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Speaker 1: Thank you New York. Today, we're reminded of the power of community, and the power of coming together. Athletes on your mark.

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Speaker 2: The first woman to finish for the second straight year here in the New York City Marathon is Miki Gorman, a smiling Miki Gorman. And why not? 2: 29:30 the time for (inaudible) .

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Speaker 3: Look at the emotion of Shalane Flanagan as she comes to the line. Pointing to his chest, pointed to the USA he so proudly wears across his chest, a great day for Matt McCluskey.

00:00:42

Becs Gentry: Hey. What's up? Welcome to the finish line, and you are here for a live recording of the New York Road Runners podcast Set the Pace, presented by Peloton. I'm Becs Gentry, and I'm flying solo here today, because my co-host Rob Simmelkjaer is, well, he's at his daughter's play, and very, very busy. So it's just me, and we've got some really exciting guests. But first and foremost, can I get a massive round applause for everybody who finished the RBC Brooklyn Half today? You are all absolutely incredible, and thank you to everybody who came out to cheer, support, volunteer, and get you all, get us all here today. And here we are in Coney Island.

Is everyone having fun? The sun's shining. It's not raining. Have some beers, some hot dogs, and all of that good stuff. So we're here. We're right behind the Coney Island, full-on party going on. We've got dance camps, family reunions, and we've got some celebratory post-race party going on very shortly after this finishes. But before then, I want to introduce you to a very, very special guest of Set the Pace. I think a lot of you know her. I think a lot of you love her. I certainly do. That special case is Ali Feller. Ali. Ali. Ali. Ali.

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Ali Feller: Where do I go? Where do you want me? Love you.

00:02:26

Becs Gentry: Okay. So as exciting as Ali is, we are also going to be welcoming a NYRR member, a very handsome star of The Bachelorette, I have that written down just saying, and fellow RBC Brooklyn Half finisher, Zac Clark. So hang around for that later on today. You also might notice that

Ali and I are wearing these very stylish shirts. Yeah? Do you guys like them? And we just have to thank our friends at New Balance for getting us these slick shirts.

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Ali Feller: Heck yeah.

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Becs Gentry: All right. Okay. We're going to do this.

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Ali Feller: Let's have some fun.

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Becs Gentry: Let's have some fun. All right. Okay. I think it's pretty impossible that people here are not familiar with you Ali Feller, to be honest. If they're not, let me give you a little background of this superhero. She is the host of the incredibly popular Ali on the Run podcast. She's a writer and announcer for the Abbott World Marathon Majors Races, including TCS New York City Marathon, Boston Marathon, and of course, she's a passionate runner, and a super mama. That's a pretty long list of wonder there.

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Ali Feller: Yeah. I keep busy.

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Becs Gentry: And that's just the top of it. You keep busy. But anyway, big welcome to Ali. Thank you so much for joining us here today.

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Ali Feller: I am very happy to be here. I feel like if you've run the Brooklyn Half before, you get one of two days, and there's no in-between. It's either pouring, or it's very, very hot. This is a dream. I know that it was hot when you were running-

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Becs Gentry: It was.

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Ali Feller: But right now, this is what we dreamed about when we talked about doing a stadium show. So super excited that everyone's hanging out with us.

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Becs Gentry: I know. Thank you all so much. This stadium is pretty epic, isn't it?

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Ali Feller: Yeah. I feel like Taylor Swift right now. This is as close as it's going to get. We're doing a stadium show.

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Becs Gentry: Yeah. This is pretty awesome.

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Ali Feller: It's pretty awesome.

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Becs Gentry: We just walked out of the dugout, and pretended we were the latest signings of the Cyclones.

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Ali Feller: Totally.

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Becs Gentry: Totally did. Okay, Ali, how many times have you run the RBC Brooklyn Half?

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Ali Feller: Seven. I was told seven-

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Becs Gentry: Told seven.

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Ali Feller: ... when I looked it up on nyrr.org. I've run this race seven times, and I have such a bumpy history with this race. It's I hate to say I've never had a good race at the Brooklyn Half, but it's never been the race that's just gone great for me.

00:05:12

Becs Gentry: Yeah.

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Ali Feller: And I almost love that, that every year when I come back it's, "Let's see how this one goes." And it's the bar's low. So it's fine. Runners will appreciate that. In 2011, I ran the Brooklyn Half for the first time, and I was doing it as part of the 9+1 Program, that I could run the next year's New York City Marathon. And at that point, I was still a fairly new runner, and I had never had to make a bathroom stop during a race.

