



At mile 161 of the Cocodona 250, Aaron Reed suffered a stress fracture in his leg. His mental fitness and stamina pushed him on to the finish line. PHOTOS COURTESY OF AARON REED



# Keeping Time

## Ultrarunner beats the odds

By Victoria Hampton

As a runner and musician, Aaron Reed's life revolves around keeping time. From pace to beat, he follows a rhythm of performance as he traverses trails and takes the stage.

In December 2024, time took on new meaning when Aaron collapsed during a routine gym workout. Suddenly, he was hanging in the balance between life and death.

"I didn't realize anything was wrong until I had a seizure," Aaron says.

He was facing an unexpected challenge—time running out. Yet, mental and physical strength, along with divine intervention, prepared Aaron for the fight of his life.

### Going the Distance

Aaron, 42, has loved running since middle school. When he moved to Oregon in 2004, he ran along the state's scenic trails and found a path to the ultrarunning community.

"I was always really into long runs and as I got older, got into running ultras," Aaron says.

Aaron continues taking on challenges at longer distances and finds new trails to explore while touring and performing with his brother, Phil. Known as The Brothers

Reed, the duo takes the stage at intimate venues from Washington to Arizona, combining storytelling with original lyrics.

During a tour stop in Arizona, Aaron discovered the Cocodona 250, a 250-mile ultramarathon from Black Canyon City to Flagstaff through some of state's most scenic landscape.

In May 2024, seven months before he collapsed in the gym, Aaron found himself relying on his mental strength to push his body through the challenge. He was 80 miles in when he sensed something was wrong. By mile 161, he suffered a stress fracture in his leg.

"I had to make the decision," Aaron says. "I am going to finish. The only way I won't is if I am taken out of the race."

He walked the remaining 89 miles in 52 hours, completing the race in four days, eight hours, 16 minutes and 33 seconds.

While achieving some of his best performances, on the trail and stage, a bigger threat was growing inside him.

### Divine Intervention

At the end of the year, following a series of tests at the hospital, Aaron was diagnosed with a brain tumor.

"It's kind of interesting, because (the tumor) was in there ... I was racing really hard," he says. "I was doing really well in races, the music, just everything was going so well, and then this happened."

Due to the severity of the tumor, the surgeon didn't know if it was possible to remove it all or what type of life Aaron would have after surgery. He could lose his vision, his ability to speak or, in the worst case, his life could be cut short.

"If we don't get it out immediately, you got maybe six weeks," Aaron recounts the doctor's prognosis. "How long if I get it out? Thirteen months."

Aaron's wife, Becca, says time seemed to move backward as she stood next to her husband in a hospital bed and tried to process the news.

"I felt like things were going slow but incredibly fast," she says. "The neurosurgeon came in, and it felt like this weird time warp of slow motion and super quick all at the same time."

As a nurse, Becca helps people through some of the worst times in their lives. Yet, knowing her husband was facing a life-threatening diagnosis was different.

"Nothing can prepare you for it," she says. "It just absolutely floored me."

Becca kept replaying the morning before Aaron's seizure in her mind. They were drinking coffee together and planning the weekend. She savored the last moments of normalcy as she came to terms with the fact that if her husband survived, his life may never be the same.

As Aaron awaited surgery, Becca and Phil huddled with him on his hospital bed, shedding tears and holding on to the person they loved in his toughest moment. Aaron says a calm washed over him as he drifted into a deep sleep.

That is when he heard a voice. From somewhere unexplained and unsolicited, Aaron experienced a moment of divine intervention, offering him protection and peace of mind.

"God just literally put me to sleep," Aaron says. "As soon as he put me to sleep, he said, 'You're gonna be OK.' I just came out of it knowing I was going to be OK."

Eight days after Aaron's seizure, doctors successfully removed his tumor. Now, everyone waited to see what would remain of Aaron's abilities when he woke up.

Shortly after finding out Aaron was awake, the doctor returned to his family with an update.

"He came storming back in and said, 'He's awake,'" Aaron says. "He knows his name. He knows where he's at. He knows where he's from. He just said the Packers game is on in 45 minutes. He's talking."

On Christmas Day, just two days after surgery, Aaron was released from the hospital. He was back on a stationary bike seven days later. Since then, he's started racing again in preparation for ultramarathons this summer.

Aaron's pathology tests continue to show improvements.

"I know this isn't going to be the thing I die from," he says.

### Coming Together in McKenzie River

In June, Aaron, Becca and Phil are joining the McKenzie River Trail Run, an ultramarathon coordinated by their friend, Tim Hooton.

"Tim is one of my soul friends," Aaron says. "It's cool to get to be there and get to do this thing he puts so much work in."

During race weekend, Aaron and Becca will commemorate their 10 years of marriage with a vow renewal.

"McKenzie River has always been a really special place for us," Becca says. "There's something magical in that area. The forest and that river, you feel like you're so far



Since he recovered from a brain tumor, Aaron Reed and his wife, Becca, view every day as a gift. The couple will compete in the McKenzie River Trail Run in June.

away. There's barely any cell service. It's just a time to disconnect from the craziness of the world, and it just feels really peaceful and serene and quiet."

While the worst is behind Aaron, building his mental stamina is just as much a part of his daily life as his physical fitness. Aaron writes in a journal, meditates twice a day and eats healthy. His practices include writing on paper five things he's grateful for each day and placing the list in a jar.

"It seems to do quite a bit, especially if you're one of those people who tends to gravitate towards the gloom and doom," Aaron says. "I always have believed that the mind is super powerful."

Yet, he doesn't give himself credit for his miraculous recovery. Aaron believes a higher power gave him back his most precious resource: time.

"I didn't have to tell myself it was OK," Aaron says. "God literally came to me uninfluenced and just told me I would be OK." ■

To listen to Aaron and Phil's music, visit [thebrothersreed.com](http://thebrothersreed.com).