

# STARTING LINES

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Dennis (here in Colorado) averaged 28.5 miles a day while running across the U.S.



## Globetrotting Like Gump

Aussie runner trying to be the fastest to circumnavigate the globe on foot

BY LISA MARSHALL

**A** long a treacherously tight shoulder in a steep, winding canyon outside Rocky Mountain National Park, Tom Dennis hopped over a broken bottle, weaved around an orange construction cone, dodged a speeding truck, and took one step closer to becoming the fastest person to officially run around the world.

After 123 days and 3,674 miles on his feet, he still had roughly a year and a half and 14,500 miles to go. But just like any wise ultrarunner, this real-life

Forest Gump chose to focus on what he'd accomplished already, rather than what lie ahead.

"It's just like any long training run," he explains, as he shuffles forward at a slow, steady pace aimed to keep his joints intact on his unfathomably long journey. "It's only after you get half way that you can even start thinking about how far you have to go."

With little fanfare, the 51-year-old Australian entrepreneur set out Jan. 1, 2012 from the Sydney Opera House in Australia with two goals in mind: claiming the Guinness Book of World Record title for "fastest circumnavigation of the globe on foot" and raising as much money as possible for his favorite charity, Oxfam International.

The title of "first circumnavigation on foot" is officially held by British runner Robert Garside, who started and finished in New Delhi, India, taking a total of 2,062 days between 1997 and 2003 to cover

35,000 miles. Guinness World Records has since tightened its guidelines, but the record for the "fastest" circumnavigation on foot remains unclaimed.

To earn it, Dennis must run 18,000 miles continuously, starting and stopping at the same place, passing through two opposite points on Earth, and completing a total of 24,900 miles (the distance around the equator) including travel across oceans via public transportation. If he succeeds, he will have run the equivalent of roughly 700 marathons in 700 days.

In South America as of mid-December, Dennis has been averaging about 31 miles per day, spending nights in cheap hotels and dining on TV dinners and red wine as he refines the next day's route and downloads the day's stats to his blog at [www.tomsnextstep.com](http://www.tomsnextstep.com). He covered 7,504 miles through parts of 23 states over 263 days while running from San Francisco to Boston between Feb. 12 and Oct. 31.

Photo by Walt Hester

“Obeying a third party’s rules takes away the subjective nature of the definition,” says Denniss, who aims to finish his circumnavigation later this year. “No one can accuse me of making up my own rules.”

With a Ph.D in mathematics and oceanography, the father-of-two made his fortune founding a start-up that converts ocean waves into electricity. He formerly played professional rugby, broke state records for sprinting in high school, and has run 15 marathons (with a PR of 2:49). Four years ago, he got the ultrarunning bug when he placed ninth overall in the 58K Run to the Sun in Maui. But even after a solo 1,000K run from Melbourne to Sydney, he hungered for more.

“It didn’t surprise me. He’s always trying to do something bigger and better,” says his wife Carmel, who agreed to tag

along in a vehicle as support crew/photographer. “He’s healthy and our kids are older now [24 and 22]. Why not?”

If all goes according to plan, he’ll cross 20 countries and six continents, plodding through the sweltering jungles of Southeast Asia, the 13,000-foot passes of Chile and Argentina, the endless summer days of the Arctic Circle in Finland, and ending with a final stretch across the Nullarbor Desert in Australia.

Clad in shorts and well-worn Nike Free shoes, he ran through a rogue two-foot snowstorm in Prescott, Ariz., had a near-miss with a rattlesnake in Nebraska, and was drenched in a torrential downpour while passing Mount Rushmore. When he traversed the picturesque Monument Valley in the Utah dessert, he even donned a Forest Gump-esque wig and beard in honor of his mythical hero. But unlike Forest, who had crowds clinging to

*“It’s just like any long training run. It’s only after you get half way that you can even start thinking about how far you have yet to go.” – Tom Denniss*

him through his journey, Denniss is going it mostly alone.

