15,000 feet, 52 miles and 3 rounds: Sam raises funds for Lifelink with an extreme challenge - Mental Health Awareness Week

Thursday 18 May, 2023

Sam, from Glasgow, recently set himself an extreme challenge to raise funds for Lifelink, a mental health and wellbeing charity based in Scotland. In one day, he set out to overcome his fears and achieve three milestones: skydiving, running two consecutive marathons, and boxing.

Speaking about his motivation for the challenge, Sam said, "I have always been the sort of person that jumps at opportunities. I get excited by ideas and I can turn my hand to most things. The major downside of this is I've always been aware of the lack of progress I've made due to me jumping from idea to idea. That feeling of changing direction so often that I was basically stagnant was frustrating and had left me in a mental rut often in life."

Despite bad weather forcing him to postpone the skydive until a few weeks later, Sam eventually managed to completed all three challenges, raising £2,000 (and still growing!). We spoke to Sam about that long hard day in March, starting with his cancelled skydive and ending after a double marathon in a boxing ring in Glasgow.

Was there any point in the day where you found yourself close to quitting or had to dig really deep to keep going?

“With 17km left to go I hit a ‘wall’ hard! It was the third wall that day but this one was different. This one hurt way worse. My body had nothing left to give. At this point I really knew I needed to dig deep. Kyle, my pacemaker for this portion of the race, dialled right in and locked down the pace so that I could just keep the head down, following him in sync, and mentally zone out of the pain. I have to thank everyone for the messages of encouragement on the donations page and through direct messages. Those messages helped so much to get me through the tough times. The support team on the aid stations and the support runners too. Couldn’t have done it without you all.”

Obviously fundraising for mental health, you must see a connection between good mental wellbeing and sport/exercise – what does this connection mean to you?

“100%. In my lowest moments there is always a direct connection that can be drawn to neglecting my physical wellbeing. Sometimes the neglect comes first and causes the low in mental wellbeing, sometimes it comes as the result of a low. It took me a very long time to realise this correlation, but now fixing those basics is always my first step when I notice a negative mood.

Running itself I find incredible for mental wellness. It’s meditative. It’s a form of therapy in itself. If I’m feeling stuck in its easy to pull on some trainers and run with my thoughts until the situation starts to feel less imprisoning.”

How important was it to have the support team around you helping on the day and running with you?

“Having the support team on the aid stations waiting for me with water and food along the course was key. Obviously running over a 10 hour period I had to eat a fair amount, so it needed to be lots of very quick snacks. The pacemakers and support runners were crucial too. Seeing the new faces come and go along the way kept my spirits high too. All these people, through my preparation and on the day, sacrificed so much to make this happen.”

What did it feel like to see everyone at the Riverside Museum in Glasgow for the finish line cheering you on?

“It was an incredible feeling. I didn’t actually know most of them were going to be there. The surprise combined with the feeling of achievement actually left me quite emotional. I was so proud of myself, and to have those who are closest to me there to help me celebrate and congratulate me, meant the world. I will never forget that feeling. Probably the best high of my life so far.”

Sam's fundraising efforts have been praised by Lifelink, who have thanked him for his support and dedication. "We are incredibly grateful to Sam for his fundraising efforts and for raising awareness of our

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work," said Jacqui Taylor, Chief Executive for Lifelink. "The funds raised will make a real difference to the lives of people in Glasgow who are struggling with their mental health, and we cannot thank Sam enough for his support."

You can learn more about Lifelink and access their free counselling and wellbeing services at www.lifelink.org.uk.

Sam's fundraising page is still live online until the 4th of June at https://www.peoplesfundraising.com/fundraising/koba-x-lifelink.

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