

Transcript for Dean Karnazes | The Road to Sparta (Episode 623)

Full show notes found here: <https://theartofcharm.com/623/>

DEAN: That was kind of ancient Greece's faster Internet. They just dispatched these runners to go gather intelligence or disseminate information quicker than an enemy could get someone there on a horseback.

JORDAN: Welcome to The Art of Charm, I'm Jordan Harbinger. On this episode we're talking with my friend Dean Karnazes. He's run, among other things, 50 marathons in 50 states, in 50 days. The travel alone, without the running, would kill most of us I think. He's run over 100,000 miles in his life including 350 non-stop miles through a freaking desert. This guy is superhuman and we'll find out why. We'll also discuss why comfort is overrated, discover how to unlock some of our inner strength to achieve extraordinary results -- much like his, I would imagine. If you can label anything extraordinary, those are it -- and explore what happens to your body when you push it past any limits you previously thought possible. Now, let's hear from Dean Karnazes.

Did you run here, by the way?

DEAN: I didn't. I feel like a wimp. I had an event in Justin Herman plaza, yesterday, so I ran here. I live in Moran --

JORDAN: Yeah.

DEAN: So it's like a 20 mile run. But I've got a 50 mile race tomorrow morning. When you do -- before these big races, you kind of taper, as they call it, so you don't -- you know, you kind of try not to do too much. At least, most people, for a week before the race. Me, a day.

JORDAN: A day?

DEAN: A day.

JORDAN: Your body recovers in one day, essentially, when normal humans recover in a week or something like that? Maybe?

DEAN: Yeah, it recovers pretty quick. I mean, once I ran 50 marathons in 50 states in 50 days.

JORDAN: Oh, yeah.

DEAN: So --

JORDAN: I was wondering how that didn't kill you.

DEAN: Yeah, I mean, people say, "I run one, I couldn't even get out of bed the next morning. How did you do this, you know, 49 times in a row?"

JORDAN: Right.

DEAN: I don't know. I just got up and ran and it all worked out.

JORDAN: Yeah, it was 50 marathons, 50 states, 50 days. Just travelling to the 50 states would kill me, without the running. That would have been exhausting enough.

DEAN: The travel was worse than the running. I have to be honest. Especially in the western states because they're so spread out.

JORDAN: Yeah, spread out.

DEAN: And I was in a bus. So I'd run a marathon and get in a bus for eight hours, which is the worst thing ever. New England was easier because, you know, everything's a little tighter. The travel was horrible.

JORDAN: Yeah, that's unreal. And I would imagine you're supposed to, you know, stretch out or cool off or walk around after something like that, maybe. Instead of sitting.

DEAN: Well and people said, you know, "Did you take ice baths or massages?" and I didn't do any of that stuff because it takes time. And like, I finished a marathon, I know I've got to drive for eight hours and I know I want to sleep a little bit. So, if I get a massage, that's an hour less of sleep so, you make a tough decision.

JORDAN: I would imagine it's tough to sleep while you're getting a massage and you're really really sore from a marathon. You probably can't really relax and doze off.

DEAN: No, it doesn't work.

JORDAN: How did you start running because I know you did some high school track but that wasn't really the epiphany that got you to becoming ultra endurance hardcore Dean Karnazes as we know you today.

DEAN: Yeah, no, I ran competitively until I was a freshman in high school. So, I was on the cross country team in high school but hung up my running shoes at like, 15.

JORDAN: Because you didn't get along with the coach or something like that?

DEAN: Well I got along fabulously with the cross country coach but he retired. He was kind of like -- he was like a sage, you know? He was like this wise guy. We would just say, "How long should I run today?" And he would kind of say, "Well, how long do you feel like running?" and, "If you feel like running a long time, run a long time. If you don't, don't."

JORDAN: Nice.

DEAN: I could live with that.

JORDAN: Yeah.

DEAN: And then the -- when he retired, the track coach took over the cross country program and the track coach was very regimented. I mean he used to like, pound on his clipboard like, "Faster, faster," and, "Your splits are off," and this and that and we were just running -- he'd never have us run anywhere except around the track.

JORDAN: Oh, so you got bored.

DEAN: Like I hate this, yeah. And I don't need this. I don't need some guy screaming at me and then running around the track so I stopped running.

JORDAN: Jeez. And did you have any idea at that point, like, "Hey, I'm kind of naturally good at this. Maybe I should I pursue it," or was it just like, "Eh, it's a sport like any other sport."

DEAN: Yeah. You're a teenager, right? You've got a lot of things going on. Loved to surf, you know, I was chasing girls -- fifteen-year-old kid, you know, just as confused as any fifteen-year-old kid. Didn't know what I wanted so I just figured running is not part of my life anymore and so be it.

JORDAN: Yeah. You don't really miss it, right? Because you're like, "Hey look, I've got other stuff going on."

DEAN: Yeah you just -- you're in the moment and at this party that night and --

JORDAN: Yeah. And dot, dot, dot, you got married, got a corporate job. How did you go from, "Hey look," I don't know, selling insurance or whatever it was. You know, corporate stuff, to, "Actually, I'm going to run hundreds of miles."

DEAN: Yeah so, I went through college, you know, went through graduate school, got an MBA, had a cush corporate job as you said. You know, with all the perks of a good job. I mean 401K matching program, you know, healthcare, stock options, company car, and I hated my life. Like, I didn't like being a

corporate guy. Just, it didn't fit me. And on the night of my 30th birthday I was in a bar, in a nightclub here in San Francisco, in the Marina district --

JORDAN: Shady.

DEAN: Yeah, yeah. Shady. Yeah, real shady.

JORDAN: Scandalous.

DEAN: Chestnut Street, yeah like, horrible area. But, drinking with my buddies at midnight I said, "I'm leaving," and they said you know, "Where are you going to go?" and I said, "I'm going to run 30 miles right now to celebrate my 30th birthday." And they looked at me and they said you know, "You're not a runner."

JORDAN: Yeah.

DEAN: "You're drunk." And I'm like, "I am drunk but I'm still going to do it." So I walked out of the night club -- I walked out of the bar in the Marina and decided I was going to run to Half Moon Bay that night.

JORDAN: Yeah, that's a decent distance. Sure.

DEAN: Thirty miles, yeah.

JORDAN: You didn't think, "Maybe I should plan how to get home as well?"

DEAN: No. I was wasted.

JORDAN: Yeah.

DEAN: Yeah I was properly wasted. And I didn't even own running gear. So I mean, I literally had these boxer shorts on -- these silk boxers, and I took off my pants and just ran in these silk boxers.

JORDAN: Where did you leave your clothes?

DEAN: I just threw it in the alleyway, yeah.

JORDAN: So you just threw them out.

DEAN: It's like, "I don't want this life." It was more than just leaving the bar, it was like --

JORDAN: Yeah.

DEAN: "I don't want this life anymore."

JORDAN: This is like leaving a cocoon or something like that.

DEAN: Yeah.

JORDAN: You shed your skin and --

DEAN: Peel away and become something different, yeah.

JORDAN: Did you know at that time, "I've got to make a change," or was it just like, "I'm drunk and I don't want to be sitting here anymore and I'm really dissatisfied with where I'm at?"

DEAN: I think it was -- the drunkenness definitely had something to do with it.

JORDAN: Sure.

DEAN: You know this had been percolating for a while, I didn't just that night say, "Oh, God, I hate my life." You know, for the past three or four years, I thought, "You know here I've got this great job, you know I've got a good degree. I'm supposed to be happy right? I'm supposed to be content. I've got a fat paycheck."

JORDAN: You did everything right.

DEAN: And it just wasn't doing it for me. I wasn't satisfied internally so I thought, "Something's wrong with this formula." I wasn't sure what it was but I figured, "Mix it up."

JORDAN: Yeah, mix it up.

DEAN: "Do something really intense," because I hadn't had an intensity in my life. You know, I mean, what's intense about a corporate job? It's kind of cush. I wanted hardship. I wanted struggle and pain and running 30 miles brought me these things.

JORDAN: When was the last time you had run before the 30 mile run?

DEAN: it had been 15 years since -- after I'd quit running in high school, I'd literally flung my shoes up into a tree, and that was it. Running was out of my life. The night of my 30th birthday it became part of my life again.

JORDAN: You're like, "I can definitely make it 30 miles," or were you thinking, "I might have to call my wife at some point during this jog?"

DEAN: I was drunk.

