

MARATHON

continued from B1

unbelievably wet.”

Growing up, Udosenata didn't play organized sports.

“In high school, I played the viola and was a thespian and I was very anti-anything athletic at all,” she said. “And then in college I lifted and did the stair master to just look a certain way. And then I loved backpacking. So, I guess I was active-ish in college. But I was not a sporty person.”

With no real desire to start now, Udosenata was convinced by her boyfriend of the time (and now husband Iton Udosenata) to compete in a duathlon

in Corvallis. The Heart of the Valley Duathlon includes and 11-mile bike ride that is book-ended by a pair of 5K runs. The pair competed in the race and Miriam Udosenata caught the running bug.

“I really liked the running part. And so we did the Butte to Butte a couple months later. I liked that, it's a 10K. Then I signed up for the EWEB Run to Stay Warm a couple months after that. Did the half marathon and then I did the Eugene full marathon five months later,” she said.

“I got really hooked.”

While the rain wasn't going anywhere, Udosenata was.

By mile four, the pack of peo-

ple had spread thin enough and she was hitting her goal pace. And mile four meant it was time to fuel up.

“My plan for fueling was to take a gel every four miles. And I stuck to it, and I just kept, okay, four miles, time to take another one,” said Udosenata. “And then I just focus on getting to that next four mile point where I can take another one just to, you know, mental games you play to get through when it's tough like that.”

As the miles started to add up, screaming spectators cheered her on as she passed fellow racers.

“I mean, there were so many fans out – just like normal – so you feel like a rock star the entire way.”

Suddenly running was everything for Udosenata. She ran the Portland Marathon where her time of 3:40:32 got her under the qualifying time of 3:45:00 (and has since moved to 3:40:00) and she punched her ticket to Boston in her second marathon ever.

“At that point I started getting a lot of running friends and getting really plugged into the Eugene running community and kind of found a whole new tribe of people. And it's just adult peer pressure,” she said. “You start running new marathons and then the big goal is to qualify for New York City Marathon which is actually harder to qualify for than Boston.”

She continued to run races, post impressive times and qualify and compete at bigger stages including the New York City Marathon in 2015. In 2016 she put up personal records at each distance but it was starting to be too much.

“By the end of 2016 I was totally burned out. And was just like, I'm done,” she said.

Done – for the time being – with racing. Not running.

“I still ran like 2,700 miles in 2017.”

Having qualified for Boston 2018 with a 3:23:20 time at the California International Marathon, Udosenata decided this was the year she went back for the Boston Marathon.

As Udosenata rolled through the miles, the notorious hills of the marathon waited in the distance. Starting at mile 17, racers encounter the Newton Hills that

crecendo at mile 20 with a half-mile ascent to what is known as Heartbreak Hill.

“At like mile 17, 18 I hear my name and my husband had... found me. And I saw him and I knew we were coming up to Heartbreak Hill – the Newton Hills up to Heartbreak. And that just kind of gave me a burst, like okay, we're almost there, we're almost there,” said Udosenata.

Having done extra hill training for this particular moment, she began her climb and was unfazed by the challenge.

“People don't want to hear this for the most part but really I don't think the Newton Hills are that big of a deal. I thought it the first time, and I thought it this time. They're really not,” she said.

“Butte to Butte's hill is much worse. I think the thing that is hard about Heartbreak is you're 20 miles in and that's where most people kind of start to hit the wall if they don't fuel right.”

Passing people the whole way up, she was filled with a feeling of pure ecstasy.