“I think about all sorts of things, everything from quantum physics to old childhood memories,” he said. “A lot of the normal, mundane things you think about day-to-day start to fade away when you do something like this, and you soak in the sights and smells and sounds and think about things you haven’t for decades.”



## Rogue Record-Breakers

**R**unning a fast marathon in costume has become all the rage. Take Canadian Paul Statchuk, for example. The 27-year-old software salesman doubled his fun in 2012, setting a new world record for running a marathon in full football gear (3:45:30 at the Mississauga Marathon) in May, as well as a new world mark for going the distance while wearing ice

hockey gear (including a stick) in October (4:08:43, at the Toronto Waterfront Marathon). “I started with 18 pounds of extra gear and with the rain, I was probably carrying about 25 pounds by the time I finished,” says Statchuk, who raised money for the Brain Tumor Foundation of Canada. Here are a few more of the many amazing (and amusing) marathon records set in 2012.

RUNNER (AGE)	RECORD	RACE	REMARK
Adam Campbell (33)	Wearing a business suit – 2:35:53	Victoria Marathon	He’s a lawyer by trade, but also a professional ultrarunner.
Keith Lavoisier (34)	Wearing flip-flop sandals – 2:46:58	Baltimore Marathon	What’s amazing is that his PR wearing shoes is only 8 minutes faster.
Camille Herron (30)	Dressed as Spiderman – 2:48:51	Route 66 Marathon	Herron (27th at the U.S. Olympic Trials) definitely got her kicks on Route 66.
Kevin Day (46)	Dressed as a nun – 3:17:58	London Marathon	He also qualified for Boston, but probably not due to divine intervention.
Susannah Gill (27)	Dressed as a peacock – 3:18:09	London Marathon	Pop star Katy “I wanna see your peacock” Perry would be proud.
Naomi Garrick (43)	Wearing a wedding dress – 3:41:40	London Marathon	Was she chasing her groom or running away from the chapel?

Photo by Victoria Marathon

# Top Shop

Fleet Feet Syracuse Named Best Running Store in U.S.

**E**d and Ellen Griffin know a thing or two about the business of running. In fact, as the owners and operators of Fleet Feet Sports Syracuse for more than a decade, they know just as much or more about many of their customers' training logs, recent race results and favorite running shoes, too.

The Griffin's leadership and the shop's reputation for providing exemplary customer service, taking pride in developing employees and being deeply involved in the local community—through races, running clubs, schools and non-profits—contributed to Fleet Feet Syracuse being named the 2012 Running Store of the Year on Dec. 5 at a running industry banquet in Austin, Texas.

"When we celebrated together with the staff back in Syracuse, it was like we won the Stanley Cup, except they couldn't drink out of it," Ed Griffin says. "So they had their picture taken with just about everybody together. We're really proud of it. It's a huge honor."

Every year, Competitor magazine and the trade publication Running Insight identify the 50 Best Running Stores in America. It starts with consumers nominating their favorite stores at [www.competitor.com](http://www.competitor.com). Then those stores are put through a rigorous evaluation process, which includes mystery shopping to assess customer service, credit ratings from vendors and assessments about local programs and community commitment.



► **OWNERS:** Ed Griffin, a former cable TV executive and his wife, Ellen, a former financial executive, opened the franchised running store 12 years ago and have since developed a reputation as one of the most sophisticated operators in the country. Fleet Feet Syracuse, which has grown to about 30 part-time and full-time employees, has been named one of the 50 Best Running Stores in America every year since the inception of the awards in 2006. "It's the people that make this business," Ed Griffin says. "If your employees are happy, your customers are happy. And if your customers are happy, your business is going to grow."

