

Manifesto  
**THRIVE**  
What and who you need to know



# RUN FOR YOUR LIFE

Ultra-trail-running champion  
Ryan Sandes takes  
life in his stride

## THRIVE PROFILE

**T**here comes a point in life when one has to make a choice. For Ryan Sandes, the decision was easy. 'Running ultra-distance races and being a party animal don't go well together,' explains the 34-year-old Capetonian. 'I tried to do both for a bit, but that didn't work. I had to choose, so I transitioned from party animal to spending more time in the mountains. I am an all-or-nothing type of person, so when I chose running, I put my all into it.' Sandes describes running as a way to express himself and have fun. All he has to do is put on his shoes and get on to the trails. But, longer races demand a balance between physical and mental preparation which can take a toll.

### ON YOUR MARKS...

'I normally have a bowl of ProNutro cereal and a cup of coffee, then I am ready to run!' Sandes says. 'I use Hammer Nutrition supplements while running and for recovery. A Red Bull also helps me to recover after a run or, if it is a short and intense run, I'll drink one before. With 5 km or 10 km to go, there's nothing like it to give you that final boost.'

Although Sandes tries to stick to a healthy diet, there's room to indulge every now and then – his favourite foods are bresaola pizza, steak and calamari. The same goes for his training routine, which varies depending on what he's training for. Usually, it involves up to 18 hours of running per week, five

hours of cross-training and five hours of gym. 'I mix it up, but 70% of the time, I train alone,' he says. 'I like running alone as I can push myself harder, and I like the fact that I have my own space when I run... I find [that] by having a training programme, I know what I am aiming towards and I can remain consistent.'

### GET SET...

When it comes to mental preparation, things get even more challenging. The ultra-running scene is so much bigger overseas in Europe and the US, so it is not uncommon to have 20 000 or 30 000 spectators at any one event. He has also experienced tough conditions in other locations around the world, such as dealing with 45°C heat when running in the Sahara Desert, swimming across caiman-infested rivers in the Amazon, and running at over 4 000m above sea level in Colorado. So, what goes through his mind during moments like these?

'A lot!' he laughs. 'I try to break the run down into smaller 5 to 10 km pieces and then use every section as a goal to achieve. This helps quite a bit because if you try to do a 70 km run without breaking the race up, it can be very difficult. When you are having a low or bad patch during a race and you have broken it down into sections, as you start a new section, it feels like you are starting fresh again. I tell myself to keep going and focus on the positives of the run.'

### GO!

There are many positives for Sandes, who describes trail running as 'a way of life.' Not only does it give him a sense of freedom to escape the negatives of reality, trail running also makes him feel at one with nature, be it in the Atacama Desert or the Alps. Indeed, while he feels a massive sense of achievement and elation from winning a race, it's the little moments leading up to a victory that he remembers most.

'Running through a country is the best way to experience a place first-hand as you have direct interaction with the people and nature,' he says. 'I always try to explore as much of the country as possible when visiting it. The world is such a big place, so I feel fortunate to have run on all seven continents. I have met so many awesome people and had some truly great experiences.'

Sandes has documented these experiences in *Trail Blazer*, his new autobiography. Its takeaway message is that our minds are more powerful than we realise and we can achieve a lot more than we think. Understanding that we are in control of our destinies, and that we only live once, helps us focus on the positives and make the most of what we have. 'Never give up,' he advises. 'The harder it is out there, the more rewarding it is when you finish your run. The most important thing is to have fun while out on the trails.' **Man**