

**SIMPLY UMU**

**RUNNING FASTER**



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By Simply Umu

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## Warming up

Here we are again. After [running fully](#), I needed to think what to do next. I knew I had explored long distances enough for now and I had a deep desire to go back to my roots. Endurance was never my natural ability. I detested distance running in secondary school but on the other hand there was something I always loved: sprinting. Just pushing as hard as you can without thinking and for a short period of time. That was what always spoke to me and I used to be good at it as well. At school I was always among the fastest of my class and when I was 17 I ran a 100m in about 13 seconds. The thing is that that 100m race wasn't very accurately measured and the time was recorded by hand and we didn't start with blocks. I just knew I was the fastest of my class. And not only from my class by the way as during our last year trip when I was 18, my class and another one had a visit to a Greek amphitheatre. We had to wake up very early and little did we know that the teachers would ask us to run as fast as possible on this ancient stadion. I came first and received a pin, that I still own to this day, as my prize.

To be fair, my relationship with athletics actually comes back to when I was around 8, when I first joined a track and field club. I don't remember much from that time only that I was with children of around 10-12 years who seemed to be so much bigger than me at that time. I spent a year in that club and never did athletics again even though I had potential. I got distracted by other sports as you might already know. But I was now 27 years meaning that even though I had passed the peak for explosiveness it was now or never to see what I can do in that discipline. And for that I gave myself one year. One year to see how much I can progress on the 100m race.

## Get ready

To put things in context, when I completed my marathon in October 2022 I was living in Antwerp and was planning to move back to Brussels. Knowing that, I took a pause from sports altogether to focus on my move. I moved back in February 2023 and once settled down, I looked at the different options. Finding a track and field club wasn't difficult as almost every *commune* has its own club. I hesitated between two but in the end I took the one from my *commune* which was closer to where I lived. The only problem was that I couldn't sign up before the beginning of the season which was in September. I had to wait and I just did bouldering in the meantime to keep being active physically. I could have just run on my own but yeah no I didn't think of that.

When I arrived at my first training session I had a weird feeling. The last time I went to a track and field club I was a child surrounded by pre-teens. Now it was some sort of reversed situation. There were hardly any people from my age but I was there, an adult surrounded by teenagers this time. For the most part, I was 10 years older than them. Fortunately there was a friend of my best friend who was also my age and one of the trainers. It was funny going there and seeing him as I hadn't seen him since university.

I remember that the very first training session consisted of running 300m easy and 200m fast several times. One guy in particular was way faster than me and I thought he was 17. My ego was already hurt, but it was annihilated when I later learnt he was in fact 14. That was a bit confronting to be honest. The coach friend was obviously also faster than me and I secretly wanted to improve to become faster but I had underestimated how ahead of me he was.

The training sessions looked a bit like the intervals I was doing when running long distances but shorter and more intense. The first times I had to sprint several times in a row I wasn't feeling that well and knew I had to get used to it. The most surprising thing was me realising my body was slowly getting 30 years old.

Let me explain. From the get go, I was coming three times a week. I was sore at the beginning but I thought it's normal when you start a new sport or move your body in a way it isn't used to anymore. The thing was that before I would adapt in a week or so but now it took more than a month to not get sore after every training session. I was almost scared I wouldn't reach that point.

One important thing to know is that in Belgium, unlike long distance races, for track races, not everyone can sign in. You need to be part of a club and have a valid licence for the year and an official race bib. And this process takes time. Well, it does take time but I took too long to sign in because I had a first free month and didn't know about that process. Not to get too much into the details, I got my race bib a bit after the last 100m race of the season. So my plan to see a one year difference was doomed as the next 100m race would be around spring 2024. Because yes, track and field is divided into two seasons, an outdoor season and an indoor season. And some races like the 100m are only done outdoors. It is due to the fact that an indoor track has a circumference of 200m instead of the 400m outdoor track so you don't have a straight line of 100m. The only straight line you have is in the middle and is for a 60m race which is therefore only an indoor event.

