

047_Dakotah Lindwurm - Official Transcript

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.

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 Grete Waitz.

Speaker 3: Look at the emotion of Shalane Flanagan as she comes to the line. Pointing to his chest, pointing to the U.S. A. He so proudly wears across his chest. A great day for Meb Keflezighi.

Rob Simmelkjaer: Hey, everybody, and welcome to another episode of Set the Pace, the official podcast of New York Road Runners presented by Peloton. I am your host and CEO of New York Road Runners, Rob Simmelkjaer. Great to have you with us on a very special week here in New York at New York Roadrunners. So much going on. Global Running Day, the Mastercard New York Mini 10K, a lot happening and we're thrilled to have you with us as we kick it off and we're missing Becs this week. It's just me. My co-host, Becs Gentry, is off traveling this week, but I was so excited to talk to Becs about my big weekend. If you listen to the show regularly, you know that I ran a half-marathon this past Sunday. It was the Fairfield Half Marathon in Fairfield, Connecticut. First time I'd run that event, and first of all, I want to say it was a great event. Congratulations to the organizers.

That's a race that's been going on for over 40 years and it's just a beautiful race. It starts and finishes right on the beach in Fairfield, Connecticut, and it was a good day to be at the beach on Sunday because it was a warm day. It is a hilly course too. I knew it was hilly going into this race, but I don't think I expected the hills to just keep coming and coming and coming. But I tell you what, I'm so thrilled with the day I had. I must have really done a good job training because I felt terrific the whole way through. Ran my second-best half-marathon time ever at 1:35 and change. And for me, that's a great time and a great experience for me given I tried to run that race a year ago and was injured, not able to even make it to the starting line. And so I just felt fantastic and want to thank everybody from the New York Roadrunners Group training to everybody I've run with to help me get ready for a race like that.

And I tell you, I did something I never do and have never done before in a race. I am usually the master of the negative splits. I like to go out pretty slow and try to save something for the end. For this one, I did the exact opposite. I went out so fast and I'm not sure exactly what was going through my mind to be honest. I think it may have been the fact that it was a warm day and I knew it was going to be getting hotter and hotter as the day went on and I felt really good at 8:00 AM. The temperature was still reasonable and it was a flat start and I said, "Let me just bank

some time here early on." And so I ended up running very quick out of the gate, my fastest mile on the whole race was the second mile. I ran a 6/40 split the second mile, which was bananas.

But you know what? It didn't turn into a fly and die. It was more like a fly and fight. I kind of was able to hang on and finish with a respect all the time toward the tail end, but I've never done that before. Not sure I'll do that again. I'm sure Becs would have some things to say to me about those splits. We'll talk about that later. But all in all, it was just a great day. Congratulations to the 2,700 or so finishers. And another thing I'll say about running a race like that, it was such a great race, but it just reminded me of how big a scale everything we do at Road Runners is. This was a race with 2,700 runners and it was a great day and they did a phenomenal job.

In New York, our weekly races are 5,000 runners and I just think it reminded me of how lucky we are in New York to have the incredible scale of running community that we have and also how good our team is here at New York Roadrunners to put on events of that scale week in and week out. So it's great to get out and run in a community race like that, but it just reminds me of what we have in New York and how blessed we are in New York City to have what we have in our running community here. So thanks again to everybody up in Fairfield for a great, great event.

We are so thrilled to have Dakotah Lindwurm joining us in just a little while to talk about her incredible journey from being on average high school runner to being a member of the U. S. Olympic Marathon team. She'll be joining us in just a bit. And here at New York Roadrunners, we are in final preparations for this weekend's Mastercard New York Mini 10K and boy, what a pro field we have lined up. Senbere Teferi, Sharon Lokedi, Sara Hall, Edna Kiplagat, Molly Huddle. For those who want to check out the Mini 10K this weekend, of course you can show up in person. It's going down Central Park West and then into Central Park. But you can also catch the race on ESPN+, on abc7ny.com and on NYRR's social and digital media channels. All those links will be in the show notes, so you can check that out.

And by the way, if you want to know how we got this incredible pro field, check out last week's episode of Set the Pace. Our general manager of pro athletes, Sam Grotewold, joined us and took us behind the scenes of this year's Mastercard New York Mini 10K field. So check that out as well. Also, if you're listening to this, you're not too far removed from June 5th of this week, which was Global Running Day, a big day in the world of running. It's a worldwide celebration of running that encourages people of all ages and abilities to get moving. And of course, we were big into Global Running Day at New York Road Runners. There were live events all over the world. We had one in New York as well, a kids race taking place out at Randall's Island. And there's still time to participate in our virtual race. We've got the NYRR Virtual Global Running Day 5K. It's open through June 9th, so you can sign up for that at New York Roadrunners website, nyrr.org and then run it on the Strava app. You can find other virtual events at www.globalrunningday.org.

Hey runners, be sure to sign up for the Peloton app. You can actually try it 30 days for free. No equipment is needed, and you can use the app to track all of your movement in one place, from your outdoor running and walking to your strength

training, even your meditation, and you can enhance your daily workout routine or training schedule with workouts that feel right for you. You can find the Peloton app in the Apple App Store as well as the Google Play Store. New paid memberships only, terms apply. Peloton, the official digital fitness partner of New York Road Runners.