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Becs Gentry: Oh. Oh.

00:05:39

Ali Feller: So shout out to the 2011 Brooklyn Half, the race where I made my first every bathroom stops during a race, and I made three of them.

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Becs Gentry: We love that first ever (inaudible) .

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Ali Feller: Yeah. So it went great for me, but I kept coming back. I do. I love this race. Look at this. This is awesome. So seven Brooklyn Halves, did not run Today's Brooklyn Half, which is okay. It's a season of life, and my body just said no to running right now.

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Becs Gentry: It did. It did. And on that note, one year ago today was a really tough day for you. You've shared in so much detail, with so much strength your journey, and you've told your audience a lot. You've taken them with you since your diagnosis on May 19th. So that was the day before, the RBC Half?

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Ali Feller: Yeah. So one year ago I was in New York City for Brooklyn Half weekend, and I had just been to the doctor. I had found a lump in my left breast, and then a second one, and then another one on the right side. And all of a sudden, life got really weird for me. And I was in New York City. I had had biopsies that week, and came to New York all bandaged from the biopsies, and swollen, and struggling, and stressed. And I was out to breakfast with my dear friend Mary the day before the Brooklyn Half when I got the results in the portal, which is how they do it now. You don't get a call from your doctor.

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Becs Gentry: No.

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Ali Feller: You get a notification in the app.

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Becs Gentry: All online notification.

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Ali Feller: Terrible. And we're at breakfast, and I see Invasive Ductal Carcinoma, and I know that carcinoma is not a good word, and my whole world changed, and I am a

runner. And that's what I did, is that's what we do. And I think that's part of the beauty of running is it's there for us when we need it, and it's there for us when we want to celebrate. And it's there for us when we just need to work some stuff out. And the next day, I got to the Brooklyn Half start line with my friend Mary. She ran next to me every single step of the way. And I didn't realize it at the time, but there was a great deal of symbolism in all of that, primarily that I have never been alone for any of this, that I have had the most amazing support network. And part of that is the running community. And I know that sounds so cheesy. I know that's putting a very-

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Becs Gentry: I get it.

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Ali Feller: ... happy little rainbow on a really awful time. But I can't stress enough how much the running community has kept me going, and kept me living on days when I didn't know if I could. So the Brooklyn Half it'll always be the race where I made my first bathroom stops. But it will certainly be the race where the day after I was diagnosed with breast cancer, and I felt like my world was ending, and I had no idea what the future would look like, I joined more than 20,000 like-minded people. And I ran from the Brooklyn Museum, to Coney Island, and there was nowhere I would've rather been that day.

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Becs Gentry: Oh. Right? Yeah.

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Ali Feller: Thank you. And I'm still here. So that's great.

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Becs Gentry: Yeah, even more of a yeah. I remember seeing all of that unfold, but not knowing at that point.

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Ali Feller: No, and that was weird too, is my world felt like it didn't feel like it was ending, but it was shaken up, and it was scary.

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Becs Gentry: Yeah.

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Ali Feller: And it was. It was I had moments on the race. I remember crying at the start line, because I'm a start line

crier. By the time I get to the finish, I'm so dehydrated, I have no tears. But I cry at start lines. And there were so many moments during the race where people would cheer. They'd be like, "Yeah. Ali on the Run, you got this." And I'm like, "You have no idea how badly I need to hear that right now." And then of course, as I shared publicly what was going on, which I'm really glad I did. Everyone's different when we're going through hard times. Some people keep things very private. I'm an oversharer, and I'm so glad I shared, because I've found so much support, and I've connected with people who have been through this. And I just don't know how I would've gotten through all of this without that.

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Becs Gentry: And I would imagine there are so many people out there who you've helped through a journey traveling through at a parallel time. And you may never know. You may never get to meet them. I hope you do. But I'm sure there's people out there have found strength in your honesty, and your oversharing in the best way.

