

PROFILE

JUSTIN ANGLE:

Extreme student-athlete racing green

By Ed Kromer



Even when a hydration error rendered him bloated, queasy, lethargic and dangerously disoriented in the opening third of last year's punishing Western States Endurance Run, the 100-mile ultramarathon across the rugged, scorching outback of central California, it never occurred to Justin Angle (MBA 2006) to quit the race.

Where lesser mortals would have surrendered to the fetal position and wished for the end to come quickly, he plodded on, choking down water until his chemistry returned to some semblance of normalcy, some 60 miles up the trail. He did finish the century, in under 23 hours and 26th place.

On a good day, Angle cracks the top five. One of the top ultra-distance runners in the country, his level of

commitment is one that few can comprehend.

"I've always been into exploring my own limits," he says, with the economy of an elite endurance athlete.

Indeed. That credo even applies to his current day-job: doctoral student in marketing at the Foster School of Business, an endurance sport of the intellect. Angle's early research is focused on demystifying the vagaries of consumer behavior, motivated by personal experience. "I think of myself as a thoughtful, consistent, logical being," he says. "I understand branding, but I still find myself affected by it. And to me, if you recognize that your own behavior is illogical and irrational and yet still do it, that's really interesting."

Of course, Angle and irrational behavior go way back. He was a champion collegiate rower at the University of Pennsylvania. After graduation, he worked an early-bird finance job in San Francisco for four years, taking advantage of free afternoons to coach high school crew. Graduating to collegiate coaching positions at Penn and Yale, he got into bicycle road racing, then mountain bike racing, then triathlons. "I found that the longer the distance, the better I'd do."

A five-time Ironman finisher disillusioned by the rampant commercialism of the event, Angle discovered the ultramarathon community when he moved with his wife to Seattle and enrolled in the UW MBA Program. As a sideline to his PhD studies, he trains daily in nearby wilderness (and even around Green Lake). And five or six times a year he joins the rest of his pre-

ternatural tribe in trail races or unsanctioned runs that traverse some of the most awe-inspiring backcountry on the planet, including the John Muir Trail and the Tahoe Rim Trail.

Fortunately, Angle's true athletic love is required. As one of the best in his sport, he is sponsored by Clif Bar, Black Diamond, Seattle Running Company and Patagonia, all brands that he's proud to represent. "I like being an ambassador for these companies that espouse so virtuous a corporate ethic," he says.

His most virtuous sponsorship of all came out of his work as a teaching assistant in lecturer Elizabeth Stearns' "Cases in Sustainability" elective. Thanks to Stearns' connections, the Bonneville Environmental Association, a Portland-based non-profit that supports renewable, alternative energy projects, is now offsetting the estimated 18,000 pounds of carbon dioxide emitted as a consequence of Angle's travel to running events.

He believes that the act of "racing green" fits perfectly with the environmental nature and ethic of his sport, which challenges the limits of the human body and spirit amid landscapes of primeval splendor. Good day or bad.

"It's great to have a perfect day," he says. "But that's very rare. And it's the races where things don't go well and you have to overcome challenges that are more defining. Not that I look for hard days. But when you're in them, you learn so much about yourself." ■