

Superintendent Profile, Thomas Bastis



Too many times we hear about Superintendents being burnt out from the stress of what is turf management. It is certainly easy to do with start times that border on ridiculous and go until the end of a 6pm board meeting because those board members work “regular” hours. Some can do that day in and day out, but for most of us mortals, it helps to have something that gets us away from golf; a release. For Bay Area Superintendents Thomas Bastis and Kevin Breen, they have found their release through running and I don’t just mean a jog through the park.

When did you have the idea to do this run and why did you decide to do it now?

I’ve had this bucket list run on my mind for at least a year but it’s been something that I know I could only attempt if I had a clear window of 3 months of solid running and not the other Mtn. biking, and kayaking that would distract me. Then I had a couple of people do it earlier in the year and I went through something called “FOMO” Fear of Missing Out. That’s kind of where I get that little extra motivation to do longer or harder miles. My normal motivation for doing longer miles comes from how good/bad a week I have had....

What is the name of the run or trailhead?

The run is called R2R2R or Rim to Rim to Rim. You start on the south side of the Grand Canyon at about 7,000 feet and head down the South Kaibob trailhead or Bright Angel. After about 2 hours and 5,000 feet of solid descent, you cross the Colorado River utilizing a suspension bridge and continue on the Arizona trail through Phantom Ranch across the canyon floor. I think it is after another 3ish hours of running that the pitch of the North Rim begins going very vertical and finally tops out at 8,000 ft. Half done and 23 miles down...23miles back.

How long have you been involved with adventuring/ultrarunning?

Myself and fellow superintendent Scott Bower (Martis Camp) started in 2004... I think. I started running a lot more because it is a great base of training for the other disciplines; kayaking and Mountain Biking. I’ve recently started picking each one of the disciplines to concentrate on for a year and compete in one big event. For instance, I spent a chunk of training time 2 years ago and completed the Tahoe Rim100 mtn. bike race, another year a 300 mile kayak race from Tampa Bay to Key Largo. It keeps thing different and I end up learning so much from hanging out with people that, that is all they do.

Have you run from an early age?

I think I had a normal childhood but don’t remember running a ridiculous amount. I was always able to pass the Presidential Physical fitness test in only running the running portion. I ran in high school but not college. I was more into biking in college but didn’t have enough time to really have a go at it.

How does running hours on end compare to being a superintendent?

Running is a bit like maintenance...if you do a little bit each day, you can stay in reasonable shape. If you don’t run often...it’s a mess. I think the running long hours or racing for days has taught me not to look at how longer the entire race is but to break down things into digestible parts. Kinda like eating an elephant...one bite at a time. I guess I’m just looking at a bigger elephant than most people care to think about.

Do you get more perspective on your job while running? What did you gain from this experience?

I have definitely solved a lot or have had a lot of time to think about problems. I rarely get angry...so I don’t run to blow off steam-not that a bit of stress is lost while running. A couple of things I get from running:

1. I think my members and even friends enjoy hearing some of the crazy stories or it’s easy to talk about something other than turf with me as a result.
2. Having another passion besides the golf course puts a lot of my time management in perspective.
3. If I want to run...I have to be more organized and efficient or it just doesn’t work.
4. Now that I have convinced another superintendent to run locally, (Kevin Breen) I am able to pass ideas, thoughts, and questions past him. The other guys we run with love it because it can be interesting stuff to hear.

What’s next on your list?

Next on the list running: maybe the Lost Coast in Northern California, the Napali Coast in Kauai and back to Patagonia, Chile for a 10-day adventure race in the Torres de Paine.

Surprisingly, running hours on end has a lot of similarities to a superintendent’s job. Throughout any run, a person goes through an emotional roller coaster. There is the initial feeling of being strong, then you get tired, a pain may pop up, you’ll think you can’t finish, and then finally your strength is back for the finish.