JORDAN: Yeah, you weren't thinking that far ahead.

DEAN: I wasn't thinking anything.

JORDAN: Yeah, that's true.

DEAN: Well I sobered up about half way through -- about, you know, mile 15 I would say -- somewhere around Daly City, and I thought, "What the hell am I doing?"

JORDAN: Yeah.

DEAN: "This is ridiculous." But, you know, this is before cell phones. So I'm out there in the middle of the night, you know, just running

by myself. What am I going to do? So I figured, "**** it, just keep going."

JORDAN: Yeah, you didn't really have a choice at that point."

DEAN Yeah, yeah.

JORDAN: Although then when you got to Half Moon Bay -- I know this is a detail that is completely irrelevant but I'm so curious.

DEAN: No, so I got there, the sun was rising the next morning and there's a 7-Eleven. It's -- God, that 7-Eleven is still there. It's on the corner of 92 and Highway 1 and there's a payphone out in front, this skanky payphone --

JORDAN: Right.

DEAN: The payphone is still there and I'm like, "Who uses pay phones?" And this is 25 years later.

JORDAN: Yeah. Drunk Joggers in their underwear.

DEAN: Yeah, but I mean, still. Twenty-five years later, to this day, that payphone is still there. So I called my wife and -- you know I was married at the time. Happily married. And she said, "I'm really worried. You've never not come home."

JORDAN: Yeah.

DEAN: "Is everything okay?" and I said, "Everything's fine but I do need a ride home." And she said, "That's fine. No questions asked. I'm come get you. Where are you at?" And I said, "Well I'm out in front of 7-Eleven," and she said, "Well the 7-Eleven on Geary street?"

JORDAN: Yeah.

DEAN: And I'm like, "No, the 7-Eleven in Half Moon Bay." And she's like, "What?" you know, "How did you get there?"

JORDAN: Yeah.

DEAN: And I said, "Well I ran," and she said, "You ran from where?" and I said, "I walked out of the bar last night and ran here."

JORDAN: Did she believe you at that point? I mean I feel like she would have gone, "Okay, tell me what really happened."

DEAN: She just said, you know, "No questions asked. You don't sound very stable," she said, "but I'll be right down."

JORDAN: Wow.

DEAN: So, yeah, she didn't -- yeah.

JORDAN: And then, how did you kind of explain to her -- is that what started right then or did you kind of go back to work and go, "Hey the time I did that really whimsical running thing, that was good move. I need to look into this," or was it kind of an immediate realization?

DEAN: It was an immediate realization that something had to change. But, again, I took baby steps. I was concerned. You know, and my wife was actually pregnant at that time. I'm thinking, you know, "I've got a stable paycheck, I've got health care," you know, "I've got all these things coming in," --

JORDAN: Right.

DEAN: "You've got to keep this stuff." So it lasted for a few years until I made the decision. I'll never forget walking into my kitchen one morning, and you know, when we sit down with my wife and have this conversation with her. I'm going to walk away from all the things I just explained I had and become a runner.

JORDAN: Yeah.

DEAN: You know, an obscure runner, a guy who runs hundreds of miles. And, you know, she looked at me and she said, "I wonder what took you so long." So --

JORDAN: Really?

DEAN: Yeah. Very supportive wife.

JORDAN: She already knew that you were unhappy in your corporate job.

DEAN: I think she could tell. Yeah, she could tell. I never really articulated. I was freaking freaking out.

JORDAN: Yeah.

DEAN: Like, how am I going to get by without a paycheck? But she was very supportive.

JORDAN: Yeah. The plan was just, "I'm going to start running all the time." Were you getting some sort of benefit it? Clearing your head or were you thinking about things when you were running or were you not thinking about certain things when you were running? You know, what was the benefit other than just getting exercise?

DEAN: Kind of escapism if you will. I just felt complete when I was running. I never felt like I was a whole person until I was like, out running. Especially running long distances. It's hard to describe to a non-runner.

JORDAN: Yeah.

DEAN: Running 100 miles puts you somewhere else. It takes you out of the everyday normal life. To me, that sort of rawness, that kind of primordial experience, like, that was when I felt most alive. I thought, "There's a magic there but the magic has got to pay the bills too."

JORDAN: Sure.

DEAN: I mean, this is a practicality of, "How do you feed your family now?"

JORDAN: Yeah.

DEAN: So I was kind of concerned about that as well. Like, you know, "How are you going to make a living doing this? I mean even if you win this race, you know, you get a belt buckle."

JORDAN: Yeah.

DEAN: That's what you get, I mean --

JORDAN: Yeah, so it seems like it would be really tough to rationalize those things although at the time maybe the more urgent concern was not driving yourself crazy with the day to day corporate job, the day to day life because, like you said, escapism and things like that. And I've read in some of your work that you kind of lament that there's not struggle these days, we're too comfortable, especially physically and things like that. Why do you think the struggle is so important for humans?

DEAN: Yeah, I think there's something elemental about overcoming struggle. I think that we aspired for this state of comfort, right? Especially in western culture. We thought in the absence of pain we'd be happy. And we're so comfortable, we're miserable, I think -- a lot of us. I mean, I think that -- you know, look at the rise of antidepressant use, look at the rise of opioid abuse. I mean, we think about pain in this culture of ours and we think, "You can't have pain," like, "Alleviate pain immediately. Take this drug," you know, "Go to this clinician or whatever. Have this surgery. You don't want pain," and I think that pain actually is something that is very elemental to the human being, if you will.

We need a certain amount of struggle, I believe, and we need to face this sort of challenge to feel alive. Otherwise, we live kind

of a compromised life. I mean, I think that -- you know, when I travel a lot, I see some people and I just think, you know, "These poor people, they don't really have a life." I mean, they live in air conditioned house and then they get in an air conditioned car, they go on an elevator up to their air-conditioned office. You know their -- physically, their bodies are kind of deteriorating. This is a marginalized existence.

JORDAN: You've mentioned actually, that there's magic in the misery. Did you find that you got almost addicted to that sort of feeling of pushing yourself one rung higher or one mile further? Or was it something that you just kind of started and never stopped doing? Because I feel like the distances that we're talking about -- and we'll get into that in a second -- I would imagine you had to train a while to be able to that, even if you're a genetic mutant or you have imperviousness to certain types of pain, your body still needs to acclimate to running through a desert for 150 miles at some level.

DEAN: Well I think -- you know, the things that I do are quantifiable, right? The challenges I take on are measurable, albeit intense. I mean when you start a race like the Badwater Ultra Marathon, which is 135 mile continuous foot race across death valley in the middle of summer, it's intense. But you know, "Wow I just did that. I completed that race. What's more intense?"

JORDAN: Yeah.

DEAN: "You know, what's a further distance in more extreme conditions?" So you can always, never stop exploring. Like, take on a new challenge -- and, I've done almost everything. I mean, I've run a marathon in the South Pole, I've run across Death Valley, you know the Sahara, I've run across America. You know, I've been on all seven continents twice. So I'm constantly seeking these new challenges. I mean, to me that's kind of the essence of what I do. I mean, I love to run and I want to be a very prolific runner in that regard. I mean, some runners, like a marathoner, a lead marathoner, you know they look at the time on their watch for running a marathon. You know and their

world standings. What I look at is, "How far can I go? What new challenge can I take on and accomplish?"

JORDAN: Do you find that -- actually, what would you do if you couldn't run? Just hypothetically, right? Knock on wood you don't have to worry about that but what would you do if say, you've -- I don't know, one of your knees or something like that or -- something happened to one of your legs and you just couldn't run? Would you pick up a different kind of endurance hobby? Or, I don't even know if hobby is even the right word at the level that we're talking about.

DEAN: People ask me that question and I don't know how to answer it because I don't know what I'd do to be honest.

JORDAN: Yeah.

DEAN: It's a scary thought. Most of the things I do in my life are physical. You know, I've never been a very cerebral guy, so I think it would have to be some sort of physical challenge. Although, you know, I like to write. I like the pursuit of knowledge. But to me, you know, really feeling alive is a physical pursuit.

JORDAN: You might not get the same effect if you just sat down with a typewriter, Googled the Sahara, and started [00:13:59] out a novel.

DEAN: No.

JORDAN: It would definitely still be hot though, I can promise you that. You sleep, what, four hours a day or something like that? Is that the usual? I know you don't sleep that much.

DEAN: Last night was about three but --

JORDAN: And you feel totally fine after that, generally?

