



Photo: André Mingneau

First ultramarathon experience

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6 uur van Aalter 58.523 km

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It started fifteen years ago, when I bought my first pair of running shoes, with the intention of jogging twice a week. Laps around five kilometres to relax and build up a condition...

A few more years later we had a new family member, a dog, and I got introduced in the world of canicross. Canicross is jogging (usually on unpaved roads in nature) with the dog in a harness leash to the runner. This new type of running was pretty intense but fun to do. I soon started my first race.

Strange but secretly I was curious about this feeling... The unknown...

It was only two years ago that the bug for long-distance running bit me. I was already a loyal spectator for a couple of years of the In Flanders Fields Marathon, which starts at Newport towards Ypres. This beautiful marathon, in commemoration of the fallen in 14-18 passes my village at 32 km... A crucial point for many marathon runners... What I saw there, commanded respect for these athletes. A struggle with yourself, often in scorching heat... Some had to throw up, others stood still with cramps in the calves, and some where totally exhausted... Strange but secretly I was curious about this feeling... The unknown...

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My husband, a marathon runner himself, always said: “You’re much too young for the long distance! Not before your 30th birthday!” And that was it... Three years ago I rode the In Flanders Fields marathon as accompaniment for my husband and the year afterwards we entered the race together... Finally! Although we ran our own race. Without accompaniment and completely on my own I swiftly ran those 42,195 km in 4h15 and I had a super-feeling at the finish! What happens next was obvious. I will do this again!

The kilometers flew by! Before I knew it I ran a marathon!

Last year I improved my marathon time and finished the In Flanders Field marathon in 3h56. Again, I wasn't total loss at the finish! Then I realized that I could run further than those 42 km and I heard of a 6-hour race...

The choice was easily made and I entered the 6 uur van Aalter, recommended by friends. The idea: we'll see and we'll have a good pint afterwards whether it went good or bad! I entered the Nacht van West-Vlaanderen marathon again as training and after a good recovery, I started running kilometers swiftly, looking forward for the big day...

Sunday 17 July, it finally arrived... The big day!!! Miraculously I had no stress and thanks to the good support and guidance of my husband and my daughter, who provided me food and drinks, it went smooth. The kilometres flew by with my loyal friends and many fans along the road! Before I knew it I ran a marathon! Just two more hours and it's done. Keeping constant pace... Except for the last half hour... The body started to resist and I felt some pain... A had a slump but then I thought, come on Becci, just another half an hour and you're done, don't quit now!

You're running in 3th position in the women category! Podium position?

My husband yelled at me: "You're running in 3th position in the women category" Me? Podium position? That podium finish is mine! With a painful body but a euphoric feeling I ran this half an hour and ended my first 6-hour race with just a bit less than 59 km!!! On a spicy gently sloping race track of two kilometers, tossing and turning all the time... Unbelievable... But the feeling afterwards is AMAZING!!!

I did this, me myself and !!!! And I will do this again!!! The unity of the runners at an ultra is big. Everyone in trance, young and not so young competing against themselves, against the weather, the race track... Running together, without words and yet supporting each other... Wonderful...I love it....

Maybe that's the essence of life... Being together... In hard times... In great times... To the end... I'll try a 12-hour race once, or a 100 km or ... They definitely see me back on a 6-hour race and for the rest... Who knows... Where there is a road...

Maybe that's the essence of life...