Coming up later in the show, our friend Meb Keflezighi, will be here to interview Gabrielle Yatauro. She's a New York Road Runners member and is also a very fast runner. She'll be joining the elite field as a local runner and she'll be joining Dakota Lindwurm and all the other incredible pros we've got lined up at the starting line of the Mastercard New York Mini 10K. Then a little later in the show, Meb will be back with his Meb Minute. He'll be giving us some advice on goal setting.

We are thrilled to have an incredible guest with us today. Dakota Lindwurm, who is quickly becoming the U. S. A. 's favorite marathon "underdog" from her beginnings as a, some might say average high school runner and then a walk on at her division II college. Dakota has trained and willed herself to two victories at the Grandma's Marathon. Most recently, she earned a spectacular third place finish at the U. S.A. Olympic Marathon trial, securing her place into the Olympics in Paris 2024. She's known for not just her incredible skills as a runner, but her character smile while racing. And I can see that smile as we get set to start this interview right here on Set the Pace. Dakota, it is so great to have you with us here on the show. Thanks for joining us.

Dakota Lindwurm: Yeah, thanks so much for having me. I'm really excited to be a part of it.

Rob Simmelkjaer: It was so much fun to see you break through in Orlando. I was there and watching that race unfold and of course we knew some of the names and a lot of the names there. And I'm relatively new to my role as CEO of New York Roadrunners and new to the professional running world. So I would have to be perfectly honest, I did not know you as I watched you finish third that day in Orlando to make the Olympic team. And so this is a chance for me and our listeners to get to know Dakota Lindwurm. And I just want to start out with what I usually ask people when I first meet them. Where are you from? Where'd you grow up?

Dakota Lindwurm: I grew up in Saint Francis, Minnesota, which is about an hour north of the city. It's a small town of maybe 4 or 5,000 people.

Rob Simmelkjaer: And was running something that was a big part of your life as a kid or did it really just start in high school for you? How did running become a part of your life?

Dakota Lindwurm: Yeah, I started in high school my freshman year. Being from Minnesota, like a true Minnesotan, I played hockey for most of my life. And then my freshman year, my mom was just kind of like, "You know, you're so invested in hockey and that's amazing, but you need to broaden your horizons. Great athletes are typically

great at a lot of things, so let's get you in something else." And I threw a fit. I wasn't super happy about joining a different sport because I was so obsessed with hockey, but I decided to go out for the track team because I typically beat the boys in the mile in gym class.

So I was like, "I must be pretty naturally talented at this." And it just turns out the boys in my gym class didn't try very hard because when I got on the track team, I was directly on the JV team and took last a lot my freshman year. But because I was so bad at it and I'm generally a pretty athletic person who picks something up pretty quickly, I think because I was so bad at it, it kind of fueled a fire for me. I was like, "I'm going to work really hard to be better." And I think it was a blessing that I wasn't a natural at running.

Rob Simmelkjaer: Yeah, I could see that. And I can also see how hockey would be a tough thing to give up. In Minnesota, they play both indoor arena hockey and then I know pond hockey is huge in Minnesota. Were you a pond hockey player as well?

Dakota Lindwurm: Yeah. I mean, I'd get done with practice and then we'd go play. We, I guess call it shinny hockey where you're not in full gear, you just go play hockey at whatever rink is open at night basically. I was pretty obsessed with it and I played all summer long and any chance I had to get on the ice, I was doing it for sure.

Rob Simmelkjaer: Was there anything from the hockey that you found translated well to running? I mean, there is endurance, especially if you're on for a long shift or something in ice hockey, you've got to have some pretty good lung capacity.

Dakota Lindwurm: Well, let me surprise you a little further. I was a goalie, so I didn't do a lot of skating. And let me tell you what I tell everybody is I think the biggest correlation between being an ice hockey goalie and a marathoner is you have to have a screw loose up here to want to be hurt that way. So I do think that they correlate in the way of I'm okay with being in pain.

Rob Simmelkjaer: That is 100% right. That is so funny. Yeah, the least endurance related spot in a hockey rink and that was you playing goalie. That's so funny. So as you go through high school, Dakota, when did it occur to you, I guess that you might actually have something with this running? You mentioned beating some of the boys in the mile, but then finishing last in the JV races. What was the progression and when did you start to realize, okay, this is kind of something I'm good at and maybe longer distances being where you could shine?

Dakota Lindwurm: I don't know if I ever really thought like, oh, I'm pretty good at this in high school because I never qualified for state meets, I never won any conference titles. But what I did really love about it compared to hockey was that I was working really hard in the off season. I was working really hard on the weekends and I was seeing the results on the track. I was getting better every year. I never really was great

in high school, but I was seeing the PRs pretty frequently. Where in hockey, I was continuing to work really hard, but my position, I could only do so much. I could stop all the goals, but I couldn't score any and I felt like I wasn't seeing those direct results. So somewhere around my junior year, it kind of sunk in that instead of me being like, okay, I'm training during the cross country and track, I'm just training for hockey, it became like I'm just waiting for hockey to get done so I can get back on the track and get back in cross country. And that flip kind of switched for me around my junior year and that's when I started to think, well after college or I mean, after high school I'd really like to continue to run if I could and that's when I started reaching out to my college coach.

Rob Simmelkjaer: Yeah. And you were not someone who was on a lot of recruiting lists, it sounds like. Nobody was calling your parents or coming to your meets to try to recruit you. You were making the calls, which by the way I can relate to. Did the same when I was coming out of high school for playing baseball. How did it play out that you ended up getting onto a college team? You went to Northern State University, and what was that process like of being able to walk on and run there?