DEAN: Yeah I do, I mean, when I sit for too long, I start to bonk, if you will. I hit the wall. That's my wall.

JORDAN: What is it? You get tired?

DEAN: Just listless.

JORDAN: Mm-hmm.

DEAN: You know, because I do everything standing up. My whole life is based around movement. So, my office is set up at standing level, which it has been for about 15 years. I've got a pullup bar, a situp mat in my office so I'm doing cycles of HIIT training -- high intensity interval training -- continuously throughout the course of the day. I'm constantly moving. I mean even when I travel, which I travel a lot now. The first thing I do when I get to a hotel room is a round of burpees, some situps, and I look for a fingerhold to do pullups --

JORDAN: Oh, wow.

DEAN: You know or a shower curtain. I also take out the ironing board and that's my stand up desk when I'm in a hotel room, so --

JORDAN: Oh, interesting.

DEAN: Yeah, when I sit down that's the only time I feel --

JORDAN: And were you like that as a kid? Because you must have driven your teachers somewhat crazy, I would imagine.

DEAN: You know it's funny, I guess I was constantly moving as a kid and I never really realized it until my parents had some of that -- you know how you can convert old recordings, film recordings, into like a DVD?

JORDAN: Sure, yeah.

DEAN: My wife and I were watching these films of me at the beach when I was a little boy, and my brother was just kind of sitting there, you know watching things and --

JORDAN: Mm-hmm.

DEAN: My wife was like, "You never stop. Like, the whole one hour thing, you were just moving the whole time. Everyone else is sitting on their beach towels and you're like running, moving back and forth." So I guess, yeah, that's kind of how I related to the world is through movement.

JORDAN: And you run every single day generally? Unless you're doing the tapering for a race?

DEAN: I do run every single day. Yeah, I mean even today -- I was saying, I have a 50 mile run tomorrow morning. I'll still run maybe 2 or 3 miles today, just to kind of loosen up.

JORDAN: How far do you run every day then, normally? I assume this varies depending on what you're training for?

DEAN: Yeah, so typically runners talk about a training week like, "How many miles do you cover in a week?" Because of my travel, my range is 60 miles to sometimes I'm running over 200 miles in a given week. There's never really a set day where I'm running, you know -- unless I've got a training block where I'm really training for a specific event, and then I'm running typically 15 to 20 miles a day with maybe some 30 or 40 mile runs on the weekends, maybe longer

JORDAN: It's so much. Even, I'm sure for runners out there. It must seem like overkill, right? All this running and I'm wondering if -- does it take you longer to feel the effect of the endorphins and stuff like that? Like, for me, if I run a mile, I will feel that runner's high. I will get that.

DEAN: So you feel it?

JORDAN: I feel it.

DEAN: Yeah, yeah.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

JORDAN: The furthest I've ever run was 10k and it was -- it took me like an hour or whatever, which is, I know -- sounds laughable for --

DEAN: It's all right.

JORDAN: And I was still in the first third or whatever of the people running this race.

DEAN: Yeah.

JORDAN: I felt pretty awesome about that and I definitely felt that high and everything, of course, was tight and locked up and I couldn't, like you said, get out of bed the next day. Does it take longer for you to feel that? Like if you ran six miles, would you get even a buzz from that or does it kick in at mile number 22?

DEAN: It depends on the pace. So if I run six miles hard, I can feel pretty good about it. Other times it takes longer than that, yeah. And I'll tell you what, the runner's high is kind of -- corresponds with the distance. So the further you go, the bigger the high.

JORDAN: I would imagine that has to peak at some point and just turn into pure punishment though, for your body, right? I mean especially during 150 mile ultras through a desert.

DEAN: Yeah, no I mean there are peaks and troughs. I mean, you probably felt that even when you were running a 10k, I mean --

JORDAN: Yeah.

DEAN: -- I imagine there were points where you were like, "Oh, God this sucks. I can't take another step."

JORDAN: Usually at hills, yeah.

DEAN: Yeah. So when you run these long distances, you know, you have these incredible highs where you feel like, "God I'm Hercules, I could run around the world," and then maybe not even a half mile later, you'll feel like, "God I can't take another step. I've got 50 miles left to go, I can't even get from here to the wall, you know, how am I going to keep going?"

JORDAN: Yeah.

DEAN: So those intense mood swings and feelings exacerbate the further you go.

JORDAN: Do you record the miles? Like, have you ever thought, "How miles have I run in my whole life?"

DEAN: People ask me that and, you know, kind of back of napkin, it's been over 100,000 I would say. But there are people that keep track of how many miles they've run. I've never kept a hard track.

JORDAN: Now you have wearables, I assume, that do this stuff.

DEAN: Now it's a lot easier, yeah.

JORDAN: But of course, if you just went for a casual jog in 1997 --

DEAN: Everything is so much different now.

JORDAN: Lost to time. It does sound a little bit like Forrest Gump running across the USA. I assume people have said that to you a million times where, you'd mentioned you'd ran across the USA. When that movie came out, I would imagine everybody was like, "Oh, you're Forrest Gump now. You're running across the states." He just felt like running. That was his answer. Is it the same for you?

DEAN: Stupid is as stupid does. The one thing with Forrest Gump, which is, I guess kind of endearing -- you know, I was talking to

the editor in chief of Runner's World, which is like the most prominent running magazine --

JORDAN: Sure.

DEAN: -- in the world. And he was saying, "You know, there's few real recognizable brands in running." I mean, you think about basketball, you know, you could rattle off a handful of guys that come to mind. Golf, the same thing. Tennis -- with running, you know, I say running, name some runners. What would you say?

JORDAN: Is it Meb Keflezighi or something like that?

DEAN: Yeah, exactly.

JORDAN: I had to pick the one where the name is impossible to pronounce and then, obviously you because you're sitting in front of me and I heard about you before.

DEAN: Forrest Gump, right? I mean --

JORDAN: Yeah, Forrest Gump. Florence Joyner, is that right?

DEAN: Yeah, she -- Jackie Joyner, right? Yeah.

JORDAN: Jackie Joyner. Yeah.

DEAN: But I mean the biggest brand in running is Forrest Gump which is kind of bizarre.

JORDAN: Yeah, it's a bummer but at least it's a positive movie. For sure.

DEAN: Yeah.

JORDAN: Yeah, I would imagine you can't really avoid that branding. Especially with the super ultra long distance type of stuff.

DEAN: I've never grown a beard. I know a lot of ultra runners that have big beards and I thought, "That's going too far."

JORDAN: Too far, yeah.

DEAN: Yeah.

JORDAN: Rich Roll, that's another one.

DEAN: Yeah, Rick Roll.

JORDAN: Yeah.

DEAN: Yeah.

JORDAN: How long is the longest that you've run in one stretch? Because I've been reading sort of varied accounts of this online. Probably you're beating your own record or something.

DEAN: Well, I mean, I ran 350 miles. Nonstop is defined as not ever resting kind of thing. I mean, I changed my clothes a couple times. It started to rain when I was doing this so I changed my clothes. You know, I had to go big potty --

JORDAN: Yeah, I was --

DEAN: -- number two.

JORDAN: -- that was in here. I was like --

DEAN: Yeah.

JORDAN: -- "I've got to figure this out. How does work?" Do they say, "All right, you can go number two but it's got to be under seven minutes or it counts as a rest?"

DEAN: Well, you know, there's no real official body that sanctions, kind of, these long runs like that. I mean, I have done timed treadmill runs for Guinness and they have specific rules. I mean, it's how many miles you cover in a given amount of time. Like I've done a 24 and a 48 hour treadmill run --

JORDAN: Oh, wow.

DEAN: -- and the Guinness guy is literally standing behind you, watching you. "You can do whatever you want, he said, "it's just however many miles you clock in 24 hours. If you want to go take a nap, you can take a nap. If you want to go to the bathroom, you can go to the bathroom. But, you know, whoever gets the furthest in 24 hours wins." So there's kind of pressure, you know, to minimize the amount of downtime.

JORDAN: Sure. So I would imagine that you didn't sleep for those 48 hours.

DEAN: No, I didn't. Yeah.

JORDAN: Wow. Three hundred and fifty miles, continuously, non stop without resting. That means you didn't sleep.

DEAN: You know it was 81 hours. So that was, you know, three nights without sleep, yeah.

