

Team WTF? (Where's The Finish?)

Where do I start? We were mostly rookies in this relay, including me, the captain! The core group was Cyrena, Lisa and I. We decided early on that this race wasn't going to be about winning times (although we'd train to do our best on a hot August course) but having a team of all women that would make this experience fun! The main ingredient to make our day a success would be a good attitude and a desire to support each other rather than go for personal goals.

The Hunterdon Hillrunners Club was the well I kept going back to for advice, encouragement and spreadsheets to build for our team. With the Hillrunner veterans' support we were able to slowly and carefully build a team that existed for all of the right reasons. We found our team, after several replacements. Once again, the club veterans let us know that this was common and to just keep moving forward. It was amazing to me that as soon as we lost a runner, we would have a new person on our bench within a day.

As soon as we settled on our final seven runners, the bonds started forming and everybody had something special to bring to the team. This wasn't about speed either, although the speed was definitely there! For instance, Susan Oswald suggested building a private Facebook page for us. That kept us closely connected and we started to see all of our funny and quirky personalities emerge. In this group, funny and quirky is an asset!

We settled on a name: Team WTF? (Where's The Finish?) A little risqué, but it perfectly matched our cheeky attitudes. We were getting ready to get this thing going and no matter what happened, we'd have each other's backs and we'd be cheering all the way to Manasquan!

Rachael called it "a metaphor for life in that it is challenging but damn fun at the same time, and the payoff's pretty groovy." Rachael is pretty groovy, too!

As a rookie team captain, I thought it best to divide up the tasks so we all shared the load and we ensured buy-in to our team. We were more like "The Little Engine That Could", since we had no idea what the day would really hold for us. We gave each other confidence and brought out our best selves in each other. For me, that was the biggest lesson of the River To Sea Relay. If you build something together with love and commitment, whatever is created will contain your dreams and that will make it a success. We built this new entity, called Team WTF, containing a little DNA from each of us. Together we were so much stronger than the sum of our parts. We could not lose!

As for the event itself, we were pleased with the well-marked course. The cool, cloudy weather was a gift from the running gods. We were dumbstruck by the fact that our final time was 3 seconds off from our estimated time. We were obsessing for weeks that the times were based on our 5K's. How could we keep a 5K pace over a 92 mile course? Well, it happened! We came

in at 13:21:57 hours. Everybody was happy, healthy and ready to get our final team picture down by the surf.

I ran legs # 3 and # 8. They were the easy legs compared to the 'Beast' or the long, long stages, but I gave it all I had. I was a decade older and many, many minutes slower than any of the other members, so I felt compelled to apologize for my slower times. The uniform response was a puzzled look of "what is she talking about"? This wasn't 'team' talk but 'me' talk, I realized, so I stopped doing that right away! Cyrena ran the Beast like it was no big deal, and the rest took their legs on and finished with huge smiles! (We had a smiley group!)

Finally, we are grateful to the club for all the good advice and for the support from club members volunteering along the course. Even if it was just a glance at someone we recognized way out on the course, your faces reassured us. We also had 2 amazing drivers, Al and Jenn, who kept their cool and a great sense of humor all day. We mainly feel gratitude to each other and to the wonderful people in our lives that helped our highly anticipated, sometimes much feared, relay happen!

We want to do it again next year and to 'pay it forward' we'd like to help other new HRH runners build themselves a dream team of their own!

I'll finish with another member's final thoughts: "In the end you leave with 14 stages worth of memories that mean so much more than your finishing time ever will". (Susan Oswald)

Team WTF? (Where's The Finish?) R2C19 team member list

Lisa Engelhardt
Rose Heron
Valerie Mathews
Susan Oswald
Peggy Romeo (Captain)
Cyrena Terricone
Rachael Wild

Drivers

Al Romeo
Jenn Kimpel

Peggy Romeo, Captain, Team WTF? (Where's The Finish?) R2C19