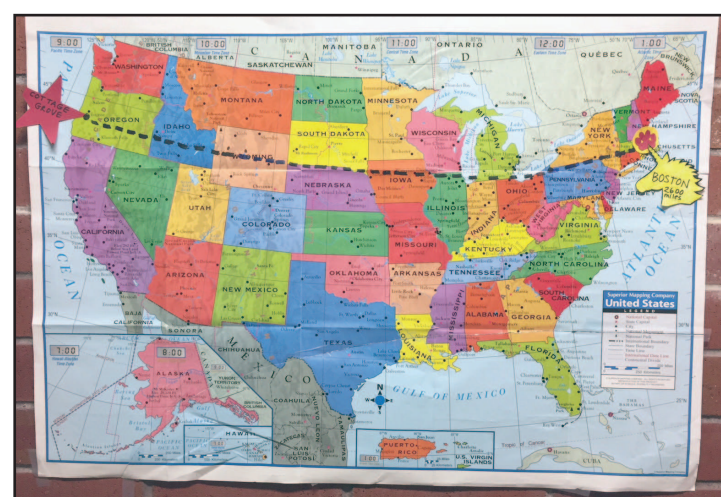
“Just kind of overcoming waves of just being so happy and feeling so lucky that I'm able to participate in something like this. Despite the weather, despite whatever, you know. We get to mile 23 and there's one of those complete atmospheric river dumps and I just woo-hoed at the top of my lungs when it started,” she said.

“What else can you even do? Bring it on, weather, whatever. And at that point I was able to look at my watch and be like, I'm getting a (personal record). No matter what I do right now.”

To get ready for the Boston Marathon, Udosenata prepared in a number of ways. She fine-tuned her lifting, found the right balance of mileage and mapped out possible race-day scenarios. She also threw some “Gatorade parties.”

A full-time PE teacher at Bohemia Elementary School, Udosenata involved her students in her training for Boston. Starting in January, one day a week the students would run laps around the track as part of a class competition – that earned them Gatorade – and to see if they could run across the country from Cottage Grove to Boston.

“On the map there behind



A map at Bohemia Elementary School that tracked mileage from Cottage Grove to Boston.

you, we kind of kept track of that little paw print moving across the country as the weeks went by,” she said.

With the miles the classes logged, and Udosenata's training miles, they made their physical goal. But also, accomplished other goals along the way.

“Just to watch some of my hardest classes behaviorally get so into it. Like push themselves... I would have marks on their arms on Boston laps days – it was the easiest way to mark them – and they would be like, ‘I got 15 last time, I'm getting 16 this time,’” said Udosenata.

“Running is a great sport because you don't need to be in some sort of [socioeconomic status] when you're younger where your parent puts you in some club soccer when you were three. It's like you need some shoes and your own grit and go for it.”

With her students into running, understanding what Boston is and having just met their goal for miles run, Udosenata left for Boston to compete in the race.

Through rain and hills and pain, Udosenata was met with euphoria on the way to the finish line.

“That's kind of when the magic of Boston that I felt last time kind of hits. And it's just this, for me, it's this emotional, I kind of want to cry, I kind of feel like choking and I just feel so thankful to be there,” she said.

“You're chasing that feeling. That doesn't happen every single time. But that's what you hope for and just luckily for me, and not luckily I put in a lot of hard work, but it happened again.”

Udosenata finished in a personal best time of 3:13:54.

As she crossed the finish line, a new challenge set in.

“People were really hypothermic and we were kind of ushered into this auditorium they have for runners to warm up. And people were just uncontrollable. And I was, too, at first. Almost delirious with cold that I've never really felt before,” she said.

Once she was able to get out of her soaking wet race clothes, she began to help her fellow runners in need around her. She explained how to get warm and helped remove their shoes as they were grateful and in shock.

“People were just like, ‘did we really – did that really just happen out there?’”

Less than two weeks after Boston, Udosenata was at it again with the marathon last Sunday; this time running as a pacer for the Eugene marathon. She led the 3:25:00 group for the first 17 miles before she handed off the group to a “running buddy” as she dealt with an aching right hamstring for the final nine miles and finished in a time of 3:45:25.

And after a pair of marathons, now it is time to rest until she decides what her goals are and what she wants to achieve in the coming year. There are marathons across the country and in Europe she has her eye on. And maybe even the marathon in Greece. And of course, Boston is on the list for a few years down the line.

“Boston, I'm not going to do it soon,” Udosenata said. “It's my special place.”

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