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Ali Feller: Yeah. And those connections are everything. And that's what I needed during those early overwhelming moments of being so scared, and being so having no idea what I should be doing, or what I needed to do. I leaned on people who had been through it, and now it does. This is so cheesy. But now it does feel like a gift, and it feels like a way I get to pay it forward. And I have this whole email that I send to people when they reach out of, "Oh my gosh. I was just diagnosed, and I have to have a double mastectomy." And I'm like, "Great. Here's my email. It tells you what you're going to need. And this is for week one of recovery, and this is week two," and it has all the links. And I'm like, if nothing else, I can send people lists, and that's how I can help.

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Becs Gentry: Hey, a list helps. I think most runners love a list.

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Ali Feller: Yeah. I hate sending that email, but I'm glad I can, if that makes sense.

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Becs Gentry: Exactly. So over the last 12 months, aside from the support that community's given you, what has been your biggest surprise?

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Ali Feller: Oh, my daughter. I have a five-year-old daughter, Annie. And someone said to me, my friend, his name is Chris Heuisler, and when this all started, he said, "Annie will be your anchor throughout this." And I was like, "I don't know what that means. It doesn't make sense. It's dumb. You seem wrong." I just was so, "That doesn't make sense. What do you mean she's my anchor? She's what I'm most worried about in all of this." And I very quickly learned that on days when I was like, "This is hard. Can I get through this," I think a lot about, I went through chemotherapy, and if you've been through it, chemotherapy is awful.

They show it in the movies. Yeah. It does suck that much. And on those days, my daughter kept me going. I didn't even want to do chemotherapy. No one wants to do chemotherapy, but my doctors obviously said, "This is the plan." And I pushed back so hard, and I was like, "Listen, I did the surgery. I think I'm good to go. I've watched 19 seasons of Grey's Anatomy." I like to say I attended Grey's Academy. "So I know. I can make these decisions for myself."

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Becs Gentry: Yeah.

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Ali Feller: And I was like, "Do I really need chemo? This feels like too much."

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Becs Gentry: Yeah.

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Ali Feller: And my surgeon called me, and she said to me, "Look at that daughter of yours. Look at that sweet Annie. You're her mother, and you need to be her mother for her entire life, which means you need to show up to your chemotherapy appointment tomorrow." And I was like, "Okay."

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Becs Gentry: And then you have Annie on your hands every time I go to (inaudible).

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Ali Feller: Oh. Yeah. I do. We do heart hands when I'm traveling for work. And it used to be I drew a heart on my hand, and I drew a heart on her hand. Well now she can draw. So she likes to draw the heart. I said, "Okay. Just do a little heart, because mommy's working." And she drew a heart, and now I wash my hands, which is good. And she

also wrote her name, and then she drew a little bird. So yeah. Annie's always with me, but she is the obvious why of why I went through the hard times, why I will continue to do everything in my power to be healthy, to take care of myself, and to be there for every day of her life.

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Becs Gentry: Love that.

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Ali Feller: That's the plan.

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Becs Gentry: I'm trying not to cry. I promise you.

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Ali Feller: I know. I'm shocked I didn't, but yeah, I'm getting better at talking about this without crying. But give it time. I'm sure. I haven't cried yet today.

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Becs Gentry: Give it time.

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Ali Feller: So give it time.

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Becs Gentry: Spring is my favorite time to start a new workout routine. With the weather warming up, it feels easier to get into the rhythm of things. So whether you have 20 minutes, or an hour for a Pilates class, or outdoor guided walk, Peloton has everything you need to help get you going. Get a head start on summer with Peloton at [onepeloton.com](http://onepeloton.com). All right. So let's talk to all these runners about running. You ran the Eugene Marathon last year. You ran RBC Brooklyn Half last year. This year you ran the United Airlines NYC Half. How has your running goals changed, and evolved, and where do you see them going?

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Ali Feller: Okay. This is another thing that you're going to be like, "Ali, you sound like you're full of it," but just bear with me. There's no pretty silver lining to getting cancer. People are like, "What good has come out of this?" And I'm like, "No. I don't want to have been through this." And if I may, it has been really good for my relationship with running. I am someone who in the past didn't always have the best relationship with running. I was someone who they say exercise to make your body feel good. And I would do the opposite. I had a history of punishing myself through



exercise, or always wanting to do more, or just getting into a yucky headspace with doing too much, or being addicted to running, which we can joke about, and say, "It's a healthy addiction." But I certainly went through times where it wasn't.