So yeah I was already disappointed because I wouldn't be able to see where I start from and how fast I run with absolutely no training. But at the same time I was thinking of taking advantage of the indoor season to run a 60m and 200m. I actually had no clue of the times I could do as my only reference was the approximative 13 seconds on an approximative 100m course. The first time I got running times was during a rainy training session, with one of the coaches timing us by hand. I did a 30 m in 4.33s and a 60m in 8.74s. I didn't know how that would translate into a 100m but I knew I was around 13 seconds, just above or just under but I had to wait until April to know.

What struck me during that training session was how bad my start was and realised I should buy spikes which are pointy shoes in order to not slip and hit the ground with more force while running. So I went to a sports store and bought the cheapest model as it was only for a year.

The next time I got some running times was actually during the week leading to my first ever indoor competition. We had to run 5 times a 60m all out and these were my times that this time I had to record myself: 8.19s, 8.13s, 8.13s, 8.22s. It was a rainy day, I had a lot of clothes on, I didn't have a block start so I started realising I could possibly run 60m in under 8 seconds for my first race on November 25th 2023.

## On your marks

It's worth mentioning that when you sign in to a competition you need to give reference times so that they can place you in a heat with people with a similar speed as yours. The thing was that I had no references so I was put in the last heat and in this case it was with people slower than me. I wanted some people from my level to push me but I was told that a first competition was a way to get set before actually starting performing. It's just setting the base.

As a newbie, I made some rookie mistakes that day of course. Before actually competing you need to warm up. When I train at the club I directly come dressed in sports clothes but for the competition I was wearing my day to day clothes and forgot to bring my normal running shoes. So I did the whole warming up with spikes, which basically hurts because it's an unnatural position for the feet that you cannot sustain for long.

I was so curious and asked a lot of questions to the fellow athletes of the club about how a competition works. Basically while warming up, you are called to a room where you have to wait with other people from your heat and you are sat in order. Then you are led to the start of the race. You wait for the heat before you to finish and you can start preparing your blocks. In an indoor competition, next behind your blocks you have a speaker because the person given the start of the race has a fake gun.

I started the competition with the 60m. I was stressed and excited at the same time. I was again surrounded by teenagers and I saw them being very serious; jumping around, hitting their legs and so on to get ready. Once the heat before us was done, we could prepare our blocks and do one or two starts just to check if everything is fine. I actually had struggles setting my blocks and because everyone was already ready I didn't take more time and I was finally hearing the famous lines that I only heard on television.

*"Préparez-vous"*. This means that you need to stand behind your blocks and it's when the whole room goes silent so that the athletes can focus.

*"A vos marques"*. You put yourself on the blocks, trying to have your spikes having as much contact surface with the blocks for an optimal start. You put your hands right before the starting line, relax your head and shoulder and wait for the official to check if everyone has their hands behind the line.

*"Prêt"*. You raise your pelvis and already squeeze your abs and push on your legs to act like a spring ready to go.

And then you have the gunshot, in this case just a fake sound but it was still such a cool moment. My start wasn't very good as I didn't prepare my blocks properly and because I was in the last heat there was no one to push me and I finished the race in 8.10s. I expected to be under 8 seconds but it was my first ever race and I would have other opportunities to improve that time.

The next race was the 200m and it went great. In an indoor race the 200m is a full circle and it has a slight elevation depending on which lane you are. I don't remember much from the race in itself but I know that when I was at the corner leading to the final stretch, I felt someone was behind and it helped me push, especially because someone was telling them to catch me. If it weren't for them I would have slowed down as a 200m is a very long distance to run full out. You actually slow down anyway but the trick is to slow down as slowly as possible. In the end I ran it in 26.68s. I was told that usually you are faster outdoors because it's not a full circle, you don't have any elevation and the wind can help you quite a bit.