► **FEATURES:** The well-lit, 10,000-square foot store has a 1,500-square foot community room where it coordinates race packet pick-ups, indoor cycling for up to 30 people and regular in-store clinics

and presentations. Other unique features include an inlaid section of track for testing shoes (made from the same material as the one at the London Olympics) and a prominent space to honor local high school runners of the year.

► **PROGRAMS:** The store offers a variety of training programs on a year-round basis, but it's the 10-week begin-to-run programs that have been most remarkable, typically attracting between 250 and 350 runners for the spring, summer and fall sessions. In addition to a bevy of training groups from 5K to the marathon, the shop has also had success with its beginner triathlon program and its winter maintenance program, which includes indoor cycling, indoor swimming and outdoor running. In the fall, the shop organizes weekly "Dusk Runs" on the dirt path along the Erie Canal.



## PREVIOUS WINNERS

**2006**  
Boulder Running Company, Boulder, CO

**2007**  
9th Street Active, Durham, NC

**2008**  
Bob Roncker's Running Spot, Cincinnati, OH

**2009**  
Naperville Running Company, Naperville, IL

**2010**  
Playmakers, Okemos, MI

**2011**  
Shu's Idaho Running Company, Boise, ID

► For a complete list of the 50 Best Running Stores in America for 2012, go to [www.competitor.com/50best](http://www.competitor.com/50best)

## Runners to Watch in 2013

6 American runners to keep an eye on this year

BY MARIO FRAIOLI



### FERNANDO CABADA

► From 2006 through 2008, Fernando Cabada won two U.S. road racing titles and bagged a 2:12:27 debut marathon. After a promising start to his pro career, he spent most of the next three years battling injuries before winning another U.S. 25K title in 2011 and placing seventh at the U.S. Olympic Marathon Trials last January, where he lowered his personal best to 2:11:53. Now healthy and training in Boulder, Colo., the 30-year-old Cabada has his sights set on making the Olympic team in 2016.

### SAGE CANADAY

► The 26-year-old Canaday burst onto the mountain and ultra running scenes last year, turning heads with a dominating win at the Mount Washington Road Race, where he clocked 58:27—the fastest American time in history. He went on to win the White River 50 in course-record time and placed second at the Ultra Race of Champions 100K and top-10 at two world championship events. With his competitive credentials (Canaday is a 2:16:52 marathoner) and off-road adeptness, he is poised to become one of the most feared ultra-distance and uphill racers in the world.

### KIM CONLEY

► Who can forget Conley's epic final lap flurry in the 5,000m final at last summer's Olympic Trials in Eugene, Ore.? Conley passed five women over the final 400 meters to place third in the race, 0.21 seconds under the Olympic A-standard of 15:20 — good enough to land her on the Olympic team. At the Games, Conley failed to advance to the final, but finished her prelim in 15:14.48, a new personal best. After a breakthrough year in 2012, the 26-year-old Californian will have a hard time sneaking up on people in 2013.

### MOLLY PRITZ

► The 24-year-old Pritz was not a star runner in college. In fact, she didn't even run for her college team. But since graduating from Bucknell in 2010, Pritz has blossomed on the roads. In her marathon debut in New York City in 2011, Pritz finished as top American, running 2:31:52. Last year, she lowered her half-marathon personal best to 1:10:45 and won a national championship at the Gate River Run 25K. The Boulder-based Pritz might have what it takes to be America's next best female marathoner.

### DUANE SOLOMON

► Solomon, 28, went into last summer's 800m final at U.S. Olympic Trials as an underdog to make the Olympic team. He left with a third-place finish, a new personal best of 1:44.65, and a ticket to London. In the Olympic final, Solomon shattered his own personal best, along with everyone's expectations in what was the fastest race in history, with a fourth-place, 1:42.82 finish that made him the second-fastest American ever behind his coach, the legendary Johnny Gray.

