

Welcome to the party!! We are glad you are here!

My name is [Helgi Olafson](#). I'm a professional super yacht chef and amateur ultra-endurance athlete. I have a genetic degenerative autoimmune arthritis called ankylosing spondylitis (AS), which basically means that, if I don't take a proactive approach to treatment, many joints in my body are likely to fuse together over time. I consider myself one of the lucky ones, being diagnosed at age 19, rather than in my forties like most AS patients. Early diagnosis is so important to have a successful life with the disease. I have been a Patient Advocate and Fundraiser for the Spondylitis Association of America (SAA) for almost fifteen years.

AS can be super painful at times, but exercise and motion usually makes things feel better. In early 2024, I was diagnosed with an overuse injury called femoral acetabular impingement syndrome (FAI). Even though I am a veteran endurance athlete who knows the power of mind when it comes to pushing limits and pushing through pain caused by my lifelong condition that has a mind of its own, I also now know that there were many things that I could have been doing better along my endurance sports journey to mitigate the damage that I have caused in my hips and other areas. My endurance journey will bring awareness to help others.



In mid 2024, I made lofty goals for 2025, stating that I would complete the Arizona Monster 300, and after completing the race, I was planning on running another 325 miles to the start line of the Cocodona 250 and completing that race as well, totaling 900 miles. MonsterDona has a nice ring to it.

Well, to say the least, my body had different plans. I was devastated. I always look forward to my experiences with the ultrarunning community and it's a tough blow when plans don't work out the way I envision them. Acceptance and adaptation are imperative, but it's easier said than done.



I could have buckled altogether, but I saw an opportunity to adapt and grow, using my experience to send a message and of course to raise funds for my favorite nonprofit, **Spondylitis Association of America (SAA)** along the way. There are many athletes with FAI and this "over-use" injury can mostly be avoided with proper strength and mobility training from the beginning. I have always only wanted to run or cycle and sometimes swim as training, leaving the strength and mobility at the door because it was boring and I only wanted to do the fun stuff. The fun stuff got me through **14 +200 milers with no DNFs** (trust me there were many ALMOST DNFs).

I am setting my sights on my 15th +200 finish, which will be at Destination Trail's new 308-mile point-to-point endurance run called the [Arizona Monster 300](#), next April 4th thru 11th. The course is a point-to-point route, traversing the Sonoran Desert. The race starts in Patagonia, near the Arizona-Mexico border and all the way up to Superior, just east of Phoenix. [Official Course Map](#)

So what's the ask? Check out the pitch in the link below to see if you would be interested in supporting this documentary project:

[\(Sponsorship Pitch Deck\)](#)

We have three tiers available for brand sponsorship for the project, but we are also hoping to get the community behind the movement as well, so we created this [GoFundMe Page](#) to act as a fourth tier of sponsorship for any amount of contribution. All donors' names will be

included in closing credits of the film. If you would like to remain anonymous, please make your contribution anonymously.

Any donation amount will help. A share will also help. Let's band together and show our support for a project that is sure to inspire. In order to be successful, we need a bit of extra help, and so does the SAA.



25% of all donations to this project will go directly to the Spondylitis Association of America (SAA). After expenses for the project are met, 100% of the donations will go to SAA.

Charitable Receipts are available upon request for the percentage that goes to SAA. Please [contact Helgi](#) to get a charitable receipt.



To tell the story, I have teamed up with reality TV star-turned up-and-coming filmmaker, [Alex Haubrich](#), owner of [YachtieWorld](#). Alex specializes in storytelling through film and social media. Alex is excited to direct a documentary on our experience getting to the finish line through all of the highs and lows of the 7-day event and he is particularly interested in sharing what it takes to complete such a daunting journey.

"Sonoran Odyssey - 300 Miles of Grit and Glory" will not only showcase Helgi's journey through multiple hurdles to get to the daunting finish line, but also it will be a testament to Alex's work as a Director supported by Documentary Film Maker, Noah Jackson.





Helgi fighting to finish the 2021 Moab 240, covering 2,850 human-powered miles in 61 days to earn his second Triple Crown

Spondylitis Association of America (SAA)
 25 % of your contribution will go directly to funding SAA support programs and research

Film Production
 Equipment Travel
 Post-production
 Drone Licensing
 Entry into Film Festivals

Athlete and Crew Supplies
 Transportation and Fuel
 Lodging for Film Crew

The funds received, less the donations to SAA, will be used solely for the purpose of producing this documentary. **There will be no profit.** We want people to be excited to support a

compelling story that highlights inspiration from the ultrarunning community, while supporting an organization dear to my heart.

The film will hopefully inspire some folks and touch on some current conversations in the world, like “Runners Identity.” My story shows a man who has been and may always be overly dependant on my identity as an ultrarunner. At times over the past ten years, my life has been ALL about ultrarunning. I would do almost anything to have the experiences that I can expect ONLY from a +200 mile ultramarathon. Other areas of my life don't get the attention they deserve. Sidelining injuries, in my case FAI and sometimes AS, has caused depression to start knocking on the door. Adaptation and mindset are powerful abilities to master, but its also ok to give yourself some grace. This conversation is just one of the many layers for athletes regarding mental health.

The value of doing hard things while paying attention to life balance. Ultramarathons, especially the +200 distance may seem unattainable as a goal to most people in the world. Having a demanding career where scheduling the large chunks of time it takes for these races may make it seem impossible to even start planning for something like this. At the end of the day, it takes alot of work and determination, and oftentimes support, to put all of the pieces together. I understand that I have value as a mentor. My support crew for Arizona Monster 300 is made up mostly of yachties who also identify as ultrarunners. These folks have funded their own travel, one of them all of the way from South Africa, just to come out and support me in my quest for the finish line. It's powerful to me to know that these people believe in me and have my back. I intend to spend time with each of them on the trail as we work together to complete each section of the race. As someone who values teamwork, I am most excited for viewers to watch Sonoran Odyssey - 300 Miles of Grit and Glory because it will inspire people to reimagine and forever question their own limitations in order to achieve their goals and dreams.

Femoral acetabular impingement (FAI) is a diagnosis that can be especially troublesome for active people who like to move a lot. Having limited mobility is challenging, but with proper care and rehabilitation, the patient could have a chance for a comeback as long as there is not too much damage to the joint and the labrum. All cases vary, but it's actually quite common for active individuals (especially runners) to have FAI and be asymptomatic. There are many ways to come back from FAI, including surgery and/or full joint replacement. We will use my own case of FAI in the film to keep the conversation going and hopefully help some people gain more confidence to navigate their own journey with hip impingement.

Thanks so much for your time,

Helgi Olafson

<http://linktr.ee/helgiolafson>