## Set

I was stoked from my first competition experience and wanted to improve for the next one which would occur on January 7th 2024 for the Brussels championships. I went to most of

the training sessions leading to race week. The Wednesday of that week we had to run the following distances:

- 2 x 200m at 85% of our max speed
- 150m full out
- 120m full out
- 2 X 60 full out
- All of that with the following rest times in between: 5 min, 4 min, 3 min, 2 min and 1 min.

Let's say it was a brutal training session, especially a few days before a competition. And it didn't stop there because on the Friday of that week we had a strength training session. And the race was on Sunday. I was hoping so hard not to be tired that day. And to top it all, I had a family emergency that prevented me from sleeping well the whole weekend and I almost cancelled the race because of all of that.

So basically I arrived at the race tired, preoccupied, not in the mood and already angry that I wouldn't be able to beat my times but I tried to soak it up anyway.

For the 60m I was in a heat with people of my speed and when you race only the time of the first one is shown on a board but when you're not first you have to wait for a bit to have your time. When I saw that the first ran in 7.77s, I was convinced I had run a sub 8 as I was second in the heat behind him. I actually ran a 8.08s and I was third as the second was in a lane too far for me to see him. I had beaten my time so I was still happy and realised being 2nd of 3rd of your heat is actually perfect. I don't have the speed to be in the first heat so your place in the heat doesn't mean anything as you can be the fastest or the slowest of the heat depending on how they have been organised. So the best thing is not being first as you will slow down but not being last as you won't push as much. It's a balance of having people to hold on to without being gutted. And this is more about luck and being placed in a good heat for your speed.

For my 200m heat I didn't have that luck. Usually before the race, they print a paper where you can see in what heat you are, with who and most importantly what the best times of your competitors are. Literally everyone had a better time than me, even someone who was more than 20 years older than me. And I was also placed in lane 1 meaning that I would have very tight corners which doesn't help to have good times. I knew I would just be destroyed by the others and it made me even more unmotivated.

Once the gunshot was fired, I didn't really put intention into my start and didn't push that much. But when arriving at the first corner, I saw next to me in lane 2, the guy in his fifties that I was passing so it made me a bit happy but the others were very far. But then I suddenly realised my technique was shit and I focussed on all the things I had worked on during training: long strides, attacking the ground with force and keeping the arms straight. Then at the second corner because an indoor track is curved with a slight elevation, the other ones had to go up and I gained time on them so I exited the corner and started the final stretch at a good position. And because I didn't push to the max at the start I still had energy and started accelerating. I thought I finished second but the first one was in lane 6 and I hadn't seen him. I finished the race in 26.55s.

I was very surprised to have beaten my time in a heat with only people theoretically better than me, in the worst lane, with soreness and a bad night of sleep. So I was more than happy.

Now it was time to work on the next competition. I realised that during training sessions I tend to rely on others to be pacemakers as I know it's easier to push than if I was doing my set on my own but I won't always have someone to push me. If I am the fastest in my heat I should be able to run at 100% without any external help.

I also understood the mental aspect is very different in sprinting from what I was used to. In the long distance races I use my mind to tolerate the pain. In sprinting I use my mind to not deviate from a very precise technique. You have to do some movements over and over to assimilate that so it becomes automatic and you don't have to think about it.

The last indoor competition was on January 28th and we were only two from the club whereas before almost the whole club was present. Once again I was not in the mood. I felt rested and with good legs but I just wasn't feeling it. When I warmed up I did 2 starts to practise and the first was good but the second horrible. I knew I wasn't focused enough. And I indeed had a bad start at the 60m and finished my race in 8.10s. It was my last ever indoor competition and the dream of running sub 8 went away. I was a bit sad but not that much as my true goal is the 100m.

The 60m made that I wasn't that optimistic for the 200m. Also the other guy I went to the competition with ran the 60m but not the 200m and did long jump instead which finished earlier. He left before my 200m race because there was like 3 hours between the two races. So yeah, I was literally all alone.

When running the 200m, I had the legs and relatively good rest but had a hard time with very fast people in front of me and I finished in 26.91s because I slowed down a lot at the end. There was almost a difference of 1 second between the second to last and me and everyone in the heat had a personal best except for me.

