

## Running for the Rush

Missy Keenan, Special to the Register *September 1, 2014*



When Amy Hill found out she could do the Titan Mob Run at Living History Farms for only \$40, she thought it was a steal.

"I was excited to get such an awesome deal, but then I hear, 'You pay to do that?'" Hill laughed. "That's what a lot of people say."

Adventure runs are gaining in popularity in recent years, but they might not suit people who prefer running in straight lines — or keeping their shoes clean. These cross country races usually range from 5K (3.1 miles) to 20K (12.4 miles), and are interspersed by obstacles with names like "Ladder to Hell" and "Alcatraz" that involve scaling walls, army-crawling under barbed wire and through mud, and even leaping over flames.

"I think the craziest obstacle I've ever done was at the Tough Mudder," Hill said. "You jump into ice cold water and have to swim over to the other side. And then at the end you get shocked by electric current. It's not enough voltage to actually hurt you, but it's pretty scary."

"You can opt out of any of the obstacles, but I never have," she continued. "Even people who are really suffering usually don't opt out. I watched a girl trying to get up a wall who didn't have the strength to do it; she was just shaking. Then a bunch of guys stopped to help her the rest of the way up. I bet she still talks about it. She definitely overcame a fear that day."

The sense of teamwork and helping each other succeed is a common theme among adventure runners.

"I try to compete and go as hard as I can, and I want to finish in the top half, but by no means am I pushing people down to try to get first place," said Des Moines runner Mark Daniel. "Last year there was one obstacle where we were trying to climb a hill with a rope and some people couldn't make it, so I'd lend a hand and pull them up. Everybody on the course wants to see you finish."

Hill echoed that sentiment: "At the beginning of Tough Mudder, they give a speech and tell you that everyone here is your teammate and you should treat them like that. Going through the obstacles and experiencing everyone helping each other out, you really feel like that's true."

Both Hill and Daniel are in their mid-30s, and Hill said she thought most other adventure runners were probably around her age and older.

"I don't know if it's a mid-life crisis or we do it to feel young, but I'd say half the people are in this age range," Hill said. "You're never too old for these runs. I've seen a guy who was about 65 going through his second time around the course in one day, and here I am struggling to run it once. It was humbling, for sure."

Some adventure runs also feature shorter races for children. "I've actually done a couple of the mud runs with my 7-year-old son," Hill said. "He can run about a mile. He likes to lay in the mud and we'll get each other all muddy. He complains about the running part but he loves the mud part of it."

"Doing these runs is a passion of mine, and it's fun to share it with him, too," Hill said. "I've done a lot of traditional runs, but I kind of get bored with them. The obstacles and camaraderie make these runs more fun. I definitely don't get the rush out of just running like I do from these races."

### **Mud run training tips**

- Amy Hill lifts weights three times a week and does about 10 miles of cardio per week. Her secret weapon? "I've found that pull-ups have been the best training for me because there are so many walls to climb over. I can't do that many pull-ups, but the few that I can do have really made me stronger."

**Her favorite run:** Tough Mudder, various locations and dates; [www.toughmudder.com](http://www.toughmudder.com).

- Mark Daniel works out regularly at a Crossfit gym.

"I run a mile here or two miles there, but mostly I go to the gym," he said. "Our workouts are pretty intense and give you a lot of stamina. So then a 5-mile run with obstacles isn't too taxing because you're put through the ringer at the gym all week."

**His favorite run:** Gladiator Assault Challenge, Chicago area in September, in Boone next May; [www.gladiatorassaultchallenge.com](http://www.gladiatorassaultchallenge.com).