JORDAN: So, okay. All right, so you're already answered big potty. Little potty I assume is just a matter of what, running sideways for a few steps or something like that, or --

DEAN: Have you seen the video? I have a training video.

JORDAN: I have not but I'm going to have to look that up now.

DEAN: I don't have a training video, that's too weird.

JORDAN: That would have been interesting. I was like, "Well we'll put it in the show notes. I'll have my producer look that up."

DEAN: We could shoot a video. People ask me all the time about it. And, you do this modified waddle, kind of like a penguin.

JORDAN: Yeah.

DEAN: You know, you just kind of turn sideways and you try not to get any on your shoes.

JORDAN: I was going to say, you could end up with wet shoes.

DEAN: No, I'm an expert. Never get my shoes wet at all.

JORDAN: Do you ever run to the point of then shut down? Because it seems like -- you said 81 hours? Okay, so if I'm running for, let's be realistic, I'm not going to make it even five percent of the way doing that. Not even close. But I would, at some point, start to -- my body would shut down and we'll get to the biology of why you're able to do this in a little bit. But, you've still got to sleep, right? I mean your brain just will still slow down, even if your muscles aren't locked up from lactics.

DEAN: A couple times this has happened to me. This is kind of bizarre, but as I've been running, I've woken up in the middle of the road and thought --

JORDAN: While running or just like face down in the middle of the --

DEAN: Yeah, literally be running and all of a sudden waking up and thinking, "Oh, I'm running in the middle of the road. Why the hell am I doing this? Like, you're going to get run over. You know better than that." So kind of meandering back over to the side and then, again, waking up in the middle of the road and you're like, "Hold on I was on the shoulder a second ago. Now I'm in the middle of the road," and realizing, "Oh, my God, I'm falling asleep as I'm running," and -- basically sleep running.

JORDAN: Wow.

DEAN: So your body is just willing itself to keep going I guess, and you're asleep. But I think even the more bizarre element is, after this kind of comatose running or sleep running, when you wake up you're refreshed. It's as though your body just -- it has to reboot.

JORDAN: Mm-hmm.

DEAN: And it reboots and then you're good. You had your little cat nap, you just feel like, "Wow I'm renewed. Okay that was good, I got a little sleep."

JORDAN: Sounds almost like your brain just needs to shut down for a second and then upload something or whatever is going on there.

DEAN: Have you ever heard of this before? I wonder where like, programmers -- I mean, there's other guys that like, obviously spend many days without sleeping.

JORDAN: I mean I definitely have pulled all nighters and things like that, for various reasons. Some are fun and -- actually most of them are fun but a lot of them aren't, you know. Especially back in the college days. You know I used to be an attorney and I remember falling asleep upright at a keyboard but I certainly didn't wake up and go, "Oh, good I typed that motion while I was asleep." That never happened.

DEAN: That kid's going to get indicted.

JORDAN: Right, yeah. That never happened. It usually just -- it was kind of like, in the middle of a sentence and then it says "Asdfghjklmn space colon," and that's it.

DEAN: Yeah, no I remember like cramming for an all nighter in college and you kind of wake up with your head in your book, right?

JORDAN: Yeah.

DEAN: Like, "Oh, I'm falling asleep." Same sort of thing when you're running. You just kind of wake up and, "Oh, I'm running and I'm asleep."

JORDAN: At some point you're just looking at the lines on the road. What is your brain doing while you're running?

DEAN: It's doing all the things your brain was doing when you were typing that motion and falling asleep. It's just kind of like, narrowing down and all of a sudden, yeah.

JORDAN: Not much is the answer.

DEAN: Yeah exactly. Not much. You're kind of on autopilot right? Yeah, and that's -- with running I guess it's a little bit easier because you're not typing on a keyboard, right?

JORDAN: Right.

DEAN: You're just doing that same repetitive foot strike and all of a sudden you're asleep.

JORDAN: I'm just trying to put myself in the position of thinking -- you know when I close my eyes I would imagine you start to lose your balance and things like that too. But maybe not after the amount of training that you've done. Maybe you don't do that.

DEAN: That was the most bizarre thing that I've thought of. When I actually had, you know, conscious thought return, I wondered, "Why didn't I fall over?"

JORDAN: Yeah.

DEAN: Like, "Why am I still running and upright?"

JORDAN: Yeah.

DEAN: But I did some research into it and, you know, there are accounts of -- especially people in military conflicts that are escaping from enemy that know they're being pursued, where they've woken up on this forced march. So they're marching away, trying to get away from someone's that's going to, you know, potentially kill them or capture them. And they've fallen asleep and kept walking. Same sort of thing.

JORDAN: Jeez that's unbelievable. So you're kind of accessing a different part of -- maybe the human psyche. Survival mode that's not readily available to everybody.

DEAN: Well it's funny I had a guy -- I wrote about this in a blog I think and a guy contacted me. He said, you know, "I read your account of what happened. You weren't actually asleep, you were in this transcendental state, in a meditative state. I could work with you on this." And I'm like, "Okay are we in the twilight zone? Like who is this guy?"

JORDAN: Yeah.

DEAN: He said, "No, no. I was actually the trainer for Bruce Lee."

JORDAN: Oh, cool.

DEAN: "And I used to have him go into these states and I could do the same thing for you and you could potentially fall asleep on the run and just keep going and run forever." And I thought, "I'm not returning this guy's email."

JORDAN: Yeah, I don't know about that.

DEAN: That is too weird. Yeah, I'm not going to --

JORDAN: But it would be pretty interesting to see if there is something to it. Although, you kind of already do run forever, so I don't know. Is the limiting factor then, your need for sleep? Because obviously your muscles are not giving out after 350 miles. What was the final thing where you're like, "You know what? I'm just going to stop now. This is a nice round number. I'm going to cut out here." What's the bottleneck or whatever?

DEAN: I think it was sleep but I think it was a culmination of things. I mean I think it was, one, getting that many calories in your system -- like going to homeostasis where you're getting in enough calories to sustain you but not too many calories that you're bloated, is a fine line. Because your GI starts to shut

down, you know, the more exhausted you become. So, getting calories was one factor. Heat regulation was another factor. I'll never forget, I was running and it was at night. You know, and my crew's in, you know, puffy North Face jackets and I'm in just shorts, shirtless, and they're saying, "Aren't you freezing? It's so cold out." My body -- it just generates so much heat. So I think that heat dissipation is a big factor. Obviously, you know, we talked about sleep being a factor.

JORDAN: Yeah.

DEAN: The muscle soreness is interesting because, you're right, you have these points where you think, "This is so painful. I can't keep going," but once you push through it, you can kind of access this -- like this second and third and fourth and fifth and sixth gear. So I'm not convinced that the muscle thing is a limiting factor.

JORDAN: Just to be clear for everyone, running still hurts you like it hurts everyone else. You're just pushing through those different walls.

DEAN: Well, I mean, how do you quantify pain? I mean --

JORDAN: Well yeah, it's hard to compare. I mean, I would like to think that it's obviously hurting me more to run six miles than it's hurting you to run six miles, because of the amount that you're able to do it. And obviously there's a biological difference. However, you still have to pushing through certain levels -- certain thresholds of pain and things like that. Because there are other ultra endurance athletes and there might even be other people who have the same lactic setup that you have -- and I'm curious about that as well -- but mental toughness has to, at some level, be one of the factors that decides who wins those races. Especially for people who aren't you and maybe just have normal human biology. Those people, that might be decided almost entirely on mental toughness. Is that accurate at all?

DEAN: Yeah, no I think you're absolutely right. But how do you quantify the amount of pain I'm feeling versus someone who's running next to me --

JORDAN: Yeah.

DEAN: -- for a hundred miles. "Is this guy really in as much pain?" like, "My pain level is at 75. Is his pain level at 75 or his pain level at 200?" You know, "His pain is so much higher than mine," or just, "Am I better do deal with the same level of pain as he is? You know pain is in the neurons of the perceptor, right? I mean it's, your pain and my pain might be something that limits you and something I think, "Well, you know, it's just pain. I can get over that."

JORDAN: Right or maybe even motivates you at some point.

DEAN: Yeah.

JORDAN: How many calories do you burn on an average day that you're running an average amount? Or is that just a completely wild card kind of thing?

DEAN: No, I mean -- so when I ran 50 marathons in all 50 states in 50 days, I ate about 10,000 calories a day.

JORDAN: And how are you consuming these? Are they gels and things like that are sort of, synthesized for runners?