What's funny is that earlier that day on the train to the competition we watched a short film with the other guy from the club. It was about a football team at mid-time being dominated by the other team and one character said 'we got wrecked... on a sunday afternoon' and we laughed so hard. But I told him to beware of what could happen to us today as well. And we did get wrecked on a sunday afternoon...

After that I had to wait until April for the first outdoor races and in that time, I started to skip some training sessions, training on average 2 times a week and even once a week sometimes. It could be because of the weather conditions or because I had social plans. It felt like training was becoming less of a priority. But I knew I had to focus during the next 2-3 months to have the best 100m possible.

## False start

Despite the title of this chapter, I didn't have a false start during a race but life gave me one so to speak. Long story short, I broke my wrist two days before my first 100m race and it was also the day after my birthday. Yes I know it sucks.

It happened during a training session on a Friday. We were playing a chasing game. You are two in starting position on a lane and someone is one metre in front of you. You start sprinting at the same time and the person behind has to catch the other by touching them. Three times I was in front and the second three times I was behind. I almost touched the guy in front at the first two attempts. It was the last chance so I gave it all and saw my finger being a few



centimetres from him and leaned a bit too much. Leaning too much while sprinting with spikes that grabs the ground in a way that you cannot get your balance back with your legs was the combo that led to my injury.

I fell on the ground, rolled a bit and got rapidly back up. I didn't feel any pain but had a few scratches on my body. I went to ask for some disinfectant and while applying it, I started to feel a slight pain in my wrist. It starts getting swollen and I put some ice on it. In my head it was nothing serious, probably just a sprain. One fellow athlete of the club told me his mother is a doctor and if I had broken something, I would be in agony. Some other athlete told me if I don't come to the competition on Sunday, maybe with a small hand cast, he would be disappointed because, well, you don't run with your wrist, right?

That same evening I was seeing my best friend and his fiancée. I sent a picture to them thinking it's nothing serious. But, he is a physiotherapist and she is a surgeon so their immediate reaction was that I need to go to the emergency room. So when I met them, they looked at my wrist and confirmed that I needed to go to the hospital and they thought there was a big chance that I had a fracture.

My best friend's fiancée works at the hospital we went to so I was able to not wait for a long time as she went backstage to make the process easier while my best friend was with me the whole way through. The first step is a basic check up with a general practitioner. While doing that they brought up two people with a polytrauma and that usually means that I would wait for a while as they are more urgent. But fortunately knowing people working at the hospital helps so I very rapidly got a radio and sat in a room to wait for the results with my best friend. My best friend's fiancé came to us and confirmed that I had a fracture and she already made a certificate for 4 weeks of sick leave and told me I might need to get surgery. I couldn't really believe it. One of my first thoughts was that I had a huge deadline at work and it was literally the worst possible timing ever. I also knew and told my best friend that I had no control over it but it didn't change that it sucked. I also thought that I was extremely lucky to have them because if it weren't for them, I would never have gone to the emergencies and let alone as a VIP. I tried to process this while waiting for the next step, the scanner.

I went to the scanner together with a son with his sick mother. He was really stressed and explained to me that the doctors didn't really care and he had to push for her mother to be checked. I was in full empathy with him and maybe it was a way for me to not think about my own situation.

While being prepared for the scanner, the woman who was supervising it made some jokes but I forced myself to smile and laugh. I'm sure she did it to lighten the atmosphere but deep down I just wanted to process the suck I was living and not distract myself.

After that my best friend's fiancée put me in an arm cast, meaning she worked outside of her working hours and thus unpaid. It was the first time in my life I wore a cast. It made me think of the time in primary school when other children had one and we drew on them.

This cast went from my hand to my upper arm. You may wonder why such a big cast if it's only my wrist that's broken. It was because my wrist couldn't twist and to prevent that you need to block the whole arm. And because the cast is quite heavy, I also had a sling. Meanwhile, a doctor came and explained the results of the scanner. Basically I was in a grey zone and experts needed to look at my case to see whether I needed an operation or not. They also told me I would risk arthrosis.