Dakota Lindwurm: Yeah, I didn't get a single recruiting letter, not a single person reached out to me to be a runner, and that's perfectly fine. I had kind decided on the college that I wanted to go to was Northern State. The campus was pretty small. It's in a small town and it had my major and it was very affordable, so I knew that's where I wanted to go. And then they had a track team, so I just emailed a coach. I said, "Here are my times. I perfectly understand that I am not somebody who you typically give a scholarship to, but if you let me on your team, I'm going to work really hard." And a day or two later, he called me and said, "You'd be a really great walk on addition." And for me that was him offering me a full ride scholarship.

I was so thankful for the opportunity that I really wanted to keep my word and say, "I'm going to work as hard as I can for you," which he probably wasn't expecting me to be eventually a five time national qualifier, two time all American. But he definitely picked a good diamond in the rough for sure.

Rob Simmelkjaer: And it's an incredible thing when a coach is able to find that, right, because they've all got limited scholarship slots available for their sport. And when someone with talent pops up out of the blue and comes on as a walk-on, that's like gold for a college coach. What was the process once you got there like of improving and when did you or your coach or someone say, "Wait a second, we got something here? I think we got a steal."

Dakota Lindwurm: Actually, it took me a year to get my stride. I feel like, as a lot of people do, I had a little bit of a difficult time transitioning in college and I had a teammate, her name was Sasha Hovind. She had the exact same high school PRs as I did, 5:35 in the mile 1157 in the two mile to the second, the exact same PRs. And her sophomore year in cross country, she qualified for the national meet and I was

nowhere near it. And we drove down, we watched her compete, she became an All-American that first time. And it was sitting there that sophomore year being like, "She had the same exact PRs as me. All I have to do is do what she does and I can do that too." And that's when the flip really switched for me.

And I did whatever she did. If she were on a workout hard, I run it just as hard. If she stayed after to do core, I did core. And that was where she really set the example for me for sure. And then that outdoor season, I qualified for the national meet as well. So that's, I'm sure, when my coach was like, "Oh, all right, we got a good one here."

Rob Simmelkjaer: It's amazing what someone setting in the example can do. We think about having a pacer in a race. This is almost like having a pacer in life. You see someone doing it and you say, "I want to do that. I just need to keep up with them." And it can be transformative to have essentially a role model. You're talking about a role model who is also a contemporary and a teammate of yours that helped you figure out the path to being what you could be.

Dakota Lindwurm: Yeah, absolutely. I'm super thankful for her because if she wasn't my teammate, if she wasn't there setting that example, there's no way of knowing if I'd be where I am today. So I'm really grateful for that and I've always sought that rising tides, floats all boats and her having so much success just elevated my success for sure.

Rob Simmelkjaer: So what were your preferred distances, Dakota, in college, and did you start to now really gravitate towards longer distances? Where were you in terms of your distance endurance and where you were lengthwise?

Dakota Lindwurm: Yeah, my college coach only let me run one 10K my freshman year. He was pretty conservative in the idea of doing too high a mileage and he wanted to make sure we had long successful, healthy careers. So I got to do one 10K that freshman year, and I immediately knew that the 10K was for me. I felt like when I would do 5Ks, I would give everything I could in that 5K and then five minutes later, once the race was over, I'd be like, "Okay, let's do it again." I was recovering so quickly. So yeah, I was a 5K, 10K girl, but definitely knew 10K was my strength

Rob Simmelkjaer: And that was a signal for what would come later. Obviously, your body was telling you, you can go longer here, this is good. We like to keep going. And so did that essentially turn you into a 10K runner as you went further into your college career?

Dakota Lindwurm: Yeah, absolutely. And then even as I got farther and I was getting more successful, I almost never just did one event. It was always like the 5K, 10K double, and I was never really banged up or beat up or tired after, which was also kind of like now looking back, I can see that was my body telling me you're really a marathoner. You don't really get exhausted from these short races.

Rob Simmelkjaer: Having your body tell you is one thing and then picking up on those signals and listening to it is something else, right? Because a lot of people, maybe they have in their mind, "No, no, no, I'm not a marathon or I'm not a long distance runner. I'm a 5K person." They kind of resist and fight what their body's telling them, but it sounds like you were ready to listen and to go that longer distance.

Dakota Lindwurm: And a little funny story people don't always know is my college coach always encouraged us to run summer races, jump into 5K or 10K, stay motivated for cross country. And after my freshman year going into my sophomore year, I convinced him to let me run a trail marathon. And so every summer in college I ran this trail marathon and won it. So I already kind of knew that my body was built for the long haul for sure.

Rob Simmelkjaer: Wow, that's pretty unusual for someone at that collegiate level to already be sampling the marathon distance. So you really had a sense at a very young age. And so as you get out of college, Dakota, the marathon's already in your mind at that point, right? So what is your thinking? As you're getting out of school, is a professional running career fully in your sights at that point and knowing that's what you wanted to do?

Dakota Lindwurm: Not at all. I knew that I was going to keep running. Running is my everything. It's what makes me feel most like myself, and I knew I was never going to not be a runner, and I thought, "You know, I'll train for local 5K, 10Ks marathons, maybe I'll qualify for Boston one day." I didn't really have any sense of what professional running was. I literally didn't understand what it meant. And I was helping my coach give a perspective athlete a tour of the school, and his parents said to me, "What are you planning on doing? Surely you're not done with running." And I gave some answer like, "Yeah, I'll always keep running. I want to train for marathons." And my college coach just looked me in the eyes and he goes, "You could qualify for the Olympic trials in the marathon." And I looked and I said, "What is that?" I was like, "What does that mean?"

