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R. Craig Ewing, Esq. Running Around the World - Almost Twice and Then Some

Death-defying heat gripped the day. Spotter planes, helicopters and sharp shooters closely tailed the runners to prevent charging rhinos, elephants and lions from attacking. In spite of all this, CTLA member Craig Ewing triumphantly crossed the finish line of a 26.2 mile marathon through a game safari in Kenya.

Another time, he finished fourth overall in chilling 15 degree weather and brutal 50 mph winds. Under these extreme Antarctic conditions, only four brave and freezing spectators dared to withstand the elements to celebrate the accomplishments of all the runners.

Of course, no one would ever call these typical marathons.

The legendary long distance runner Steve Prefontaine – also known as “Pre” to his fans – once said, “To give anything less than your best, is to sacrifice the gift.”

Ewing uses this quote as a mantra. He pushes himself to the very best of his abilities during runs as well as in his professional and personal life.

Ewing belongs to the Seven Continents Club, an organization recognizing elite runners who compete in marathons and half marathons on all seven continents. Ewing ran the Safaricom Marathon in Africa, Antarctica Marathon twice; The Great Wall Marathon and Dead Sea Marathon in Asia; Loch Ness Marathon, Copenhagen Marathon and Athens Marathon in Europe; The Gold Coast Marathon and Sydney Marathon in Australia; as well as the Santiago Marathon and Fin Del Mundo Marathon in South America. Of course, he ran many in North America including the Denver Marathon – one of his favorite Colorado races. His best marathon race time came in at three hours and six minutes.

The Seven Continents Club does not have time limits to complete races on all seven continents. It all depends on the vacation a runner has available and his or her travel budget. Participants tend to complete all seven over a number of years.



With a smile on his face, Craig Ewing runs across the Great Wall of China during a marathon.

Only eight members of the Seven Continents Club have accomplished it twice. Ewing just needs to run one more in Africa to join the ranks of this select group.

As a kid, Ewing ran on the track team at Mount Hebron Junior High in Montclair, New Jersey and continued throughout high school. “We didn’t achieve much, but had a lot of fun along the way,” Ewing recalled. In college, he started running long distance.



Craig Ewing stands at the finish line of the Antarctica Marathon.

While attending the University of Denver College of Law School, he became hooked. “I worked full time, attended law school full time and joined a running group,” Ewing explained. “We pushed each other and ran up to 70 miles a week. I was addicted,” he said.

At that time, a doctor told Ewing he would never be able to run a marathon because of the cartilage damage under his kneecap.

Obviously, this doctor did not know about his love of running, his determination and his mantra. The pain and discomfort never stopped Ewing from giving his best.

Mike McConnell, now a Denver defense attorney, signed Ewing up for his first marathon – the Denver Marathon. From that point, Ewing continued to run his share of 10k races, half marathons and marathons. In 2002, he took marathon competitions to the next level – a level of adventure, a level of risk but even better...a level of opportunity he never would have foreseen.

Ewing’s initial Seven Continents Club marathon took place in Antarctica. While travelling by plane, he sat next to a stranger also running the race. They

struck up a conversation with all the pleasantries such as “Where are you from?” Ironically, Ewing and his new friend, Dan Gannon, discovered not only did they both come from Colorado but they lived in the same town, Sedalia. As the conversation progressed, they not only lived in the same town but they were neighbors. Ewing and Dan became fast friends.

“Antarctica is one of the greatest places in the world. The crazy weather conditions make it a challenge. I met a gentleman travelling solo from Israel. Unfortunately, he had some emotional hang ups after serving in the Israeli army and facing gunfire. The race director recruited him to stand at the top of Collins Glacier with a turnaround sign. The people you meet on the trip are special. Our love of running holds us together. Once you get started on a Seven Continent trek you see the same people on a frequent basis,” he told.

In the end, Ewing finished the Antarctica Marathon as the first American, the third male and as previously mentioned fourth overall. A runner from Dublin finished ahead of him however race organizers caught him cutting the course. To Ewing, the

medal from this race stands out among the rest. Winners also receive the race’s mile markers from the place they finish. Ewing took home mile marker four. The weather and the penguins severely beat up the sign – yet it remains a priceless keep sake.

The venture continued even after the race. While celebrating on a ship with other Antarctica Marathon runners, a rogue wave hit and burst open the door to the bar. A female participant suffered some injuries. “The incident really scared and shook up everyone. So Dan, my new friend from Sedalia and I instituted a rule. If you drink at the bar you have to wear a life jacket – and everyone did,” he said with a chuckle.

“If you have ever run a marathon, the minute you finish you say...I am never going to do this again. Then two minutes later you say...where I am going to book the next one,” he rationalized.

Shortly after, Ewing and Dan learned about an upcoming race in Africa. The two registered for their next marathon. That year, Jody Berger from the *Rocky Mountain News* covered Ewing and



At his office, Craig Ewing displays some of his favorite marathon medals on a sculpture he created.

Dan's Antarctica and Africa marathons on the front page of the sports section.

"When we went to Africa, the United States issued warnings of potential terrorist activity in Kenya. British Airways decided not to fly due to threats of side winder missiles trying to take down planes. Many who registered for this race did not attend. On a plane to Nairobi, I had the opportunity to meet a young guy from Kenya. He went to Harvard and did very well in the States. He could not wait to see his parents. I could only imagine how he talked about his life in Cambridge with his parents. The two are so different," he explained.