DEAN: It was a mixture of -- yeah, some athletic food. Nut butters. I found that nut butters work really well for me, more so than gels. Like too many gels -- it's, you know -- it's very sugary.

JORDAN: Yeah.

DEAN: So, cashew nut butter. You know, there's little packets of nut butter and they're high in calories, they're calorically dense and they seem to sit pretty well.

JORDAN: I heard that you ordered a pizza once while you were ordered. Is that true?

DEAN: I'll never live that story down. Yeah, I wrote about this in my first book. I was running a 200 mile, 12 person relay race. But I don't have 11 friends, so I was just running this 200 mile race by myself.

JORDAN: Right, it's because you didn't have 11 friends, sure.

DEAN: So I was out in the middle of nowhere in the middle of the night, like West Marin, you know, out by Nicasio, I don't know if you know that area. So it's kind of this rural area. You know, there's no one out there, there's no stores out there and I was starving. I thought, "This is bad. I've got 30 miles to go before I'm going to come upon any source of food. What do I do?" I had a credit card and a phone -- a cell phone. It was actually one of those Motorola flip phones, it was back in the day.

JORDAN: Sure, yeah.

DEAN: So, I ordered a pizza and just had them deliver it to me out on the roadside. I mean it just seemed like the logical thing to do. Like, "I'm hungry, I need food, how do I do this?"

JORDAN: Yeah. I mean it does make perfect sense but I'm trying to envision the phone call where you're kind of breathing into the cell phone and the guy's like, "Hello Dominos," right, or whatever. "Yeah, I'm running along Highway 5," whatever, "Can I get a pizza delivered?" Do you remember what was on it? I would assume this is the kind of pizza you don't forget.

DEAN: Oh, I -- yeah. No, no. And this is very specific, for anyone that ones to try this. You get the Hawaiian style.

JORDAN: Hawaiian style, okay.

DEAN: So like, pepperoni is too spicy. You've got to do Hawaiian style, you know, the ham and the pineapple. And you get a thin crust

and you ask them not to slice it. Because when they deliver it -- I mean, what do you do with the pizza when it's delivered?

JORDAN: Right.

DEAN: You've got to get it out of the box, right? Just roll it into this big Italian log. You know, it's not sliced, and you just mow as you run.

JORDAN: Wow, so you basically just rolled this big pizza into -- yeah, like a burrito type thing. Hammered down --

DEAN: A burrito and ate as I ran.

JORDAN: Jeez.

DEAN: Yeah.

JORDAN: And they didn't think you were kidding, like, "No I'm really running. I'm going to eat it while I run."

DEAN: It took some convincing.

JORDAN: Sure.

DEAN: Because they said, "What's your street address?" and I'm like, "Well, I'm not actually at a street address." It's a roaming street address. You know, they're used to delivering to houses.

JORDAN: Yeah. I would imagine they kind of have to legally do that. I don't even know -- I'm imagining this guy pulling up alongside you, you're handing the card through the car window, and he opens up the hot bag and gives you the box.

DEAN: I mean that was kind of what happened. I mean, he pulled up alongside me. I mean, I'm in the middle of nowhere running, you know, with a headlamp on.

JORDAN: Sure.

DEAN: There's no cars out there. It's, you know 11 o'clock at night. He pulled up alongside me and just -- you know, we had a conversation and he handed this thing out the window to me, I gave him my credit card, you know --

JORDAN: That's so ridiculous. So you ate it while running. You ever try anything else like maybe some Chinese food or anything like that?

DEAN: I tried Chinese. I got the Kung Pao tofu and I just drank it out of the box. Oh, God.

JORDAN: It sounds less appealing than the pizza.

DEAN: It was, you know, the soy sauce is like electrolytes so the salt was good but the only downside with Chinese -- I was hungry an hour later.

JORDAN: Yeah well that's --

DEAN: Cha-ching.

JORDAN: That's true for everyone. You're running these crazy long races, is there a van following you? I mean, this seems like the kind of sport that involved a team that gets no credit a lot of the time and the person up front, you know the guy running the race gets the credit. You have to have people behind you, right? Coaches and trainers and things like that, or --

DEAN: It's actually my mom and dad because ---

JORDAN: Really?

DEAN: -- they're the only ones that'll do it. Yeah, depending on the actual race I'm doing and whether it's a competitive race in -- you know, in a tough environment, like Death Valley. My crew can vary from, you know kind of, my peers that know how to crew for an ultra distance runner --

JORDAN: Mm-hmm.

DEAN: -- many who are trained in either coaching or training or they're actually MDs. Other times it's just -- it's my family. You just have an adventure, yeah.

JORDAN: How do you run a team where it's kind of a solo sport but really there's a team involved? I mean it seems like that would be kind of a unique skillset to have.

DEAN: Well, you know, the one thing I am kind of demanding in this regard is that, anyone on my team has got to run with me. So, if you're going to be on my team --

JORDAN: Really?

DEAN: -- there's going to be fitness involved, yeah. That tends to draw like minded people. I mean, you don't have to be an elite ultramarathoner. Even if you run a 10k. If you're going to be on my crew -- I did a run across America, 75 days from L.A. to New York City, 40 to 50 miles a day, for 75 continuous days.

JORDAN: Oh, man.

DEAN: Some of the people that were on my crew were not runners and I said, "By the end of this thing, you're going to be a runner," and every day they'd come out and run. Maybe two or three miles and then three or four miles and -- I'll never forget one guy, at the end, was actually running a marathon. Like, "Through New Jersey --

JORDAN: Oh, wow.

DEAN: -- I'm going to run 26.2 miles with you." And he ran a marathon and he wasn't a runner at the start of the journey, you know, 60 days earlier.

JORDAN: That's incredible. I trained for a long time to be able to run that 10k. But I also didn't have to keep up with anybody else. That might bump up the training schedule a little bit.

DEAN: All right, next time I run across America I'm calling you.

JORDAN: Oh, God. Yeah, I mean, I'll drive the van. No problem. It seems like you have to be able to unlock some strength that you probably didn't know was there. Is that the case or were you always super athletic? Because I know ran when you were younger but it seems like you're unlocking something that, either most people don't have or certainly that you didn't necessarily know that you had.

DEAN: Because I do these things, it's hard for me to say whether that's the case or not. I mean, people say, "No matter what I did -- you know, no matter how hard I train I could never do what you do." And maybe it's just the case that I love to run. That's kind of my passion in life. It still is. Ever since, you know, I was a kid. And, you know, the 15 year hiatus kind of made me reinforce the fact that I love to run. I've always just been passionate about running and it just kind of a -- it's a weird passion to have, right? I mean, how many people aspire just to run just for the pure joy sometimes of running? I love to run and I've devoted my life to running so it's everything I do and maybe that allows me to go further than most people could.

JORDAN: Do you think everybody has something like that, that they just haven't found? Do you have any theories about that?

DEAN: We're having this conversation -- you know, a lot what I'm saying now is almost cliché these days. Like, you know --

JORDAN: Sure.

DEAN: -- "Follow your heart. Find your passion." Like, millennials kind of get it. I think younger generations come along and said, "You know, this corporate gig is not for me." Twenty five years ago

when I did this, it was kind of novel. Like, no one doesn't, you know like, work for the man their whole life.

JORDAN: Yeah.

DEAN: Yeah. I think now it's more mainstream and I think that hopefully I've inspired a couple people to kind of follow their own passions and do what they want to do versus, you know, living a scripted life.

JORDAN: I can only imagine some of the weird stuff that you've seen while running across the states.

DEAN: When I was running across America, I'll never forget, I was on a radio show. They're interviewing me as I'm running and the host was very serious. And I got attacked by a dog --

JORDAN: During the interview?

DEAN: During the -- I'm running. So he's in a studio somewhere like this, you know, interviewing me.

JORDAN: Oh, it was a phone in --

DEAN: I'm on my cell phone --

JORDAN: Oh, wow.

DEAN: -- running along and this dog is attacking me and I'm like, trying to hit this dog away and this guy's asking me some serious, you know, cerebral question. And he finally said, "What is that noise in the background?" and I said, "I'm getting attacked right now by a dog."

JORDAN: How weird is that? Because you're just -- a lot of times, you're just running alone through the countrysides.

DEAN: Yeah I was out there and some dog in a rural countryside, you know, road, just came chasing me down.

JORDAN: The problem is dogs are really fast. You might be able to run longer and further than them but --

DEAN: Yeah.