And the next day, I walked into his office with a notepad and a pen and I said, "I need to know everything about what you just said. How do I qualify? What pace is that? How do I get a coach? How do I enter the race? I needed to know everything about it." And he certainly wasn't saying, "Hey Dakota, I don't think you should put everything aside and pursue professional running." Because I was promising at the marathon, but I wasn't a Sara Hall in college. I wasn't an Emma Coburn or a Kara Goucher. I wasn't somebody who was guaranteed going to be a really successful professional runner or anything. So he was just saying, "Hey, you should try to qualify for the race." Not, "Hey, maybe qualify for the Olympics someday." And I was just always somebody who's all in on something so I was like, "If I'm going to try to qualify for the Olympic trials, I'm going to try to qualify for the team."

Rob Simmelkjaer: And so you qualified for the Olympic trials in 2020 and you finished 36th in that race. Super respectable, obviously for someone who didn't even know what they were not long before that. So what was that experience like? What did you get from the experience of preparing and then running in that first trials race in 2020?

Dakota Lindwurm: Yeah. I think that was a perfect first Olympic trials for me because I had no expectations. If I would've come in last, I think I'd have been just as happy as coming in 36 or whatever. I had a pretty horrible race there. I can very vividly remember like a lot of people did. The wind got pretty bad and the hills were pretty horrible. But I just enjoyed it and I learned from it and I watched what the front pack was doing for as long as I could until I couldn't keep up with them any more kind of thing. I just felt like I got to go have a really good experience there. Which then going into 2024, I felt like, oh, this is something I've done before and it's no big deal, which I think kept me kind of calm going into 2024.

Rob Simmelkjaer: And as you come out of 2020 now, you're now a runner, right? I mean, you're thinking about running for real and of course your greatest successes at the marathon distance before you're making the Olympics were Grandma's, winning back to back Grandma's, which is an iconic race. How did that come about? What was your thinking going into those races and how did that really change your perspective in terms of what you were capable of?

Dakota Lindwurm: Yeah, I think going into Grandma's has always been a really great place for me because it's, I don't know, three hours north of where I live. It's a car ride up there. It feels like home. I grew up going up to Duluth all the time with my family. And so it's just really low pressure in comparison to going to a Boston where it feels really high pressure and they don't typically bring in a super strong field. So it feels like I can be a top dog there and it's helped me just build a lot of confidence. And I feel like every time I go to Grandma's, my career just elevates one more step, one more step. So going there that first time in 2021 and winning, I was kind of like, "Oh, this is a big deal." And it ended up helping me get my Puma sponsorship. And then I went back the next year and ran 225, which was a really great time at that point for me. I felt like that really put me on the map over and over.

Rob Simmelkjaer: And it was around that time, Dakota, 2020, '21 that you lost your mom. And you talked earlier about your mom being the person who came to you and said, "Hey, why don't you take those skates off for a little while and put on some running shoes and give this a go?" What was it like for you going through that period where your running is kind of taking off, right? You're exploding, you have great performances around the same time that you're losing the person who got you into this sport in the first place.

Dakota Lindwurm: Yeah. I love to tell this story of in 2019 I ran Grandma's and it's where I qualified for the 2020 trials. My mom was sick for a lot of my life and she

had autoimmune diseases where every day was really unpredictable, so you never knew how she was going to wake up feeling. And more often than not, she woke up feeling pretty bad where she couldn't maybe leave the house or even leave her bed. So going into that Grandma's in 2019, my expectations were low of her coming up to watch because it was unlikely. And I finished, I qualified for the trials and I was so, so surprised across the line and then looked to my left, and she was right there at the finish line, and I can still remember our hug and hear her crying saying, "You did it." And then of course, 2020, we lost her.

And then 2021, went back up there and won for the first time. I crossed the line and I looked over to my left, right exactly where my mom stood and nobody had any idea about this, but my grandpa was standing right there, and that was the first race he had ever watched me run. And I got to win and I got to go right into his arms. And it was just really, really special to share that moment with him. It's really amazing. I know that she would be so incredibly proud of me, but I wish for one second that I could just tell her, "Mom, you were right." I wish I could give her that satisfaction of you were right all along by making me join a new sport.

Rob Simmelkjaer: She definitely was onto something. And it's great, I understand that feeling of wishing that a parent could see some of these moments that you're having. It is great that she was able to see you qualify for the trials because that was kind of a moment where clearly there was something going on here and you knew it and she probably knew it. So at least there was that opportunity to have that moment. And I'm sure that moment is when you think about a lot during races, at the end of races. It must be a huge motivator for you.

Dakota Lindwurm: Yeah, absolutely. And she didn't really know much about running or maybe if anything about running, so she was always just proud when I would finish. I mean, she'd be super proud that I made an Olympic team, but she'd be just as proud if I would have taken 70th at the Olympic trials. So I can't wait to celebrate with her someday in heaven, but for now I get to just imagine what she's doing up there.

Rob Simmelkjaer: Absolutely. Amen to that. So all right, let's talk about what happened this year. So you are getting ready for your second Olympic trials and you and your coach, Chris Lundstrom, decide to increase your weekly mileage to 130 miles a week, which is some impressive mileage. Can you talk about training for trials this year, what you did differently and how that mileage really ended up being a key to your success?