And I can recognize that now. Of course, at the time, I was like, "No. It's a good thing." It wasn't. My body was so beat up, and I was in so much pain. And then over this past year, there have been times that I physically, like doctor said, "You can't run. You just had a double mastectomy. You can't run for six weeks while you're recovering," And I took that really seriously, and I learned that it's okay. And I learned that I will come back. I love a comeback. Comebacks are awesome.

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Becs Gentry: Absolutely.

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Ali Feller: We might not choose them, but a comeback is so empowering. And it has been really good for my mentality in that I'm not so obsessive about my running anymore.

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Becs Gentry: Right.

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Ali Feller: I don't need to run six days a week. I don't need to do a long run on the weekends. I run when it feels good, and when it feels like it's going to serve me. And I run, and I know it's cheesy. I run for the joy of it.

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Becs Gentry: Yeah.

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Ali Feller: And I think I always did. But this has really helped that mindset and that approach to running where now it is so something that I get to do. So when people come to me, and they're, "Oh. I have to run 20 miles this weekend," I'm like, "You have to? You have to?" We get to, and what a gift this is.

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Becs Gentry: We get to. I couldn't agree more. And I know that sounds funny coming from a running coach, and a Peloton instructor, and somebody who will give you a whatever week training program you want. But I shudder when people are like, "I have to run this today." I am like, "You don't

have to. No one is making you." You get to do it.

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Ali Feller: Unless you are a professional athlete. Yeah.

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Becs Gentry: They still don't have to. They get to.

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Ali Feller: Right.

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Becs Gentry: And they choose to. And I think it's a big mental reframe.

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Ali Feller: Yeah. And then look at days like this. How lucky are we-

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Becs Gentry: How lucky?

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Ali Feller: ... to be here?

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Becs Gentry: Yeah. So lucky. So running I guess has helped you, your mental space getting through this past year a lot.

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Ali Feller: Yeah. So my favorite thing now is power walking.

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Becs Gentry: Yes. Power walking.

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Ali Feller: So I love walking, and I just want to shout out to all the people out there who walk as a choice.

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Becs Gentry: Yes.

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Ali Feller: Walking is not the downgrade from running.

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Becs Gentry: Nope.

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Ali Feller: Walking is awesome. And throughout the past year,

as I've been through surgeries, and chemo, and I also have Crohn's Disease, and my stomach is a mess, my body is just chaos, walking feels so good. And it's movement. And it's activity. And it's a thing that I choose. And I'm such a proponent of do the thing that feels good for you. And obviously we're preaching to a stadium full of runners right now, but people come to me all the time, and they're like, "I really want to run, but I hate it." And I'm like, "Okay. There's levels here. So let's get into these layers. Right?" So first is you want to. Why do you want to? "Well, I see people out there, and they seem like they love it, but I hate it." "All right. Well, are you sprinting out your front door, or are you pacing yourself," because I would say most of the times, we hate running when we start, because we have no idea we should slow it down.

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Becs Gentry: Slow it down.

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Ali Feller: But then if you're doing it, and you're doing all the right things, and you're doing it the right way, and you still hate it, do something else. Do what feels good.

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Becs Gentry: Do it.

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Ali Feller: And I just happen to be in a season right now, and I wish I weren't in this season, but I'm trying to embrace it of right now what feels good for me is walking and strength training. I do a lot of Peloton strength classes.

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Becs Gentry: Woo woo.

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Ali Feller: Woo woo. Exactly. And I think there's really just something to be said for appreciating our bodies, and appreciating where they are each day, and knowing that each day is going to look different. Each run is going to look different. Mile one's going to look different than mile six. How many people today got to mile three, and realized, "Ooh, I went out a little hot. I might need to adjust things here." Did you?

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Becs Gentry: Far too fast.

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Ali Feller: Yeah. And we adjust, and then mile 12 might end up feeling great, even if mile 6 didn't. How was your race today?

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Becs Gentry: Tough.

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Ali Feller: Tough.

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Becs Gentry: I went out drastically too fast. I went out 2021  
Becs fast.

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Ali Feller: Okay. I love that confidence for you.

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Becs Gentry: It's really, really brutal. Yeah. And about 3 miles in, I was like, "2024. Becks can't sustain this for any longer." So I pulled back, and that was a mental conversation I had to have with myself.

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Ali Feller: Wait. So when that happened, were you frustrated?

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Becs Gentry: Yeah.

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Ali Feller: You were?

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Becs Gentry: Yeah.