### NEELY SPENCE

► Spence comes from good genes, but she's got some serious skills and work ethic of her own, too. The daughter of Steve Spence, the bronze medalist in the 1991 world championships marathon, Neely followed up a record-setting Division II collegiate career at Shippensburg with a solid professional debut season for the Hansons-Brooks squad in 2012. The 22-year-old Spence was runner-up at last year's U.S. 5K championships in Providence, and placed third at the 10K championships in Boston. As much as any young runner in America, Spence seems destined for greatness.

**ROCK THE NATION** If you want to go on the road as a rock 'n' roll groupie, you need a backstage pass. The Rock 'n' Roll Marathon Series has expanded to 28 events in North America in 2013, and you can run them all (or pick and choose several) if you get a Rock 'n' Roll Tour-Pass Unlimited for a one-time fee of \$399. (TourPass holders must register for a race within 30 days of an event.) For more information, go to [www.runrocknroll.com/tourpass](http://www.runrocknroll.com/tourpass).



# New Year Gear

Five innovative running accessories for 2013



**[A] Ultimate Direction SJ Ultra Vest**

• One of three new uber-lightweight and intuitively functional trail running packs from Ultimate Direction, this 7.5-oz. Scott Jurek signature model has 47 cubic inches of smartly placed storage compartments and securely stashes two 20-oz. water bottles. \$125; [www.ultimatedirection.com](http://www.ultimatedirection.com)

**[B] Salomon Sense Hydro S-Lab • Handheld Hydration Set**

Carrying water or an endurance drink of choice during a race can be cumbersome. Salomon's innovative new device allows hassle-free access to hydration via a PVC-free and BPA-free 8 oz. soft flask while allowing a runner's hands to remain relaxed. \$40; [www.salomon.com](http://www.salomon.com)



**[C] X-1 Audio Momentum In-Ear Ultra-Light Headphones**

• Featherweight, sweatproof and rinsable, these running-specific iPhone-compatible headphones offer up superior sound quality and a secure fit, plus reflective accents for safety, several color options and in-line mic and volume control. \$50; [www.x-1.com](http://www.x-1.com)



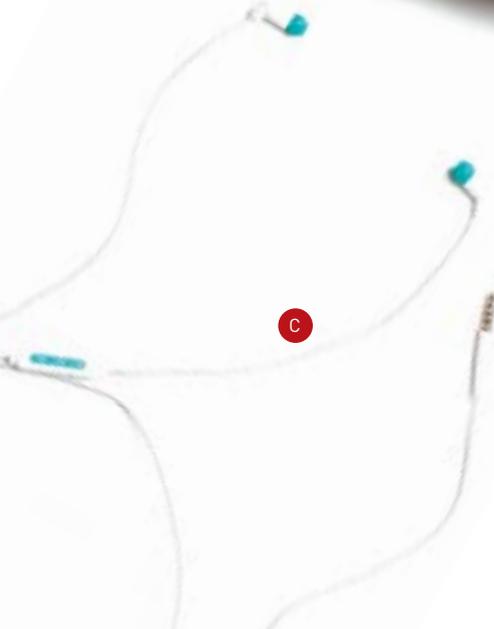
**[D] New Balance Minimus Hi Rez**

• On first glance, you'll wonder if this is the latest and greatest in the barely-there minimalist road running shoe category or a technologically-enhanced work of art? It's definitely both of those, not to mention super light (4.3 oz., men's size 9.0), extremely flexible and sporting a zero-drop profile just 8mm off the ground. (Due in stores by April.) \$120; [www.newbalance.com](http://www.newbalance.com)



**[E] Roll Recovery R8**

• This brilliantly innovative (and easy-to-use) contraption loosens tight and fatigue muscles and helps flush the post-exertion toxins that build up after hard efforts. Unlike a foam roller or self-massaging stick, the R8 has the self-massage force built into its design, thus eliminating the need for strenuous efforts of self-inflicted pain. \$99; [www.rollrecovery.com](http://www.rollrecovery.com)



X-1 Audio:  
Secure, stable  
and great  
sound.