Dakota Lindwurm: Yeah, it's not that crazy that I bumped up to 130. I did 120 pretty frequently, and right before I left for Orlando, which I went down the day after Thanksgiving to train because Minnesota winter is so unpredictable. I wanted to be in good weather, similar weather to what I'd be racing in. And a few days before I left, I said, "You know, I feel like I've been really comfortable at 120. Let's bump up to 130 and see what happens." We kind of have nothing to lose. Either I have a really great

race and I make the team or I don't. Like it's not a big deal if we give it a shot and it doesn't work kind of thing.

Especially because I didn't feel like I was currently in the fitness or I had been in the fitness it would take to make the team. I felt like I needed to do a little bit more. And I think just bumping up for some reason just helped me click all across the board. I felt like I was able to still do my workouts really, really well. I never looked back at any of the workouts I did in my build to the Olympic trials and thought, "Oh, I wish that one had gotten better." Every single one was pretty flawless and I think it had to do with just having the confidence of the mileage and just getting a little bit extra fit from having that bump in mileage for sure.

Rob Simmelkjaer: So when you stepped to the starting line in Orlando, it sounds like it was a very different mindset than the one you had four years prior where now you're not just happy to be there, you're there to see what you can do. And as you looked at the other women at that starting line, the Emily Sissons of the world, what was your strategy? How did you want the race to out and then how did it ultimately out for you?

Dakota Lindwurm: Yeah, I had a call with a coach before, the Tuesday before and we kind of went through a race plan. The plan was to be unseen and unheard for as long as possible. I didn't want anybody to know that I was even there. I am somebody who has taken the lead in races before early, and I didn't want to do that. I wanted to waste as little energy as possible. And I told Lando that I was just going to follow any move anybody made a day and just hope that I'm in the final three in the last bit. And his incredible advice and wisdom was that's fine if the moves seem legit, go with them. But know that around mile 18 to 20, people are going to start making moves that are too big for their britches and be aware of those moves and say, "Hey, I'll make it up slowly rather than try to throw down big surges."

And he was exactly right. I stayed pretty quiet for most of the race. I did take the lead for a mile or two about halfway through, and I saw my family and got excited, but I worked my way back. And then around 18 or 20, Fiona made that really big press. Emily went with her, and then another group of women, it was like Sara Hall, Betsy Saina, and a few other women made a move to go with, but I thought to myself, I'm like, "Not all those women can hold that pace." And that's where Lando's really great advice came in and I said, "Okay, well I'm going to let them take that pace and then I'm just going to slowly tip away at it." And then somewhere around, I don't know, 22-ish, I caught back up to Sara and Betsy. Emily and Fiona were gone at that point and I was like, "I can still make this team. I can be the third place."

And I passed Sara, I passed Betsy. Betsy hung on with me for a second. I had Carolyn Rotich on shoulder, but then around 23 or 24, I started to hear things like, "Five seconds back, 10 seconds back." That was the first time that I was like, "Oh my gosh, I'm on this team if I can just finish this race." Of course, I was constantly like, you can't think about the finish line until you're there. But yeah, I just felt like I was kind of in a zombie walk to the finish line, just like get there, don't have any thoughts. I'm typically so smiley and so engaging with the crowd, but I was really just laser focused

being like if you cannot celebrate until you can touch the finish line, and that's exactly what happened, you seem to be super serious. And then once I'm four steps away, I let it all out.

Rob Simmelkjaer: What was that moment for you? What was going through your mind as you crossed that finish line? What's the first thing you thought about?

Dakota Lindwurm: I think when you see me finish, I literally put my hands on my head and I go, "What?" I knew it was going to happen, but for it to come to fruition, for you to have all your hard work paid off in one moment. Only three people make the Olympic team every four years, you know how small of a chance you have of making that team and for it to come true is, I think I've been looking for the right word to describe it since that day and I don't know that it exists.

Rob Simmelkjaer: What's the best call or text that you've gotten or that you got right after that race reacting to you making the Olympics?

Dakota Lindwurm: I thought it was pretty cool. I got a message from our mayor of Minneapolis, Jacob Frey. He was actually a former runner and he congratulated me and he actually asked me to go for a run with him. So I thought it was kind of cool because he's famous here in Minneapolis, so I thought that was pretty cool.

Rob Simmelkjaer: I love it. Well, you're going to be pretty famous everywhere and you're going to be famous here in New York. Talk about deciding to come to join us here in New York and what you're hoping to get from the experience.

Dakota Lindwurm: Yeah, this was a perfect opportunity for me to get to the Mini. I've never been because Grandma's is typically two weeks later and I'm pretty committed to being a part of that weekend at this point, and you can't really race a 10K two weeks before a marathon. So as soon as somebody brought it up, I was like, "Yes, I'm doing the Mini this year because everybody talks about how well it's put on." It's a women's only, just like gal pal kind of weekend. And gosh, the New York Road Runners, I always say they have the hardest darn courses and they are so challenging, but everybody loves to go to them because they put on the best races, they treat us so well and they bring together world-class fields every time. It's like every year we're like, "This is the best field ever." And then next year it's going to be like, "This is the best field ever." You guys just are constantly raising the bar for sure.

Rob Simmelkjaer: Well, Sam Grotewold, who is our director of pro athletes just does such a great job putting those fields together. We actually interviewed him last week on Set the Pace, so you can go back and listen to that if you're interested in how he does it. But what's it going to be like lining up against so many of these incredible runners, including your teammates going to Paris? We know it's obviously the marathon

and Paris is your focus now we get it, but what do you hope to get even just out of the race this weekend?