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Ali Feller: So how do you, sorry. Now I'm turning it around. I'm like, "Let me interview you, please."

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Becs Gentry: Do you think she does this for a living? She's just switched the role. She's like, "Let's deep dive into your psyche."

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Ali Feller: I'm sorry. I'm sorry. Just one question. Just one question. How do you do that when you are in a point of a race, especially when it's early on, and you're like, "Oh man. The thing that I thought that I could go out and do,

I'm now realizing I'm not going to be able to." How do you get out of that frustrated mindset, because you still have 9, 10 miles to go?

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Becs Gentry: 10 miles, 10 sweet miles. I embraced it. I acknowledge it. I acknowledge the frustration. I let the frustration surge through me. I let it come out. I throw my toys out the pram. I slowed right down, and was like, "Screw it," just got really angry. And then I gathered myself, and just remembered where I was 3 years ago is very different place. And I'm grateful for where I was 3 years ago, but I'm even more grateful for where I am today. And I promised myself I'd finished with a smile today, not with a grimace. And I knew I'd never beat my course record on this course anyway. So that's when I was like, "You know what? Let's see a different number on that watch." And then somehow, not saying it didn't hurt for those last 10 miles, because it still hurt, but I allowed the hurt to be a bit more graceful, let's say.

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Ali Feller: And you finished smiling. I can confirm. I saw you at the finish, and you were smiling.

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Becs Gentry: I got to see my friend at the finish line. All right. I'm going to switch this around again. So we all know Ali is a super mom. Annie is the glorious, glorious little girl. Happy Mother's Day a week later, by the way. And do a lot of you know that Ali used to be a ballerina, right? She used to do ballet. Yeah. Do you think Annie's going to follow in your footsteps as a dancer, a runner, both, neither?

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Ali Feller: Oh. I don't know. I want her to do whatever makes her happy. Right now it is very funny. So she is taking dance classes at the studio that I grew up dancing with.

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Becs Gentry: That's amazing.

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Ali Feller: Her teacher I taught when her teacher was a kid at that studio. So it is this totally crazy-

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Becs Gentry: Full circle.

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Ali Feller: ... full circle experience every Tuesday when I take her to dance class, and she loves it. And when we do weekends like this, and she's not with me this weekend, but she loves doing kids races. And she loves gymnastics, and I want her to do whatever makes her happy. It is funny though. She's so me in so many ways, where I'm like, "Annie, do you want to play tee-ball? Do you want to try soccer? Do you want to play basketball?" "No. No balls." I'm like, "Girl, same." I've been afraid of the ball since the day I was born. And it is funny that even without, and I'm not projecting. I've never told her that, but she made her own choices, and she wants nothing to do with ball sports. So same.

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Becs Gentry: Yay. That makes me very proud that Annie is going to be her own leader in her own sport.

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Ali Feller: Oh. Yeah. That's what we want right?

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Becs Gentry: And that's it. We are in the middle of the rise of women in sport. There's still a really long way to go, but I think where it's going right now is fantastic. And I want to know. Because I know how many of the runners, the incredible runners you are very good friends with, is there one or two in particular that on a daily basis inspire you?

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Ali Feller: Oh. All of them.

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Becs Gentry: So they're all my friends.

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Ali Feller: Yeah. Also, it is funny. I have an album on my phone called Annie and Pro Runners. Because she comes with me to so many events, she doesn't realize how cool it is now, but I'm like, "You've known Des Linden your whole life. Do you know how cool that is?" I still am starstruck around Des Linden-

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Becs Gentry: Same.

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Ali Feller: ... and Annie's petting her dog like it's nothing.

I am forever inspired by the everyday runner who wakes up at 4:00 AM, and gets their run before they make their kids' lunches, and then goes to work, and comes home, and shows up for their family, and their loved ones, and their people, and are making that commitment, and that decision to chase these big goals when no, running's not our job. Running is a passion that we take seriously, because we love it, and we love ourselves. And I am really inspired by the 28,000 people that we're surrounded by today. And again, I know everything I say is cheesy. I embrace it. I love cheese. So yes. The professional runners inspire me so much.

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Becs Gentry: So much.

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Ali Feller: Right? They're incredible. Just the athleticism, and the way that they compete, and the way that they have to be so mentally sharp to do that, I am so inspired by it, but where I use the word inspiration is the everyday runner every time.