Right before leaving, my best friend and I talked about how I have no control over the situation. Sometimes life throws curveballs at you and you have to adapt. I literally bumped head-first into a tree when going full distance and had nothing and now just for tripping I am

immobilised for a month at least. It's annoying but this also means life gives me extra time for other things. It's just a slow process to realise what happened and the consequences of it.

We left the hospital at 00:30 AM to drive me home. It only took two hours for the whole thing while people normally stay four or even five hours in the emergency room. On the way home, it was now me who was trying to make jokes but the truth was that it was a way for me to hold my tears. I was laughing at their jokes as well, trying to keep my composure. At some point I tried to think of a normal day with one hand and realised, how am I going to shower, tie my shoes and so on, and my best friend's fiancée said that even wiping my butt will be an issue... We also discussed that it might be a good idea to live with my mother for a moment.

When I finally got home and said bye to them, I dropped my armour down and shed heavy tears. I needed that. And by that I mean the time to just accept it sucked and feel it. I didn't need any distraction, I needed to be allowed to be sad. After that I went to sleep and proceeded to have a horrible night of sleep. I couldn't find a good position. I took pain relievers before going to bed but I still had pain from the inflammation during the night and I ultimately woke up to take another one and managed to sleep a bit.

The next day I called my mother and planned to see her the day after that. While discussing with her I just couldn't make a choice whether to move back with her or stay at my place. In the end I decided to see how it goes and if needed I'll move. I wanted the comfort of my own place and I didn't want to put an extra mental load on her. I ended up dividing the mental load between several people that themselves offered to help me.

I am a very sensitive person and even though I was quite sad the first two days, after that it was the complete opposite. I spent the extra time looking at Youtube videos on how to live with an arm cast. It's crazy how every little detail of life becomes harder. I also organised myself with other hobbies. I thought, "Ok, I have one month with way more free time so how can i make the most out of it." I also considered doing strength training for legs. I did it for a few days but didn't keep up with it.

I sorted the insurance and everything and had a meeting with the doctor two weeks after my accident. While replacing my arm cast they explained to me that they highly recommend an operation and literally gave me a few minutes to think about it. I wanted to call people but decided on my own and trusted the doctors. Due to a cancellation I could have on the following week. That also meant that my sick leave was extended to three months and that in total I would have to wear an arm for six extra weeks after the operation.

Next to that I was supposed to get a call from the anaesthetist the next day at midday but I didn't get any call and so I contacted my best friend's fiancée to help. They did finally call me and explained that I just needed a partial anaesthesia and I was relieved because I was a bit afraid of a general one.

April 30th 2024 was the day of my first ever surgery. I arrived in the morning and was supposed to leave a bit before 1 PM. That didn't happen of course. My operation started two hours late and in the meantime I was waiting and the only distraction, as phones weren't allowed, was a radio show with people debating about societal topics. When they called for my turn they accompanied me to the surgery room. And let's say, that was so intimidating. Imagine myself, wearing a light piece of clothes with only pants underneath and about seven looking at you as a lab rat. When they laid me down they connected me to some machines and everyone could hear my heartbeat. I was doing my best to keep my composure and have a poker face but everyone in the room could hear my heartbeat intensifying. They acted like nothing and I

assume they are just used to it. Also while sending my arm to sleep someone was literally teaching to someone. I really felt like a study object rather than a patient. After that they announced to me that I would get general anaesthesia as well. That freaked me out as it wasn't what I had planned even though the waiver I signed was for both in case of. Then they put a mask on my face and from other people I heard it takes about 10 seconds to sleep. I set the challenge to myself to be conscious of the exact moment I would fall to sleep. After a few seconds I was like I don't feel anything, it's not like I'm battling against sleep or whatsoever. Then a doctor touched my shoulder and said 'it's gonna be ok, sir'.

