



You've got to be strong, you've got to be fast and fit, but most of all, you've got to be tough. We discover obstacle running through the eyes of legendary champion Amelia Boone, who is also a full-time lawyer

Multitasking for badassess

1 Were you always a good runner?

As a child in Oregon, I wanted to be a marine biologist and swim with dolphins. Once I grew out of that, I wanted to be a lawyer. I was set on that from high school
5 onwards. I was a jack-of-all-trades kind of athlete. I was pretty good at everything I touched. I played a lot of football, softball, team sports. I was always going from one practice to the other. We had this minivan, and my parents used to throw me in the trunk because I was so
10 dirty.

I don't have a running background. To this day, I've never run for a team or run cross-country or anything. I've actually only run one road race ever in my life. I've never run a 5k. I did the half marathon. It was fine, but it
15 didn't grab me – it was more like a bucket list thing. And it was also training for my first obstacle race because I wanted to make sure I could run 13 miles without stopping!

20 What makes a good obstacle racer?

You have to be an extremely well-rounded athlete. You can't just be fast. You can't just be a good runner. You see people who say they're superfast, but you need upper body strength. And you need to be able to lift your own bodyweight and get up over walls. It's this
25 combination of speed and strength and endurance that really helps you. And you also have to really kind of like – and not be afraid of – getting dirty and banging yourself up. You're crawling under barbed wire and jumping into freezing cold water.

I always try to compartmentalise what I'm going through. So, for instance, World's Toughest Mudder is a 24-hour race. The worst thing is like four hours in. And you're like: oh my God. I have another 20 hours of this. What am I doing? What did I get myself into? That's the
35 moment people will give up. So for me it's just about getting through the next 30 minutes, or the next mile.

I figure there's never anything so awful that you can't get through the next 30 minutes. And that is how I push myself and keep going in those situations.

40 **How do you prepare for World's Toughest Mudder and what is it like?**

I never pulled all-nighters in college, but I did a few at work. Let me tell you, it's way worse sitting at your desk for 24 hours than it is to be running around. It's much
45 easier when you're moving. I never get tired during this stuff – it's the adrenaline. You get physically exhausted, but you're so full of mental energy, sleep is not an issue.

The lowest I've been was in my first World's Toughest Mudder in 2011. It was in sub-freezing temperatures
50 and we were breaking through ice in the water. It was so cold, like the coldest I've ever been in my entire life – and just so miserable. I remember thinking, 'Why would I do this? Just why?' That was a dark, dark place. But at the same time, when I look back on that, that is the
55 moment that it all kind of came together for me. It's like, I've reached this low and I can get through anything now, you know?

I think that one of the greatest things is – and this sounds trite – but feeling alive. And using your body,
60 moving your body, doing things you don't do when you're sitting at a desk every single day. And really just pushing yourself and experiencing that. It gives a bit of perspective to everything else.

65 **It's a fairly new sport, so how do you try to get better? There can't be textbooks or anything.**

Honestly when I started, there was nothing. Now there are tonnes. I think one of the things that appealed to me was that everyone was saying to me that I should do triathlons, or do an Iron Man – and I looked at the
70 training schedules and it's like, 'You run x amount, you bike x amount and you blah blah blah.' It seemed so mechanical, whereas with obstacle racing, nobody really knew how to train for it. The few of us who were doing it to a good standard were asking, 'Well, what do you do?'

75 And so it's been, over the past five years, this adventure – kind of figuring it out together. And now there are all these gyms that pop up, and people have like Ninja Warrior gyms where they practise obstacles and stuff. But for those of us doing this from the
80 beginning five years ago, it was kind of just this fun experimental journey. That's part of what really attracted me to it.

85 **The perception of OCR racing is very masculine. Is there more gender equality in actual competition?**

I think it is gaining popularity amongst women in the shorter races, pretty much almost equal. The women will still lag behind especially when the races get longer. In the World's Toughest Mudder, it's eighty per cent dudes.
90 But, there are more strong women coming into it. And when we're out there, I don't even notice guys vs girls because I have goals out there.

Sure I want to win for women but I want to come

in as high overall as I can. So my goal is to come top
95 ten overall in a race, that kind of stuff. My favourite courses are ones that are on mountains. So I want super challenging technical terrain. Straight up and down ski hills – that's what I love. Combining terrain like that with heavy carries... I like carrying heavy sand bags, carrying
100 logs. And those strength-based obstacles, those are kind of my thing.

105 **There seems to be a real camaraderie among competitors. How much does that extend to actual competition when you're fighting for a top ten finish?**

When you're out there competing, you're definitely not going to let somebody pass you or help them out. With something like Spartan Race, where it's only two hours, you don't have that luxury. But in World's Toughest
110 Mudder, sure, I stop and help people out over obstacles, because you've got 24 hours. There is definitely great camaraderie.



115 **This thing has only been going five years. Where do you think it can end up? Will it end up in the Olympics?**

I see it expanding. Everyone talks about the Olympics and I think that's a definite possibility. Unfortunately, some of the things that make OCR so unique, you'd have to take away. Like, everything would need to be
120 standardised. You'd have to take away the barbed wire. I think some version of it could end up there, though. I definitely see more cross-over athletes getting into it, from the track and field world – steeplechase, things like that. It's a new challenge for them once their career has
125 come to an end.

Did you ever realise the dream of swimming with dolphins?

Sadly not. I think my life would be in a very different place had I gone down that track. But then again, I never
130 expected things to work out this way, so... <<