Dakota Lindwurm: I race 10Ks so infrequently. I quite literally don't even know what my PR is. I think I just looking to snag a PR. I'm sure I'm in better shape than the last time I ran a 10K. I would be naive to say that I want to compete against some of these best 10K runners in the world and I don't know want to go race it, have a good time in New York and hopefully just get a good key on where my fitness is right now.

Rob Simmelkjaer: Have you spent much time in New York before?

Dakota Lindwurm: I've been there for the united half a couple of times, and I was there for the marathon in 2021, the really hot year. I mean, I think you can always have more time in New York for sure.

Rob Simmelkjaer: Well, we are thrilled to have you. And you mentioned earlier the smile that you often run with just not maybe right before the finish line of the Olympic trials. Where does that come from? I mean, I saw that in some other video of you just always running with a smile. You interact with the crowd a lot. I'm sure you'll have so many people yelling your name in New York. There's going to be a lot of smiling we hope in the Mini 10K, but how does that work for you? Does that help you run better to loosen you up and get you to a better head space when you're running with a smile in your face?

Dakota Lindwurm: Yeah. It actually goes back to that first marathon in Grandma's, my first road marathon. I was going through a rough patch around mile 12, which is kind of too early to go through a rough patch in a marathon. And I happened to see my dad and him and I have a fun relationship, so I kind of gave him the strong arm, thumbs up, smile, and he immediately pulled me out of that rough patch and I was like, "Oh, maybe there's something to this." And I just started deciding to have fun. In fact, it's kind of a silly way to try to make a living if you don't love to do it, and I do love it. So why in the world on race day do I decide to be super serious? That would be, I don't know, it's just not me. So it's not authentic. So I started to just smile at everybody and every time I started feeling rough, I'd kind of give a wave like, "Let me hear you," or put my hand in my ear to get them to cheer louder.

And it continued to pull me out of those rough patches. And I was like, "There's something to this for sure." And if I'm smiling, I'm hearing people say, "Oh, she looks so great." And I'm like, "Yeah, I do look so great. I feel awesome." And sure enough, I ended up looking it up. And sometimes when you're smiling through something that is hard, it literally will trick your brain into saying like, "We are enjoying this." Even if it isn't super enjoyable in that moment. So yeah, I don't know. It just kind of became my trademark that way.

Rob Simmelkjaer: I can totally relate to what you're saying. The power of smiles on other people, but then even on yourself. Just the motion of putting your face into a smile, you're right, it sends signals to your brain and to your body that everything's good here. I need to try this because every time I ever see a photo of myself running a half-marathon or even a 10K, I just look like I'm in so much pain and I'm not even doing it for a living. I'm just out there doing it purely for fun. You're out there doing it as a professional athlete and you can smile. So if you can do it, I think I should be able to do it.

Dakota Lindwurm: You know, I think that's another thing too I've thought of is if just one person who's never run a race or a marathon sees me and goes, "Wow, she's leading this race or is being really competitive and she's having a good time, maybe I can go just compete and finish it and have a good time." And I hope it inspires at least one person to at least sign up for a race and say, "Maybe this is fun."

Rob Simmelkjaer: I love it. It's fantastic. Well, hopefully you'll have a smile on your face in Paris as well. How is the preparation going? What's your mindset for that experience? How are you thinking of it? Are you thinking of it as, all right, I want to get here in terms of a time or a finish, or are you thinking of it more as a, wow, I'm going to the Olympics, I want to soak up every moment of that experience from the opening ceremony to the closing ceremony?

Dakota Lindwurm: I'm going to try to do a mix. I definitely want to go and just say, this may be a once in a lifetime opportunity. Obviously, I'd like to make it in 2028 or 2032, but that's never promised. So I am going to go be a part of opening ceremonies. I'm going to go try to watch other events. I'm going to approach it as if it's any other marathon because I don't want to put any extra pressure on it just because it is the Olympics. So I'm going to go have fun, but I think because the course, I've been to Paris now, I got to see the course, I think because the course is so challenging and it'll be likely hot and humid in Paris that it opens it up for an underdog. And I keep saying I can't claim the underdog title for much longer, but I think I can claim it one more time in Paris. And I don't know, I want to go surprise some people. I think I could place well and on the right day, I wouldn't deny myself a medal, I'd say. I think that I could surprise somebody.

Rob Simmelkjaer: I love it. I absolutely love that mindset going in. What's your relationship with hills, Dakota? Because that's what everyone's saying is people are intimidated by the hills. We know a lot about hills here in New York. How do you feel about hills?

Dakota Lindwurm: I prefer flat marathons, but the great thing is we know it's hilly, so we'll train for it. I've got an amazing coach who I trust with my life, and we've already been incorporating a lot of hill work, and I've got a couple really great strength coaches who I've explained the course to, and they're like, "All right, we're going to get your quads

ready to get beat up on those downhills." So I have full trust in the system and in the process, so I think I can be better than I have been on hills before, and I like that it's going to be hilly because some of those women can run nearly 10 minutes faster than I can in a marathon, but they won't on this course.

Rob Simmelkjaer: So Dakota, somewhere out there listening to this is a high school version of Dakota Lindwurm or maybe one of their parents, a girl who is an average high school runner, maybe just discovered it. Heck, my daughter just started running cross country in ninth grade and she's running maybe a 22 something 5K. Pretty good for somebody who just started, but no one's looking at her as a division I athlete at least just yet. But what's your message to someone like that now as you prepare to represent the United States at the Olympic Games? What would you say to that girl out there in terms of what they can get out of running?