And I woke up in another room, in a bed on my belly with a new arm cast that covered only my upper arm this time. I told the doctor I needed to get on my back and told me I could but the thing was that I was drugged and I had no energy so they helped me. They told me they tried to put me on my back and there were three trying so. I have absolutely no memory of that. They told me I wasn't the worst, they once had someone who stood on the bed and luckily they were doing martial arts to block them. They also explained to me I took longer to wake up than usual so in the end I left the hospital about 3 or 4 hours later than I planned.

I kept the arm cast until mid-june and once out I was so happy to finally be able to scratch my arm and not put a plastic bag on my arm with one arm when I need to shower. End June was the start of my physiotherapy journey to get back strength and mobility. The doctor planned 30 sessions and allowed me to run again starting from the end of July.

When I got back to training, I immediately signed up for a 100m race in mid-august. During the first training session, I felt I wasn't slower but had a hard time keeping the same speed on a 150m or 200m or repeating sprints was tiring way faster than before and I had harder to keep my knees high as I had learned. But I felt the technique was not that lost and that I still had some instinct.

I also had a small pain after the first training that was tolerable on the second session but then I probably pulled my calf a bit on the third training session. I felt like my body was getting smaller injuries easier. But here it was due to the restart, training 3 times a week from the start, the summer heat and so on. That combined with bad sleep, I got a bit sick at some point and thought my body wasn't as resilient as before.

The Wednesday before my first competition, I tried starting blocks because I hadn't done it for at least 4 months and while doing it I realised I lost everything and that my start was even worse than before. When you sprint you need to place your feet correctly and the first steps are crucial to have an efficient pushing phase.

## GO!

And there I was, August 18th in the famous Baudoin stadium in Brussels for my first official 100m race to see if I can run under 13 seconds or not. Once again I was tired and not feeling great but that was because of me. I moved way too much the day before so my legs weren't that great and I felt that a lot while warming up. The more the moment of the race approached, the more I felt anxious. I was finally, after so many setbacks, going to run my first ever 100m race.

My heat got announced. I prepared myself and I was ready to hear the ritual words : get ready, on your marks, set. And this time a real gunshot. I actually heard it before while warming

up for other races and I thought it was extremely loud knowing that I wasn't even close to it at that time. Fortunately at the starting line because you are focused it didn't feel as loud. As usual, my start was terrible. Not in terms of reaction time but I almost stumbled and placed my feet horribly and didn't have any pushing phase whatsoever I basically just stood up right away. I focused on my race and pushed as hard as I could. I was running with a fellow athlete from the club, a teenager that finished right after me.

I had no idea if I had run under 13s and we had to wait almost two hours to get the results. I just knew the teenager's personal best was 13.03s so I didn't really expect to be under 13s. In the meantime I also ran a 300m but it was only not to come there just for one race but yeah better not talk about that one.

After a long wait I saw I ran in 12.94s and the teenager in 13.11s. I said jokingly that I can actually already retire as sub 13 was already good for me

On the way home, the friend that was also the coach told me that if I hadn't broken my wrist and had a good start I should probably be able to run around 12.70s. At that time I still had two months to go before the end of the season and see how much I can push this time in that short amount of time. And I had still a few competitions to do so I was motivated.

Due to some changes internally, there was also a new coach who arrived in September and he was giving very good and specific advice that I tried to remember and apply. Besides that, a lot of people from the club were leaving which meant that I would have a bit more than one month of almost private coaching so I could make the best of the month I have left. He told us he was on holiday for two weeks and then would come back.

My second outdoor competition occurred on September 6th and this time I felt rested but the race was in the evening. All the others were in the afternoon. I was feeling that my legs were fresh but from my indoor season experience I knew it didn't mean I would perform. Because of my horrible start I also knew I normally should do a better time than last time.