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Becs Gentry: That is so much truth though, because you're right. It's the runners who have 12 plus hours of life ahead of them every day, but they still wake up to get the miles in.

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Ali Feller: You see it. They're the people on the Peloton leaderboard for the 6:00 AM classes.

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Becs Gentry: The 4:00 AM crew. We have a 5:00 AM crew. We have (inaudible).

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Ali Feller: Yeah. They're like, "I got to take the UK classes, because getting up so early."

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Becs Gentry: Yeah.

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Ali Feller: I think that it's a commitment to do that every single day, to every night set your alarm for the next morning. And look at everyone here who put in the long runs to train for this. Most of you probably did your long runs really early on a Saturday morning, so it didn't disrupt your families, your loved ones, your plans for the day. Is

that you? Yeah, which by the way, I love that you're gesturing, and acknowledging that, and being like, "Yeah. That's her. She's a star." And your family sees it, and loves it. And I think that's amazing, and you inspire me, and congratulations. So it's that.

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Becs Gentry: I know. Incredible. But that's real life. That's real. Don't get me started on the squares. Okay. Ali, what should we potentially, could we potentially see from Ali on the Run in the next year or so?

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Ali Feller: Oh. I have spent the past year in survival mode-

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Becs Gentry: You have.

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Ali Feller: ... in so many ways.

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Becs Gentry: And thriving.

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Ali Feller: Yeah. That feels generous, but I love you for saying it, and seeing it. I want to be able to say, "I spent the last year in survival mode, and now I want the next year to be about celebration mode."

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Becs Gentry: Amazing.

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Ali Feller: I want to chase the things that bring me joy, and I want to do that unapologetically. I want to sign up for the races on a whim, because I'm feeling good, and why not? I want to surround myself with people that I love, and that I am my best self around, and that Annie can look to as role models, and friends, and companions. And I think it's just, I don't have any specific hopes, dreams, or goals on the run, or in my career. I think getting a cancer diagnosis does teach you to try to live in the moment, and not put too much pressure on the future. And I'm fine. I'm not dying. I'm good.

And I spent the past year saying, "I want to make sure that I'm at the Chicago Marathon, and I'm doing this thing," or, "I want to PR at the Dash to the Finish 5K." And it's like, that's just not the way life played out. And it's not that I don't want to have big dreams. It's not that I'm



afraid of disappointment. I just want to chase the things that feel good in the moment, and unapologetically do that. I am not an unapologetic person. In fact, I love apologizing even for things I don't need to apologize for. So I'm trying to be better about that, and I want to just be a little bit more brazen perhaps in the way that I move through life now.

00:28:28

Becs Gentry: I like that goal.

00:28:29

Ali Feller: Check back in six months when I'm like, "Okay. I didn't do that at all, but ..."

00:28:34

Becs Gentry: As long as you don't say, "I'm sorry."

00:28:36

Ali Feller: I'm working on it.

00:28:37

Becs Gentry: Then we'll have checked that one box.

00:28:38

Ali Feller: I'm working. I'm trying. I'll give you a buzzer, and if you ever hear me say it, you can buzz me.

00:28:44

Becs Gentry: I will. We spend a lot of time together, many things.

00:28:46

Ali Feller: And I'm glad.

00:28:48

Becs Gentry: I'll get you a swear jar for that.

00:28:49

Ali Feller: Oh. Don't give a swear jar. Yeah. I do a lot of that.

00:28:55

Becs Gentry: Okay. One last question. If you're in the middle of a run, training run, and it absolutely sucks, is there one song that you would put on right now to listen to?

00:29:08

Ali Feller: Okay. The Tortured Poets Department?

00:29:15

Becs Gentry: Knew it.

00:29:15

Ali Feller: No, but that's a bummer. But I Can Do It With a Broken Heart, come on. It's the anthem right now. But I'll say I'm a big Swiftie, and it's always going to be a Taylor Swift song, though if I am having a hard time, and I need to turn it around, and I'm calling a Hail Mary, it's Fight Song-

00:29:36

Becs Gentry: Oh.

00:29:36

Ali Feller: ... which you did during your Femme Power Run, and I was sobbing on the treadmill. Yeah. Fight Song, that is empowering. And that's the dig deep, you need help in this moment, and you will find it by the time the second chorus comes around. So Taylor, I love you, but I'm going to go Rachel Platten Fight Song.