JORDAN: -- maybe not faster.

DEAN: No. Yeah, I can't outrun a dog.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

JORDAN: Anything else come to mind? I'm curious now, there had to be.

DEAN: Oh, there's lots of things we could talk about.

JORDAN: Yeah.

DEAN: There's been a lot of weird things that have happened to me. I ran into a snake. I was running through the Ozark mountains. I think it was in maybe Saint Louis -- outside Saint Louis. Very humid day on a backcountry road and there was just those, you know, those kind of drooping trees everywhere.

JORDAN: Sure.

DEAN: And there was a branch hanging down, and I ran into this branch and it was kind of soft and fell over my shoulder. I'm like, "Oh, ****, it's a snake."

JORDAN: It's a huge snake.

DEAN: Yeah.

JORDAN: Oh, man.

DEAN: Yeah.

JORDAN: What did you do at that point? I mean are you freaking out and panicking or are you kind of in the zone because you're running and you brush it off?

DEAN: I brushed it off and then three seconds later, when I realized that was a snake, I freaked out and panicked and sprinted.

JORDAN: Yeah, and you sprinted for the next 20 meters?

DEAN: Yeah.

JORDAN: Oh, man.

DEAN: And then, I was running a race called the Ultra Tour Du Mont Blanc around Mont Blanc in Europe.

JORDAN: Mm-hmm.

DEAN: So it starts in France, it goes through Italy and Switzerland. And I think I was in Italy at this time. So I was running this 100 mile race, I was completely lost out in some village in the countryside. You know, obviously I was off the course. I had to go to the bathroom and so I was just peeing in someone's flowers -- like in a flowerbed -- and I feel something hitting me on the back of the head. I'm like -- this old -- I think she was Italian. An Italian woman, she had a baguette and she was just beating me with a French baguette. I felt like grabbing it and eating it, I was so hungry.

JORDAN: Yeah, yeah like, "Hey be careful with carbs around me right now. I'm on mile number 80." That's so ridiculous. Yeah I can -- people don't realize when you're in cycling or something like that, you're in a huge pack, there's media, they're filming you, the roads are blocked off because it's biking. A lot of times with these runs, you're the only person around for miles or at least for kilometers if you're --

DEAN: Yeah and that's what I like about it --

JORDAN: Yeah.

DEAN: -- I mean when **** happens, yeah.

JORDAN: So what is the actual biology behind why you can run so far? I mean there have to have been people who have said, "Look man, if you're able to run this far we've got to figure out why and how." If I were you I'd probably be also -- maybe a little concerned about why you can run so far. You might want to know, "Is there a biological tradeoff happening here?" You know, do you have any ideas?

DEAN: Well I've certainly been, you know, sliced and diced and analyzed and a couple things they've found is one, I have good biomechanics.

JORDAN: Mm-hmm.

DEAN: So, that just means my alignment when I'm running is really conducive for a runner, for locomotion. My foot strike, I don't pronate or supinate, I kind of do everything a runner should anatomically to minimize the stresses on my joints and my muscles. A lot of that is hereditary. It's just the way you're structured. They say one of the best things you can do as a long distance runner is to choose your parents well.

JORDAN: Oh, yeah good. Good tip.

DEAN: And they also have found that something called my lactic acid threshold is very stable. And lactic acid is a byproduct of muscle, you know, metabolism. So if you've ever like done a dumbbell curl -- you know, if you lift a heavy weight, you can do maybe five or six reps and then your arm starts to fatigue.

JORDAN: Sure.

DEAN: You feel that burning sensation. That's lactic acid. If you put the weight down, you kind of, you know, shake your arm out, wait for a couple minutes, you can pick it up and kind of resume the

cycle. That just doesn't happen to me. I don't build a lot of lactic acid if I'm running like a fairly fast pace but not a sprint. Like, I don't get muscle cramps. They said, "You're also very vascular. So, you're very good at shunting blood around to your muscles." And how that is, again -- you know, I'm a hundred percent Greek, so maybe it has something to do with hereditary.

JORDAN: Yeah, is that -- I guess because Mediterranean climate maybe a little warmer, maybe you have more capillary type capacity or heat regulation type stuff going on there.

DEAN: That's exactly -- yep. You sound like a scientist, that's --

JORDAN: Yeah.

DEAN: -- exactly what they've said, yeah.

JORDAN: Yeah, that's so interesting. And low body fat, maybe things that you're eating or not eating could have something to do with it.

DEAN: I think low body fat as well. You know the more insulation you have, the hotter you get. So very low body fat -- it's a source of anguish around my household because I'm like in big puffy jackets and my wife is sweating in shorts.

JORDAN: Sure.

DEAN: And I'm like, "You've got to turn on the heater," she's like, "It's 100 degrees in here and you're freezing. It's unnatural."

JORDAN: Right.

DEAN: But, I'm always cold.

JORDAN: Are you really? Oh.

DEAN: Yeah.

JORDAN: Except for when you're running, of course.

DEAN: Yeah, but I still don't sweat that much. Even when I'm really hot, I don't sweat that much.

JORDAN: Huh. That biology I don't necessarily understand as much. Does that mean you're dissipating heat without sweating?

DEAN: That's what they said, yeah.

JORDAN: Okay.

DEAN: And that, they think is a good thing, theoretically, because the more you sweat, the more electrolytes you're shedding. So trying to replace the exact balance of sodium --

JORDAN: Ah.

DEAN: -- potassium chloride, magnesium, that you take in is a tricky balance, right? And that might cause muscle cramping. Say if you throw your electrolytes out of balance, where if you're not sweating that much, you're not having that issue.

JORDAN: Sure, so if you're not getting rid of the electrolytes that you normally need to run, is it, I guess -- what's that cycle called? The ADP and the ATP and all that stuff in the muscles?

DEAN: The Krebs Cycle, yeah, yeah.

JORDAN: The Krebs Cycle. If you're not getting rid of the electrolytes you need to run the muscles and the neurotransmitters and all that stuff, because you're dissipating heat in another way, then theoretically that stops becoming the bottleneck of where you start to shut down. Because for me, I might be the opposite. I start to sweat -- only somehow when running -- just an absolute ton, but after a few miles, everything is so tight I can barely walk.

DEAN: Yeah.

JORDAN: And I tried stretching, because I thought, "Oh, I'm just not stretching enough. I've got to stop and stretch every mile." I could stop and stretch for 20 minutes a mile and it wouldn't make a difference after a certain point. I just can't even -- my stride gets so short I can barely walk.

DEAN: Yeah I mean, that could be a function of electrolytes. Certainly a lot of runners take electrolyte capsules. So there's capsules you can actually take that replenish but it's a tricky balance because if you're taking too much electrolytes then you get bloating. You know, trying to regulate the exact balance gets tricky, especially the further you go. I mean, you ran a 10k, think if you'd run, you know 100k.

JORDAN: A hundred, yeah.

DEAN: A hundred. It gets more and more difficult to balance your electrolytes and I don't have that issue, thankfully.

JORDAN: Yeah, wow. That's super interesting and fortunate of course, given the sport that you're in. Have you ever run in Greece then? You mentioned you're Greek.

DEAN: Yeah, many times.

JORDAN: It's like the original marathon.

DEAN: Yeah, my father always insists we're from the same village as Pheidippides, who was the original marathoner in the hills of Greece. And I always tell him, "Dad, I grew up in L.A." I mean --

JORDAN: Yeah.

DEAN: "What hills are of Greece are you referring to?"

JORDAN: Although genetics are genetics. I mean, if you really did -- I don't know much about mythology and how accurate that stuff is but if you did come from a place where people were running long distances -- because I heard that Pheidippides didn't just

decide to go for a run or have to go for a run because of that battle, but he was actually a runner and came from a line of runners.

DEAN: There's this book called [*The Road to Sparta*](#) by this guy Dean Karnazes.

JORDAN: Oh, okay. Maybe it was in your book then.

DEAN: Yeah. Yeah, he was part of a class of citizens called Hemero dromo (ph), which meant day long runners. So these guys were professional foot messengers. I mean, that's what he did for a living and this was 2500 years ago. The Greeks realized that a trained runner could dispatch information to -- in the neighboring city states faster than someone on horseback. These guys could outrun horses.

JORDAN: But not from speed. Why, do horses need to rest often or something? I don't know much about that.

