It is an honest, open, often humorous book about his travels and races, charting his progress from "also-ran" to World-class endurance athlete. He has also written about his Run Across Australia and his Run Across America.

Bobby's publications can be ordered by sending a cheque made payable to Bob Brown:

7 Ashburton Square  
Callington  
CORNWALL  
PL17 7DG

The book is £10 (+1.49 PandP) . The booklet is £7 (+£1 PandP). The money raised is being used to finance my run across Europe.

£8 from each copy will be donated to the  
'Chicks' charity: (I will only keep the printing and postage costs)

\*\*\*Ironmate & Bobby Brown Interview - Race Across America 2004\*\*\*

Ironmate: How long did you train for this race?, or has it been a natural progression since you first started to run after you learnt to walk.

Bobby: Well, I have been training since I was 4. From a youngster I was mad keen on any sport, I just kept moving! I was in every school team. Over the years I concentrated on running (first 1/2 marathon at 13) , did a marathon, progressed to tri's , then ultra tri's, then running across Oz and now running across the US. So you could say it has been a natural progression. I don't train anywhere near as much as I used to. For the US run I was unfit when I started my training. I did a 26 week build up, starting at 50 miles per week, rising by 5 miles per week until I reached 140 mpw, but then cut it back to around 100-111 mpw as I was tired! Most of the running was easy commuting to work and back with a heavy backpack.

Ironmate: I believe that you have now run over 48,000 miles since you first started running is that correct?

Bobby: Sounds about right! I just love running, or just exercising in general. How can people not exercise at all! Strange.

Ironmate: How many total miles do you think someone else needs to run before they consider attempting 3,000 miles Run Across America? (RAA)

Bobby: Good question. Not as many as you might think. The 2 main attributes I think you need are  
a. not being prone to injury  
b. a supremely strong mind

Once the pain of the first couple of weeks is over, physically the race is OK. It is the mental side of things that are the hardest to deal with. Runningwise, Kaz, one of the Japanese runners is a very inexperienced runner. He is a mountaineer. So not a lot of running miles, but unbelievably strong in the mind.

When did you decide to do this race?

Ironmate: Why did you want to do this race? Will you do it again in two years?

Bobby: I felt I was becoming a bit unfit! And I needed a challenge. But I've got to a point now where any challenge I have needs to be pretty big otherwise it's not a challenge! I definitely won't do it ever again. No need to, I've already run across the US. No point in doing it again.

Ironmate: Was the Race across America the hardest thing that you have ever done or won?

Bobby: It was very hard on the legs and sometimes the mind, but it is all relative. At the end of the day I was only running 8-9 hours a day across a fantastic country. Some people work 12 hours a day in a factory. Now that is hard.

Ironmate: You won the event by a huge margin, was it a perfect race?

Bobby: By no means! In a race as long as this, things happen not necessarily associated with running. For example, I lost my job during the race. I had to deal with that upset. But I still had to run the next day. Physically though, my legs always felt on the verge of injury. I could never take the run for granted. But obviously I am very pleased to have won such a prestigious race.

Ironmate: How did you keep going?

Bobby: I'm stubborn! I would have crawled to NY if need be. If there is something you want to do in life, you do it no matter what.

Ironmate: What thoughts did you have most days?

Bobby: I always have my walkman on. My music and thoughts reflects my mood. It actually is surprisingly difficult to drift off and think (very annoying when you have so much time!) . Whenever, I felt bad I always put on Eminem. It always worked!

Ironmate: What types of foods and drink did you eat during & after each daily run during (RAA)

Bobby: Junk! Your body craves fats, so I gave it fat. Burgers, fries, chocolate. 1 litre of red wine each night plus a couple of beers. During the stage I would drink water, coke, sprite and gatorade. When it was hot I wouldn't eat but on the cooler days I ate some chocolate-butterfingers in particular-yum!

One day it was raining all day. All I had during the 48 miles was 2 cups of hot chocolate. Very unconventional, but it works for me.

Ironmate: Did you have certain music that helped you keep up your rhythm?

Bobby: Lots of 80's compilation tapes to reminisce to, heavy metal music (Iron Maiden, Saxon, Whitesnake etc) and dance and rap music to get me going, and easy listening stuff like The Eagles and Zero 7 when I wanted to chill.

Ironmate: Were you nervous before the start?

Bobby: No, excited by the challenge and uncertainty.

Ironmate: What was the best moment?

Bobby: Very difficult to answer. There are so many good memories, such as climbing to the top of the mountain in the Rockies and seeing the most wonderful view imaginable. But the best moment has to be when on day 68 I was running along in the middle of nowhere when I heard a barking noise. I turned round to see 2 familiar people with dog masks on. It was my sister Susan and bro-in-law Ross. After flying home to Oz a month previously they had decided to surprise me by flying out again for the finish. And they did!

Ironmate: What was the worst moment?

Bobby: When I thought I had torn my hamstring with 2 weeks to go. Very scary.

Ironmate: What things do you now think about the race to make you smile?