00:29:58

Becs Gentry: If you don't know that song, listen to it, because you'll hear-

00:30:01

Ali Feller: Tear jerker.

00:30:01

Becs Gentry: ... hear her in the lyrics, that's for sure.

00:30:04

Ali Feller: Yeah.

00:30:05

Becs Gentry: All right. Well I hope that has given people love, inspiration, and some thinking today. Ali, it was such a pleasure to have this conversation with you. Thank you for joining us here today.

00:30:19

Ali Feller: Yay.

00:30:20

Becs Gentry: Yeah. We love you. We really, really love you.

00:30:22

Ali Feller: I love you. I'm so excited that we're friends.

00:30:25

Becs Gentry: I know. Me too. I'm so grateful.

00:30:27

Ali Feller: Right?

00:30:27

Becs Gentry: All right. Nobody is allowed to leave, because we have a special guest that I'm going to invite up onto the stage in just a second. Okay? Now is he here? Yeah.

00:30:39

Ali Feller: Yeah.

00:30:40

Becs Gentry: I turn around. I'm like, uh uh uh. You may all know him from a little TV show called The Bachelorette, the 16th season to be precise, but there is a lot more to Zac Clark than the 16th season of the Bachelorette. Shall I embarrass him again, and call him the Handsome Bachelor again? Apart from being there, he's a very passionate runner. He has run 9 TCS NYC Marathons, and he is an equally passionate entrepreneur. Please welcome RBC Brooklyn Half finisher Zac Clark everyone.

00:31:21

Zac Clark: What's up? What's up?

00:31:21

Becs Gentry: I know I missed out the most important-

00:31:25

Zac Clark: What's that?

00:31:25

Becs Gentry: The most important part of your entrepreneurship being the founder of Release Foundation.

00:31:30

Zac Clark: Yes.

00:31:30

Becs Gentry: But we can talk a bit more about that.

00:31:33

Zac Clark: I love it. Good to be here.

00:31:34

Becs Gentry: Zac, welcome. Thank you for being here with Ali and I today. Congratulations on your run. How was it?

00:31:42

Zac Clark: It was good. I am sitting here listening to Ali, and it's very easy to get caught up on the time, and the number, and all the bullshit around running. And we work hard, but then I look at the pictures being taken, and the medal, and the glitter, and all. And that's what this is all about.

00:31:58

Becs Gentry: You need more glitter.

00:31:58

Zac Clark: Any day where I get to run, and be in this community is a good day.

00:32:01

Becs Gentry: Right? This community it just gives you life. It fills your cup. And I'm sure there's people out there who had a good race. Yeah. Yeah? Okay. There's some, yeahs. We love you. Did anyone have a bad race today? Yeah. We had one bad race. We had a couple of bad races? Good. Because you know what? That is how we learn, and that is how we grow as well. It is all part of the process. Okay. Let's get back to Zac. Do we have some Bachelor fans out there? Yeah. Uh-Oh. There we go. All right. But not to put the show down, but as I pointed to, there's a lot more to you. And you are the founder of Release Recovery, and I would love to tell all of these wonderful runners what that is.

00:33:02

Zac Clark: Yeah. So long and short of it is our foundation, the Release Foundation basically raises money, and we're grateful for the partnership we have with New York Road Runners, and the TCS Marathon. Essentially, what we do is we raise money to scholarship individuals who need behavioral healthcare treatment. Right? So substance abuse and mental health from underserved communities, they call us. They call our hotline. We run a couple assessment questions, and then they get treatment no questions asked, that they can go out and heal.

00:33:38

Becs Gentry: I love that. And for you, talk about your past, your road to recovery. How big of a part has running played in that?

00:33:49

Zac Clark: Yeah. We were talking in the locker room. We were getting fired up to come out here and serenade this crowd about running. And I can honestly say, and it sounds like

you guys identify that running saved my life. I, 12 and 1/2 years ago found myself in a jackpot where I couldn't stop drinking. I couldn't stop doing drugs. I myself went to treatment, and I landed here in New York City, and I knew nobody, right? I literally knew 0 people, and I was charged with this responsibility of building a life for myself at one of the most vulnerable points in my existence.