DEAN: If you've ever been to southern Greece, it's very hilly. Very rocky and mountainous. So, I've actually done a race called the Vermont Trail 100, which is a hundred mile endurance run in Vermont. It's a horse race -- a concurrent horse race with a foot race and I actually beat all the horses. I know a man can outrun a horse over that duration. And that was kind of, ancient Greece's faster Internet. They just dispatched these runners to go gather intelligence or disseminate information quicker than an enemy could get someone there on a horseback. So, that's what he did.

JORDAN: Wow. But they didn't have nut butters back then though, that's the problem.

DEAN: They had figs and olives and yeah.

JORDAN: Yeah. I would imagine you'd get pretty sick of figs and olives after a few dozen miles.

DEAN: You must have read my book.

JORDAN: Yeah.

DEAN: I tried to this ancient run from Athens to Sparta which is 153 miles. That's the run that the marathoner Pheidippides did. And I thought let's take the challenge on only using these ancient foods. So I ate only olives, something called pasteli which is this ground sesame seed in honey, cured meat, which is like beef jerky, and figs. You know, I train here in San Francisco running for 6 or 8 hours eating only figs. It was fine. But when I ate figs for 24 hours straight --

JORDAN: Oh, man.

DEAN: -- not good.

JORDAN: Yeah. Yeah.

DEAN: Why do you eat figs, right?

JORDAN: Any fruits, yeah. For that long of -- high fiber fruit for that long of a period of time. What about footwear though? Because I would imagine Pheidippides ran in some kind of gladiator shoe looking thing.

DEAN: He probably ran barefoot, they think.

JORDAN: Oh, yeah. Good call.

DEAN: So this guy ran either in sandals or barefoot and I tried it. I thought, "Maybe I could run this race barefoot." I ran a marathon barefoot and it almost killed me.

JORDAN: Yeah. Just blistering and cuts or --

DEAN: You know, their feet were much tougher back then.

JORDAN: Yeah.

DEAN: I mean think about if you run around barefoot all the time. I don't run around barefoot all the time, so running a marathon barefoot was --

JORDAN: It's like stepping on a Lego every time you get a piece of gravel or asphalt.

DEAN: Well you know the one thing that was surprising is my muscles weren't as sore as when I was wearing shoes because you're doing just that. You're just -- you're prancing around very cautiously with every step.

JORDAN: Well another thing to remember is Pheidippides also died immediately after running that race.

DEAN: Now we know why, yeah.

JORDAN: That length of distance. Do you think you have to be a certain kind of person to really enjoy putting yourself through these types of endeavors and through this type of pain, really?

DEAN: It's a quality that a lot of people share but it's very polarizing. I think you either have to be that kind of person or you're not that kind of person. I don't think there's any kind of, "Well I kind of like running 10ks." You're either like, "Damn it, that 10k -- that hurt."

JORDAN: Mm-hmm.

DEAN: "I'm not going to that again." Or, "Wow, that was really cool." Like, "I'm going to try a half marathon." And, "Wow I finished a half marathon, I'm going to try a marathon." So I think if you go to an organized marathon or even half marathon -- you know there are kind of serial marathoners, where people just like live for running marathons and they're kind of the same mindset as I am. I think when you get to these longer distance like ultra marathoning, which is a very small subset of runners, I think everyone is very like-minded. I think we all kind of thrive on

this pain sort of thing. We have a different sort of relationship with pain than someone that doesn't run.

JORDAN: Yeah. Knowing other ultra-endurance athletes, for example Rich Roll, and I'm speculating here. I know he had an addictive personality or has an addictive personality, had some struggles with that in the past. It almost seems like he just decided to get addicted to running instead. But other folks that are in this same niche -- I mean, there's a lot more to it than just liking it or feeling compelled to do it. I mean, he's trained tremendously to be good at it as well. So it does seem like there's just a certain type of brain wiring that says, "I'm going all in. And not only am I going all in, but I'm going to go all in and then just keep pushing the boundaries of what's possible until I find that I can't anymore."

DEAN: Yeah I think runners are compulsive in that regard.

JORDAN: Mm-hmm.

DEAN: And, you know, Rich is a good friend of mine. So, you know, did he trade, you know, one addiction for another? Yeah, probably he did. But I mean, one was a very destructive --

JORDAN: Sure.

DEAN: -- unhealthy addiction --

JORDAN: Yeah.

DEAN: -- and the other was, you could say a healthy addiction.

JORDAN: He looks great now for a guy who used to be in dire straights.

DEAN: You ought to read his book. [Finding Ultra](#) if you --

JORDAN: Sure.

DEAN: He was an attorney as well --

JORDAN: Yeah.

DEAN: -- I don't know if you know that --

JORDAN: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

DEAN: -- but he was in a very low place and he crawled out of it, yeah.

JORDAN: Yeah, he's an interesting character for sure. He's a sharp guy who I'm glad is doing much better than he used to be.

DEAN: He's a lot happier too yeah.

JORDAN: Yeah, yeah, absolutely. Well, what do you listen to while you run? Do you have other input aside from just staring at the white lines or the yellow lines on the road?

DEAN: I listen to your podcast.

JORDAN: Oh, of course. I was going to say besides The Art of Charm podcast but I was like, "Well," --

DEAN: You know I love listening to audiobooks. So I used to love to read and, you know, when you're training for six to eight hours a day, when do you find time to read? So now I listen to audio books. I probably have 500 audiobooks on my playlist. And, like when I ran across America, I probably listened to 40 books.

JORDAN: Great.

DEAN: Yeah, 35 or 40 books.

JORDAN: Nice. Any particular genre? I would imagine you're not reading about something too cerebral because you're kind of focused at the task at hand.

DEAN: Yeah, and my mom is an English teacher. She's a middle school English teacher and she said, "Fiction is the work of the devil."

JORDAN: So it's all fiction.

DEAN: I don't read fiction.

JORDAN: Yeah.

DEAN: None of it's fiction, yeah. No, I like adventure stories. Yeah, like [*Into Thin Air*](#) by Jon Krakauer --

JORDAN: Oh, yeah. Yeah I read that maybe in 1998 or something like that.

DEAN: There's one called [*The Endurance*](#) which is about Ernest Shackleton and his failed attempt to get to the South Pole.

JORDAN: Oh, yeah.

DEAN: Yeah.

JORDAN: You've run a lot of races, I would imagine people are going to kill me if I don't ask, what was the hardest one that you've ever done?

DEAN: There's a race called the Atacama Crossing and it's this six day, self supported 250 kilometer run across the Atacama Desert, which is in South America -- in Chile. And it's the driest place on Earth.

JORDAN: Oh, man.

DEAN: So the place we ran, where this race is staged -- I said to the guy, you know, "When was the last time it rained here?" He was like, "Well it hasn't rained here." "Yeah, how long hasn't it rained?" He's like, "Ever."

JORDAN: Yeah.

DEAN: "Since we've been keeping records, it's never rained here."

JORDAN: Wow.

DEAN: I'm like, "You've got to be kidding." Yeah and so it was over 100 degrees during day and below freezing at night. And you're sleeping on the ground. You know, and you're carrying everything. So you're eating basically dehydrated food, freeze dried food, you know, you're sleeping in the bag on your back, so you're trying to minimize the amount of weight you've got in your pack --

JORDAN: Sure.

DEAN: -- but take enough stuff that you're not freezing at night, and you've got enough gear to sustain yourself for six days. That was a pretty tough one.

JORDAN: Oh, man. That's just a whole extra factor of you've got to pack for survival, not just be able to handle the running distance.

DEAN: And the miseries. I mean the blisters and, you know, you're not showering, so you know, you're filthy.

JORDAN: Oh, man.

DEAN: Yeah the sheer groveling.

JORDAN: When it's that hot, what happens to your mouth, lungs, nose, skin, eyes? There's got to be some gross stuff going on there.

DEAN: Oh, my wife is a dentist. I brush my teeth every night, Julie if you're listening.

JORDAN: Yeah.

DEAN: So I try to keep myself, like pleasant, if you will. I mean, if you look at some of the ancient explorers even, they went to great measures to kind of keep up their vanity for [00:56:17]. I mean, even if you read Homer, you know, before the Battle of Troy. You know, Achilles was plucking his eyebrow.

JORDAN: Yeah, and the shaving with [00:56:17]

DEAN: Yeah, exactly. You know, maintaining your -- you know, your appearances to be able to do these things. So I try to, you know, floss every night, minimize the amount of misery and groveling that I was going through to get through this, yeah.

