



WHAT MAKES TAR SO SPECIAL

BY RENE UNSER

You might be surprised to learn what sort of things stand out for racers after a week of racing in one of the most challenging international stage races. In fact, I would go so far as to say that they aren't what initially draws you to register for a race like this in the first place. There is most certainly, the challenge, the beauty, the appeal of travel, the adventure and of course... the curiosity and wonder behind "can I actually do this?"

In reality, however, what makes this race for special for most participants of the GORE-TEX® Transalpine-Run ends up being very trivial things that one can only appreciate after they have attempted or completed the crossing themselves. The first year I ran this race, was in 2011. When I think back to that inaugural year, things that stand out to me were moments like eating the most tasty "Spätzle" at the finish line in Galtur, Austria. The mounds of cow shit my husband cleaned off our shoes over 8 days. Running from Austria to Switzerland, down a beautiful mountain pass and as we ran past a cute elderly couple sitting on a bench who yelled out (in a Swiss accent, of course) "welcome to Switzerland." My partner and I both teared up and instinctively reached out and held each other's hand. No words were needed in that moment. We didn't need to say anything to acknowledge that we were both feeling grateful for each other and proud to know we have come this far on foot. It stoked a strong determination to carry on into Italy and eventually, into the finish line after an 8 emotional days.

While I have 7 years worth of stories that define what makes this race so special for me, I can confidently say that it's the simple joys that make it so special for the majority of participants. Things like running past herds of cows on an 8,000ft peak and hearing their cowbells ring throughout the land. Or the sound of the church bells ringing in the quaint little hosting villages. There are so many personal moments shared with your partner, like singing your way up the day's biggest climb, playing the alphabet game to things that are warm to help get you through a snowstorm or suffering so badly that you barely finish a stage, only to wake up the next day and run like a rock star and be baffled at how that's even possible, yet feeling motivated by the pleasant surprise. Racing through tunnels sewn into the side of the mountain, or the pat on the back or gesture of encouragement from your partner or complete stranger on the trail. Sitting with people from nations, only to finish the week as bonded friends. This race unites over 40 nations of likeminded folks from all over the world, which creates a special vibe all on it's own.

Undoubtedly, the GORE-TEX® Transalpine-Run will leave you feeling inspired. No matter how your own personal experience turns out. You are surrounded by the strength of 350 teams, pushing hard to reach the finish line and "check off" each stage, one-by-one. To witness the finish line crossings will leave you both emotional and motivated, as you know every team has a personal story or purpose behind being there. You will overcome challenges that you never dreamed possible and push yourself through new boundaries, despite your final outcome. The GORE-TEX® Transalpine-Run leaves you dazzled by the terrain, the gorgeous views and the determination to "keep on running." What makes this race so special, however, can only be discovered by those brave enough to attempt the alps crossing, as moments like these can only be experienced and earned.

Rene Unser is a 7 time GORE-TEX® Transalpine-Run participant and has finished hand in hand with her partners, finished solo, DNF'd, has won stages and finished 3rd overall in the team women's category. Throughout all these experiences, she has learned so much about herself, partner racing and stage racing and is working with PLAN B to share monthly stories and insights that will help others make the most out of their 2018 journey across the Alps. Rene also writes training plans for novice and experienced runners, which have helped teams successfully finish this event every year.

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