In 2005, Ewing exceeded his best. He completed 52 races for 348 miles and finished in the top three 50 percent of the time in his age group.

Later, Ewing also took advantage of a special chance to travel to Jordan for the Dead Sea Marathon with his son Kyle. "He is a great runner and triathlete. Running together has been really important to me. I treasure these opportunities to go with him. He is an incredible person," Ewing proudly emphasized.

At that same time, Jordanians did not welcome Americans from Ewing's generation. They treated Kyle much better. Ewing could not figure out if he looked like an Israeli general, politician or someone else extremely unpopular.

"Every time we arrived at the hotel, we went through a check point. Security had mirrors on sticks checking for bombs under our car even after thoroughly searching it. I really felt what it was like to be an ugly American. It truly broke my heart," Ewing described.

"The Dead Sea Marathon course challenges most runners. You run 4,500 vertical feet from Amman down to the Dead Sea and it kills your quads. The next day, the marathon



Craig Ewing successfully completes the Safaricom Marathon on the Lewa Wildlife Conservancy in Kenya.

affects you. We tried to go down multiple sets of stairs to soak in the Dead Sea, but going down the normal way did not work. So we went backwards holding on to the railing. Some locals wearing burkas looked at us as a couple of drunken Americans. We laughed at each other because we could not get down any other way," Ewing explained.

"We also had a driver named 'Jihad' of all things while in Jordan. He wore camouflage fatigues and a vest. We wanted him to take us to this historical hot springs about two hours from our hotel. As the driver approached the last security checkpoint, you could hear the guards saying 'American.' Jihad left the car to speak with the guards. I knew something was not right. Kyle and I waited. He came back to the car and looked me straight in the eye and said, 'do you trust me?' I said, 'yes I do.' He replied, 'we're getting out of here' and obviously it was a good thing

because we could have been in harm's way," Ewing remembered.

"To me, running and competing is a celebration of life. You can run at any age," he said.

Ewing usually does not sleep well the night before a marathon. He has all of those fears about his upcoming performance and the race itself. But once he gets out there, he is the happiest guy on the course – loving life.

"One of the great things about running is I start out thinking about work and my cases. How can I creatively resolve various issues? As I go further, I figure out minutes per mile. Later in the race, time goes out the window. My analytical mind starts slipping away. I think about other things. I go through personal things in my life and then by mile 20 it is an emotional experience. Miles 20 to 26 are really fun. For some reason I get really happy. I do not know if it is



Craig Ewing competitively bikes in the Desert's Edge Triathlon Festival near Grand Junction, Colorado.

endorphins but the camaraderie, the cheering and the people encouraging each other to finish gets to me in a good way during a race,” he told.

Ewing only runs on a treadmill during a stress test at the doctor’s office. Otherwise, you can find him running on the west side of town. Some of his favorite places include Waterton Canyon, Bear Lake and Lookout Mountain. Today, Ewing runs about 30 miles a week for training purposes.

Being a trial lawyer, one knows the laws of a competitive occupation. Any case is like competitive race. “You have to size up your opponent. You have to find your strategy. Then, you have to out work them, out last them or do something to get the best result for your client. You cannot leave anything on the table,” Ewing highlighted.

“For example, I won CTLA’s Case of the Year Award for *Tappert v. Anthem Blue Cross Blue Shield*. I represented the family of an autistic child. When you work for a child with autism, it comes

down to whether or not he or she receives coverage for a certain kind of therapy – a therapy that can have a dramatic impact on his or her life. It is like mile 24. You really cannot let this child down after already going so far.”

Today because of orthopedic issues, Ewing’s doctor encouraged him to try other racing events. In the last three years, he started competing in triathlons. He has never failed to finish on the podium in his age group. In fact, Ewing just qualified for the USA Triathlon Age Group Nationals to be held in Milwaukee this August.

“USA Triathlon tracks your results and depending upon how well you do, it invites certain members to compete in the age group nationals. I really enjoy it. I feel like a kid racing the bike. My running buddies keep slipping off the radar. As people get older or retire, they either get on the bike or try other things. The swim started off as the toughest thing for me but now I have become a strong swimmer. I still hate the transitions...taking off the

wetsuit...putting on shoes...but I have fun,” he said.

“I spend the same time total per week training for a marathon as I do for the triathlon. Triathlons are harder. You have to have a schedule of when you bike, when you swim and when you run. You also combine workouts such as running with biking or biking with swimming on different days. Triathlon people are really Type A personalities – very disciplined,” he emphasized.

“I like to have my fitness at a level – where on any given Saturday or Sunday – I can run a marathon. I can always race three times as far as I train. If I can run nine miles...I can run a marathon...it may hurt...but I can do it,” he stated.

Out of all the marathons and races Ewing finished, his favorite souvenir t-shirt came from “Sufferfest” at Chatfield Reservoir. Similar to today’s mud runs, the course took runners through snow, swamps, the Platte River, and up some muddy banks in the middle of winter.

“Hopefully I can run the rest of my life. As I get older, my age group gets smaller. But, the camaraderie gets stronger with friends like Jim Romero, otherwise known as the Legend, who on his 70th birthday ran 70 miles. I have been competing with these runners for 30 years. We are a tight group of friends,” Ewing said.

“You have to get out there. The hardest thing about running is getting those sneakers on your feet and going out the door. I bet there has never been a time I did not feel like a happier person after I ran,” he reflected. ▲▲▲

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