JORDAN: That's amazing because I'm picturing you like, sweating through some sort of bee-keeper suit looking thing to keep the sun off of you with like, the inside of your mouth peeling from the heat. And then you're like, "Well hold on though. I've got to make sure I floss before I brush."

DEAN: Exactly. And I didn't bring any Q-tips --

JORDAN: Yeah.

DEAN: -- so I remember the first time I stuck a Q-tip in my ear, I'm like, "Ugh."

JORDAN: Like goopy sand?

DEAN: It looks like tar, yeah.

JORDAN: Gross. That's so gnarly. How do you train for an event like that that's not just distance but also heat? Get a Stairmaster inside a sauna somewhere in your backyard, or what?

DEAN: Actually I would go into the gym and do sets of situps and pushups in the sauna.

JORDAN: Oh, wow.

DEAN: So I would heat acclimate in the sauna. This sounds funny to a lot of people, I don't own a car, so --

JORDAN: You don't need one.

DEAN: I don't need -- I don't, yeah. I [00:57:22] inside backpacks. Because I was carrying a pack, you know, with 30 pounds of weight in there. So, when I go shopping for the family, I'd literally run to Safeway, you know or Whole Foods. Go shopping, put 40 pounds of food -- you know, gallons of milk, everything -- in my backpack and run 10 miles home.

JORDAN: With -- I can imagine what the eggs and Pepsi Cola looked like, yeah --

DEAN: Cold cuts in there, yeah.

JORDAN: -- what they look like when you get back, yeah. Yeah some stuff you're just like, "Hey Julie," --

DEAN: It all looked like cat food. I'm like, "This is what we're having for dinner tonight, folks."

JORDAN: Julie you might have to go back and get some more eggs. Yeah. Well how are your knees and joints and all that stuff? I mean, are you starting to feel the effects of like, "Hey I'm --" How old are you now?

DEAN: Biologically or chronologically?

JORDAN: Chronologically.

DEAN: I'm up there, yeah. I'm over 50.

JORDAN: Okay.

DEAN: Yeah.

JORDAN: Are you feeling the effects of that? You know, or are you still pushing the envelope?

DEAN: I'm still pushing the envelope. Yeah, you know what I'm doing though? I'm working out much harder. So, before I used to do primarily body resistance training, now I'm going into a gym

and I experiment with my workouts. So this is kind of geeky but, I've experimented with lifting extremely heavy weight, to the point you can only do one or two sets.

JORDAN: Sure, yeah.

DEAN: Really trying to build my muscle bulk through doing low reps of really high weight and I think that's helped keep my knees in check. I mean, I've never had an injury, knock on wood.

JORDAN: Yeah.

DEAN: My joints don't hurt, my muscles don't hurt. Everything -- yeah, I've never had back pain, never had any -- you know, you'd think when you hit 50, it just goes to hell in a handbasket.

JORDAN: That's what they say, yeah. That's what they say. What about your kids? Do they seem to have the same genetic advantage? Do they run long distances as well?

DEAN: You know I've never pushed running on them because I was kind of afraid --

JORDAN: Yeah.

DEAN: -- of the parental backlash, like --

JORDAN: Yeah you haven't tortured them enough to find out.

DEAN: Yeah.

JORDAN: That's the answer.

DEAN: Yeah. Especially my daughter. She just naturally loves to run. She's not competitive but she just loves to run and she's got great endurance. Even though she doesn't train that much, I mean -- my son, to his dad's compulsion, at 13 said to me, "Dad, on my 14th birthday I want to run a marathon."

JORDAN: Wow. Geez.

DEAN: I'm like, "Nicholas, you don't just announce you want to run a marathon. I mean there's a little bit of this thing called training involved."

JORDAN: Yeah, sure.

DEAN: So he trained and I had gone paleo at this point. And he's like, "I'm going to go paleo as well." And I'm like, "Hold it Nick, you're not going to have pizza with your buddies and everything?" He went full paleo, trained like crazy, we ran a marathon together in Marin county in, you know, here in the Bay Area. A really tough, hilly marathon. So there was thousands of feet of climbing and descending. It was in the Marin Headlands --

JORDAN: Wow.

DEAN: -- and he finished his marathon. And he kind of crushed it, he did really well. At 14.

JORDAN: That's unbelievable, yeah.

DEAN: And then afterward though I said to him, "Nicholas, let's go run Chicago Marathon next," because it's -- Chicago Marathon is like -- it's deadpan flat.

JORDAN: Mm-hmm.

DEAN: I'm like, "You won't have to climb another hill. You can run with a blindfold. You know, you don't have to dodge a rock or whatever," and he's like, "Nah I checked that marathoning thing off my bucket list. I'm done with that." I'm like, --

JORDAN: What's he going to do next?

DEAN: "Nicholas, first of all, what 14 year old has a bucket list?" Crazy.

JORDAN: Yeah, good point.

DEAN: Second of all -- he's 18 now, he hasn't run a day since. Literally. He has not run a day.

JORDAN: He just wanted to see if he could do it.

DEAN: He just wanted to see if he could do it, did it, and like, "All right, did it."

JORDAN: He's going to find some other thing. Yeah, when he's 30 he's going to go, "And then I just swam. I just kept swimming."

DEAN: "And then I got to Australia and I thought, 'Wow you know,' --

JORDAN: Turn around and go back.

DEAN: -- 'South Africa is not that far on the other side,' you know."

JORDAN: Exactly, yeah. Well, all right. Thank you so much for your time. I've got to ask though, what do you do to relax? Aside from run?

DEAN: You know, relaxing stresses me out to the point that I can not relax. It really does.

JORDAN: Can't relax. It stresses you out. Well we have that in common. Dean, thank you so much man. This has been great.

DEAN: Thank you for having me run by, yeah.

JORDAN: Great big thank you to Dean Karnazes. The book title is [*The Road to Sparta*](#). Of course that will be linked up in the show notes for this episode. And if you enjoyed this one, don't forget to thank Dean on Twitter. We'll have that linked in the show notes as well. And I'd love it if you'd send me your number one takeaway from Dean. I'm @theartofcharm on Twitter. Remember, if you want to see the show notes for this episode, tap your phone screen. They should pop right up, depending on what app you're using.

Our bootcamps, our live programs, nowhere near as hard as running 350 miles through the freaking desert, I assure you that, but a close second. You can find details on those at theartofcharm.com/bootcamp. Join thousands of other guys who have been through the program. They'll become your network for life. The bootcamps are so rewarding because of how far it takes people and what we can see with our own eyes and of course the development that happens a few months and years after the program. We're talking about nonverbal communication, persuasion, influence, identity level work, narrative -- there's so much we do in the week that you are here, locked in with us. It's just amazing. We're sold out a few months in advance so if you're thinking about it a little bit, get in touch ASAP. Get some info from us so you can plan ahead. That's at theartofcharm.com/bootcamp and if you're military or intelligence agency affiliated, check out elitehumandynamics.com, for more information on programs that we have that are designated especially for you. That's at elitehumandynamics.com.

I also want to encourage you to join our AoC challenge at theartofcharm.com/challenge or you can text the word 'charmed,' if you're at a red light, please. C-H-A-R-M-E-D to 33444. The challenge is about improving your networking and connection skills and inspiring those around you to develop a personal and professional relationship with you. It's free. A lot of people are unsure of that. It's unisex, which is great. It's a fun way to start the ball rolling, get some forward momentum.

We'll also email you our fundamentals Toolbox that I mentioned earlier on the show, which includes some great practical stuff, ready to apply, right out of the box, on body language, nonverbal communication, the science of attraction, negotiation techniques, networking and influence strategies, persuasion tactics, and everything else we teach here at The Art of Charm. It'll make you a better networker, a better connector, and a better thinker. That's at theartofcharm.com/challenge or text 'charmed,' C-H-A-R-M-E-D to 33444.

For full show notes for this and all previous episodes, head on over to theartofcharm.com/podcast. This episode of AoC was produced by Jason DeFillippo. Jason Sanderson is our audio engineer and editor. Show notes on the website are by Robert Fogarty, theme music by Little People, Transcriptions by TranscriptionOutsourcing.net. I'm your host Jordan Harbinger. Go ahead, tell your friends because the greatest compliment you can give us is a referral to someone else, either in person or shared on the Web. Word of mouth is everything. So share the show with your friends, share the show with your enemies, stay charming, and leave everything and everyone better than you found them.