Bobby: I haven't really had time to think about the race yet, which is a good thing. Some runners find they get depressed after such an experience because they keep thinking back to the race. I prefer to think about what I will do in the future. But in time there will be several funny moments to amuse me!

Ironmate: Did you think at any time during the race across America that you could not finish it?

Bobby: No.

Ironmate: When did you know that not only you would finish but win the race?

Bobby: I always knew I would finish , but I suppose only in the last 2 weeks was it impossible for anyone to catch me.

Ironmate: How long will it take you to recover?

Bobby: I had 2 weeks off and am running and mountain biking a bit. But motivational wise, I now find it hard to go for a run and finish in the same place- after spending 10 weeks running from A to B. But I have the Cornish Marathon in Nov to motivate me a bit.

Ironmate: How many pairs of shoes did you wear out?

Bobby: 5. Asics. I should have worn 6 but I lost a pair!

Ironmate: Was the event well organised?

Bobby: Extremely, the total opposite to the Oz run. But I enjoyed both equally.

Ironmate: Did you go wrong during the run and cover any extra miles?

Bobby: No, we had turnsheets every day and I was fine. Anyway, for over 1000 miles we were on the same road- no turns at all!

Ironmate: How soon after you finished your 3,000-mile epic journey did you go for a run?

Bobby: The next day!The race finished in Central Park. I wanted to run coast to coast so ran the 12 miles to the Atlantic the next day. That was very important to me. After that I did nothing for 2 weeks.

Ironmate: What did you win for being the fastest to run Across America?

Bobby: A lot of pride and satisfaction- plus a trophy. No prize money.

Ironmate: Do you know how many calories you burnt up?

Bobby: Probably about 8-9,000 per day.

Ironmate: How much weight did you lose?

Bobby: 13kgs which I put on in 2 weeks after the race!

Ironmate: When is your next race?

Bobby: Cornish Marathon-Nov 21st.

Ironmate: How does this compare to the race across Australia?

Bobby: It was much tougher. The hilly terrain meant my legs were never comfortable. I also had the pressure of being in the lead, trying to get publicity for my sponsor (GINSTERS) and charity (CHICKS), plus trying to update my website every day. All these things combined to make it very hard indeed.

Ironmate: Was this the toughest race you have ever done?

Bobby: Any race is as tough as you make it, but yes, maybe even harder than the deca, because of the duration of the race.

Ironmate: Bobby we both competed in the Triple Ironman in horrendous conditions non stop for nearly two days, how does this compare.

Bobby: Ah memories! Well, it was horrendous conditions, but I can honestly say it was my most enjoyable race ever. Masochist!

Ironmate: Will your feet ever be the same again?

Bobby: My feet are like leather now. Not one blister going across the US.

Ironmate: How long would say a sub 3-hour marathon runner have to train for to even contemplate entering such a gruelling event? How many years and miles per week for the last 6 months before the event?

Bobby: I presume you mean the US race. Like I said, the mind is the most important thing. Once you know you can do it in your head, you can. You can do anything you want in life.

Ironmate: What types of training did you do to train for this amazing feat of endurance?

Bobby: Just commuting, bit of running at the weekend, all easy . Just one long run (50 miles). A few short races for training. But mentally, I had the advantage of knowing I could run across a continent. That gave me great confidence.

Ironmate: I believe that you are planning to run across every continent around the world what is your next project?

Bobby: Next project, solo run across Europe, possibly next summer. I say solo , but anyone wanting to join me, let me know. More the merrier!

Ironmate: How differently will you train for your next endurance running event?

Bobby: Same thing

Ironmate: How do you manage to find the time to train work and plan these routes?

Bobby: I multi task alot and don't waste time phaffing (don't know if that is spellt correctly). Plus I don't do any DIY!

Ironmate: What other feats of endurance are you planning?

I'm always thinking of challenges.

Ironmate: Will life ever be the same again?

Bobby: Life is a journey, I don't think any 2 days should be the same.

Ironmate: When will you finally retire?

Bobby: I tried to retire but sport is my life.

Ironmate: Who is your sporting hero?

Bobby: Ron Hill the marathon runner. Great guy and also likes a drink!

Ironmate: Who over the years has been your toughest competitor?

Bobby: Myself.

Ironmate: Do you have any superstitions?

Bobby: No.

Ironmate: Do you have any particular rituals before during or after a race?

Bobby: No. Sorry for being boring!

Bobby: Race Across America is the most individualistic sport in the world (Apart from your helpers of course) It's just you and the elements. It is amazing. It is an individual race, but there are literally hundreds of stories I could tell you relating to people along to the route. It might be quite a solitary pursuit to some people, but to me it is the ultimate social experience. It is such an intense event, yet I have all these wonderful memories of competitors, crew, organisers, and the average person in the street. It is unlike any other type of race.

Ironmate: Thank you for your time Bobby and once again congratulations on this and all your other amazing achievements. May we wish you all the very best for the future and with your fund raising.