Despite that, I did a bad start but not worse than the previous one and runned badly towards the end and let my legs freewheel towards the end of the race. It was because I was running with the same teenager as last time. At all training sessions and during the last race, I was faster than him but this time I felt him getting closer and closer to me and a few metres from the finish line I tensed and he passed me from nothing. While walking on the field just after that race, I suddenly heard some people screaming my name. I looked around and to my big surprise some friends came and supported me as a surprise. Some of them who also came for my marathon in 2022. I absolutely didn't expect to come and my heart felt so full of love. I already knew I have an amazing support system and these kinds of things even confirms that. The thing was that one of my friends was supposed to have rugby training next to where I had my competition and I had planned to say hi to him. But no, he decided otherwise and cancelled his training session just to see me race. I couldn't have dreamed of better friends.

This time we got the results two days later and I ran in 12.90s and the teenager in 12.87s. He smashed his previous time and said that seeing me in front pushed him and he was so happy to have finally run sub 13. I secretly want to run 12.89s at least but I was close. We also did a 4 x 100m with him and other fellow athletes and because we were last in the race and I was the last one I felt I ran way better than my solo 100m because I had no pressure at all. We ran 50.26s but I cannot know how fast my part of the relay was.

After that, I had one last month of running before the end of the season and I knew my start and techniques could be improved. My goal was to run in the 12.70s and for that I planned

to miss no training session for the coming 4 weeks. Remember the new coach who was on holiday. He never came back so I was gutted and above that I got the news that the race that I planned for October 13th was cancelled and not sure the one from 19th will take place. This was supposed to be the last one of the season so if it was cancelled, I would never be able to improve my time. I later learnt that this competition would take place but it would be a 150m and not a 100m. I had been so regular on training sessions for that race and hearing that news I got demotivated and I broke my streak and missed one training session because of that, a heavy rain, no new coach, and I was also a bit sick. No point in making me suffer if I don't race anymore. Luckily it was a mistake on the website and it would be a 100m. I had one last chance of making a better time. But because the new coach wasn't there and especially because of the cold, I was not sure I'd make a better time.

October 19th 2024, last competition. I come to something that seems very local. I was only with one fellow athlete. The one I went with when we got wrecked on a Sunday afternoon. But this time it was a Saturday but yeah, the day before the training was a bit too hard so my legs weren't in top shape. But I remembered I had my best times when I was tired. To be honest, I didn't expect much from that race and I was mostly happy it wasn't as cold as the weather forecast had planned. Unfortunately that day there was a lot of wind against us but I secretly hoped it would turn on our side and not be too strong because more than 2m/s makes that your times aren't official.

So my final race started with a terrible start to stay true to my habits. But after getting up too early, I remembered that one tip that the new coach gave me that I started applying to all the following training sessions. He told me I was running a bit too upright and that I should lean a bit forward. And I did exactly that. When I crossed the finish line, I felt great and I went directly to the start area where the president of my club, who was also the official who checked our hands on the line, was there. I told him how bad my start was and he confirmed by saying that I wasn't awake. I was not sure I had beaten my time but even though it was a very local competition and I got the results five minutes later and how big was my surprise when I saw 12.67s on my phone. I couldn't believe it. And that with a favourable wind 1.3m/s. I ran way faster than expected. And according to my fellow athlete it wasn't only because of the wind as it would only make me win like 0.03s.

I felt satisfied and knew that if I hadn't broken my arm and worked on my start, I would probably run around 12.50s.

Oh and yeah I ran a 300m as well and thus never ran a 200m outdoors but again, nothing interesting as my goal was the 100m.

## Cooling down

During this whole year, I noticed that it wasn't at all like going full distance or running fully where I was missing almost no training session. Here I was more flexible, which also means less focused. I felt I needed something else to look forward to instead of just competition each month or so. I needed something big again, something that requires your whole focus.

And actually, even before the gunshot of this story, I knew it was time to reopen the endurance chapter of my life. I didn't expect it to come back that soon but I wanted to approach it from a different angle. This realisation came before, in the midst of this story and I was already laying the foundations for it in the meantime.

One year and half after my last track and field race, I will be 30 years old and I wanted to mark this milestone. For my 25th year I had become an Ironman. For my entrance to the next decade of my life I want to keep up with that iron theme. I want to become an Iron Viking.