Dakota Lindwurm: I like to say, don't set any limit on yourself. Just because you're not doing what the best in your state is doing, doesn't mean that you can't be better someday. Everybody develops in a different timeline, and you just always have to be the first person to bet on yourself and say, "I believe in myself. I believe in the hard work that I will do and it will pay off someday. Maybe not in the most immediate future, but if I keep on keeping on keeping on, you're going to surprise somebody."

Rob Simmelkjaer: And that payoff, Dakota, I mean, it could be a payoff like the one you're experiencing, but running can pay off in so many different ways. What are some of the ways that running has paid off for you, aside from the fact that it's been your career?

Dakota Lindwurm: I think running, I mean, aside from the money, the fame, the glory, running pays off every single day for me. I get to wake up, put my shoes on, and go do something I love in the deepest way. On my very worst days of running, I love it more than just about any other activity, and it really centers me, and I think I'm just really grateful that I found it for sure.

Rob Simmelkjaer: Dakota, we are grateful to you. We're so excited to have you in New York this weekend at the Mastercard New York Mini 10K. It's going to be such a thrill to see you line up along with all these incredible, great female athletes. So thank you for joining us, for telling your story. It's awesome and we're all rooting for you this weekend, and then of course in Paris as well.

Dakota Lindwurm: Yeah, thanks so much for having me on. I'm excited to be a part of the Mini finally.

Rob Simmelkjaer: All right, Dakota Lindwurm, Mini 10K runner and Olympian coming up in the Paris 2024 games representing the United States in the marathon. You can

check her out this weekend at the Mastercard New York Mini 10K, and we will see you there.

Today's New York Road Runner member moment is with Gabrielle Yatauro. Gabrielle's a local elite runner who has run 33 races with NYRR since 2019. As a dual sport high school athlete, she transitioned away from sports and towards medical social work in college and graduate school, but she rediscovered her love of running with the Brooklyn Track Club. Like Dakota Lindwurm, Gabrielle is preparing for this weekend's Mastercard New York Mini 10K and she joins us today after running five half-marathons in the past five months, including both the United Airlines NYC Half and the RBC Brooklyn Half.

Meb Keflezighi: Thanks, Rob. Gabrielle, welcome to the podcast. How are you doing today?

Gabrielle Yatauro: I'm good. How are you?

Meb Keflezighi: I'm doing well. Well, you were a runner in high school, but the physical and emotional struggle in college with the sports drain, your desire to continue running. When and why did you start running again?

Gabrielle Yatauro: Yeah, college was a bit tougher than I had imagined, and I think I decided to take a break in college and after college and I decided to really focus in on my pursuit of social work. So I came to New York from Nashville, Tennessee to pursue grad school at Columbia University. And again, I really wanted to put running away and focus on social work. But the moment I got to New York, I think I decided to relieve some stress. I was going to take a little jog through Central Park, and I mean, I think any runner can attest to it. The moment I stepped into Central Park, I was just blown away. I just couldn't imagine what an oasis this was in the middle of the city and I started running in Central Park just for stress relief.

And then of course, as all again, I think a lot of New Yorkers know the moment I started running in the park, I had friendly faces come up to me and ask, "Who do you run with? You should definitely come out and run with us." And I got all these invites and questions on who I ran with, and as fate had it, I talked to someone very specifically who ran for Brooklyn Track Club. They invite me to a long run, very casually one Sunday, and the rest is history.

Meb Keflezighi: Well, you're right, Central Park, it keeps us all together and kind of keeps us sane and be able to just enjoy the comradery that brings the together. But when you're not running, you are a medical social worker. Can you help us understand what that job entails and how it helps you to do the job better as a runner?

Gabrielle Yatauro: Yeah, I think being a social worker in general, I found a love for community and helping others in that community and within a hospital, you really see all walks of life and at different points in life. So as a medical social worker, my main job is to provide support to families and the patients themselves, but then to help

coordinate their plan outside of leaving the hospital. So connecting them to whatever resources that they need within the New York City community or wherever they're coming from or going to and making sure they're well-supported, well-connected, and really seeing them through that process. And so I think that really translates well into even just the running community here in New York. I think my love for community and helping others and being a part of community was exactly the same as running here in New York. So it's a tough job, but it's very fulfilling. Same with running. Running is tough, but very fulfilling.

Meb Keflezighi: Sounds very parallel. For me, I visit doctors sometimes when it was elderly. I think just have another appreciation what your body is able to do because you can see all walks of life like it says after surgery, and now they have to go through their rehab and all those things. What is your mental thing? What do you think when you're struggling through the run or whatnot? Does that give you a little different perspective seeing those people?

Gabrielle Yatauro: Yes. Oh, absolutely. I mean, I specifically work here at NYU Orthopedic Hospital, and I work on the rehab center. And the rehab center specifically, I see people going into really intense occupational therapy, physical therapy, and I think we can all relate to the fact that a lot of us don't want to do therapy, don't want to put in the work sometimes, but we know it's needed. And watching patients go from something really traumatic or something that is really important to them and working towards getting out of the hospital healthier really does put into perspective. I'm seeing them go from maybe not walking to coming out walking. So when I get to run, it just really reminds me of how grateful I am to be able to do what I do and to be surrounded by the people that I am. I really lucky. And it definitely puts into perspective and I think it helps talk to patients as well and get more on their level as well, and understanding the hardships of what they're going through and their body. So it's nice.