And I turned to first and foremost the support groups that I found in my recovery community, but not far behind was this community that you see here today. And what I can say is those two communities are very similar. It's all about love. It's about inclusion. It's about doing things shoulder to shoulder, and bringing each other along. So I'm very grateful for my sobriety, and I can honestly say that 12 and 1/2 years later, on days when I might feel a little off, the first thing that I'm going to do is get outside and run.

00:34:58

Becs Gentry: I think all 3 of us are on now. We get out, and we move our bodies when we're feeling a little off. Right? It helps heal us for sure. Okay. So you have run every single TCS New York City Marathon since 2014?

00:35:15

Zac Clark: Yeah. So basically I went to rehab, and I showed up in New York City January of 2012, and then Sandy hit that year. So there was no marathon that year.

00:35:28

Becs Gentry: Good excuse.

00:35:29

Zac Clark: Right. And then in '13, I went out, and I watched for 5 hours. And I cried because there was no race, religion, creed, politics. There was nothing. It was just all love. And I'm like, "I will do that every year for the rest of my life." And I have that type of personality. So from 2014 until this moment, I've run every New York City Marathon that's been available to me.

00:35:54

Becs Gentry: And can we give anyone a sneak peek if we're going to be seeing you this year?

00:35:58

Zac Clark: I will be at the marathon this year with our 100 other Release Foundation runners, who will be raising money for our foundation, and with the rest of New York City, and beyond. But before that, I'm heading out to Minnesota to try

and qualify for Boston at Grandma's Marathon. So that's ...

00:36:18

Becs Gentry: Yeah. All right. So our Minnesota family, make sure you get out there and cheer. Make sure Carrie's there.

00:36:26

Ali Feller: This guy's fit. I've been following the training.

00:36:29

Zac Clark: Look, it's like anything else in life. And this is the soapbox that I'm on right now. I ran all these marathons, and pounded them out four hours. I would get through it, and then go figure, I hire a coach, and I listen to the coach. And I do the things that he tells me to do, and I'm getting faster. This is bizarre. Right?

00:36:50

Becs Gentry: Tell me how that works.

00:36:53

Zac Clark: No matter where you are in life, coaches provide value.

00:36:56

Becs Gentry: Yes. Yes. I will agree to that being a coach.

00:37:02

Zac Clark: Exhibit A.

00:37:03

Becs Gentry: We try and help. Okay. That's super exciting. So this will be your 10th anniversary, really special at TCS New York City Marathon with the family.

00:37:12

Zac Clark: Yeah, (inaudible) time.

00:37:12

Becs Gentry: Okay. One, I'm going to ask you the same question. You're in the toughest part of your run. Doesn't have to be the race, training run, whatever, what song are you putting on right now?

00:37:23

Zac Clark: I might be a crazy person, but when I am in that pain cave, I actually go the opposite direction, and I hit pause.

00:37:33

Becs Gentry: Oh.

00:37:33

Zac Clark: And I lean into the silence, and I lean into the pain, because I believe in the power of actually feeling that moment, and understanding that this is just temporary, and we're going to get through it. And as much as Fight Song might help me rip through it-

00:37:46

Ali Feller: Oh. You were listening.

00:37:47

Zac Clark: ... I will go. I was listening. I listened to you. I lean into the silence. So that might be a lame answer, but that's what I do.

00:37:56

Becs Gentry: No. It's an honest answer, and I'm with you. Obviously, we have music at Peloton in our classes, but I personally, I like the silence. I like hearing the conversations in my head. There definitely are days when Taylor comes on, and I'm like-

00:38:13

Ali Feller: I respect it.

00:38:14

Becs Gentry: Yeah. There are days. Okay. I feel like we could all chat for hours, and we're not going anywhere, but we are on a clock here, literally. Zac, thank you so much for being here. Thank you for running today. Thank you for everything you do with Release Foundation. Well runners, that does it for this special episode of Set the Pace recorded live from the finish line of the RBC Brooklyn Half here at this wonderful stadium, the home of the Brooklyn Cyclones. Thank you to our amazing guests, Ali Feller and Zac Clark. I'm Becs Gentry. Big shout out to my co-host who we've missed a lot today, New York Road Runners CEO Rob Simmelkjaer. Congrats to him and the entire New York Road Runners team for putting on such a world-class event. Team, if you like this episode, please go ahead subscribe, rate, leave a comment for the show on whatever platform you listening to. This doesn't only help us, but it helps you find us in the future. Thank you again so much for being here. Congratulations to every single one of you. See you next time.