Meb Keflezighi: Well, that's great. And then I'm pretty sure you inspire them. They inspire you equally. You have around five half-marathons in five a month, which is incredible, including (inaudible), few Olympians at the United NYC Half and winning the 2024 Surf City Half Marathon. What does it feel to have so many great experience and especially winning in your hometown?

Gabrielle Yatauro: Yeah, I think I'm really lucky to be able to have the opportunity. I've grown up in a lot of places, which really did emphasize my love for community. I've seen a lot of different walks of life, a lot of different places where I lived, and it was really exciting. I hadn't planned on running five. It kind of just came into every place that I've lived before had a half, and it was just so exciting because each half was just so celebratory and different in their own ways. To have friends that I've met while in New York City congratulate me and be along me, running next to me at the NYC Half and Brooklyn, and then to go to my hometown and have childhood friends be there to support me.

I mean, it truly made me feel so loved and just grateful to have that support and to be able to do that was, I mean, truly so fun. And I went from Houston Half starting where there's, I mean, so many elite runners go to Houston to get OTQs qualifying times and then to round it out with United Airlines and lining up with the professional leap field was, I mean, so indescribable. To be able to do that is just... I'm a regular, I work. Professional running is not my job. So to be able to line up going from the hometown to then lining up professionals in New York City was a dream come true,

Meb Keflezighi: Keep working hard. How was it for you to say, I'm going to go for a recreation run to Central Park, and that changed everything to now be part of the Brooklyn Track Club. And how important is the club for you as a runner now?

Gabrielle Yatauro: Yeah, I think I have to pinch myself every day when I do get these opportunities. Brooklyn Track Club has helped me so much. I mean, just in terms of feeling the love and support. I know no matter how I finish where I finish in a race, I have teammates, people that have inspired me since day one. Our captains, our women's team, we just have so many different people that same as me, have really tough jobs. They're moms, they're just doing day-to-day things, but to always come together come race day, or even practices on Tuesday nights at McCarren Track, it is so welcoming and loving and it just feels so supportive.

Brooklyn Track Club has really kind of helped me meet other people too. And not even just Brooklyn Track Club, even for the United Airlines Half. They were women from Central Park Track Club, Dashing Whippets, Front Runners, so many other clubs, and we all got to stand together on the line. And I think we all become, there's a lot of different teams in New York, I mean hundreds of teams, which fits to each person's what they want, but when we stand together on the line, it truly did feel like we are New York. We came all from the same place. And it's always special to have a team and people that are constantly there for you. It's cool.

Meb Keflezighi: Gabrielle, I hear you're running the Mastercard New York Mini 10K. How excited are you and what are you looking forward to?

Gabrielle Yatauro: Oh, I'm so unbelievably excited for this weekend. I think really everyone is going to be in Central Park come Saturday. New York Road Runners post today. I mean, they're seven out of the top 10 OTQ Marathon qualifies for the Olympics. We have world record holders, women that have won the New York City Marathon. I mean, it's truly so exciting to be able to line up next to those women and it's so inspirational. I can't wait. I think because it's all women too, it's so unique and it really just gives us a placeholder to stand advocate for ourselves and do what we do best, which is run, jog, walk through Central Park. It's going to be a great weekend.

Meb Keflezighi: Well, you are all about community, so looking forward to seeing you on that area.

Gabrielle Yatauro: Definitely.

Meb Keflezighi: We're so delighted to have you on the podcast. Keep up the great work and wish you the best in the future.

Gabrielle Yatauro: Yeah, thanks so much.

Rob Simmelkjaer: Thank you, Gabrielle, for joining us and for being a member of New York Roadrunners. We will all be watching for you this weekend at the Mastercard New York Mini 10K. Now it's time for the last part of our show, the Med Minutes.

Meb Keflezighi: Thanks, Rob. Goal setting is so important. It's the right mind frame to lead to running success. Three things that needs to be determined for your long-term goals. You have set goals, you have to make a commitment and be a hard worker. Goals are important because they are a roadmap to success. As we heard our podcast this day, Dakota Lindwurm going to the Olympics from being a walk on. This is something that you should plan for long term, but believe in yourself that you want to do it. You don't want to say, "Hey, I expect this or want that," but you want to be able to just say, "I want to do this." Make a commitment to be able to be the best he can.

A goal needs to be specific, like for me was like, win New York or win Boston or make an Olympic team in 2012. Or sometimes it's specific as running a 10K. "I want to break the American record." You are personally making that a goal for yourself and for others. And if you can tell to some close friends, that makes huge. But goals are important. They get you out of the bed and make you get up when the weather is not nice. So as long as you tie your shoes and stop pursuing your goals, great things can happen.

And as we have seen, Dakota come from a walk on or average runner in high school and to making the Olympic team, it's just such a wonderful, never give up on your dreams, keep pursuing and one mile at a time, one goal at a time, and scratch them out. Make them attainable. Don't make them so far that you can't reach it, but as long you making a checkup and going to the progress one step at a time, you're going to do wonderful. And congratulations to Dakota on making her first Olympic team and just the underdog, finishing third is good as gold.

Rob Simmelkjaer: We have reached the finish line of another episode of Set the Pace. Thank you to our amazing guest today, Dakota Lindwurm and Gabrielle Yatauro. And don't forget to catch them both this weekend at the Mastercard New York Mini 10K. If you like this episode, please go ahead and subscribe, rate it, leave a comment for us on whatever platform you're listening on. This helps us hear your voice, what you'd like to hear in the podcast. And of course it also helps others find out about the show as well. Thanks for listening. Enjoy the Miles.