

Joel's Journey – 25 May, 2017

Exploring my limits

The past three weeks have been my busiest yet, both in and out of the gym, with heavier workloads and greater results. Two weeks ago my mum and brother arrived at San Diego airport.

To be able to show Mum and Kane the place and meet the people who have made such a positive influence in my life in the last two years gave me great Pride and joy. Up until two weeks ago, “Project Walk” was something they only knew about through a phone screen or a computer. Immediately from day one, I felt as if with mum there and Kane, I could find another gear, I could push harder and remain focused even with the distraction machine, (kane) right next to me the whole time. Much like when a sprinter trains, he or she needs somebody to run alongside them to push them that extra 2% more. Some exercises and machines are extremely expensive yet so valuable to our rehabilitation, they require lengthy setup and pack up, with great attention to detail during the process. These are the things that are not filmed on camera, that Mum and Kane otherwise got to witness firsthand. In my days off and after workouts when I felt up to it, Elisa and I took the tourists to San Diego, Los Angeles, Venice beach, Hollywood to Beverly Hills and around our local town, Carlsbad. It would seem all too short in the end, as soon as they arrived, it seemed they were gone. Short as it may seem, it was so bloody good to have them around. Although Kane attempted to eat every crumb of food in the place, and drink every tea bag we had, I loved every second of it. Just like it was at home. I was even able to show them a “masterclass” performance of monopoly, proving to everybody who the real property tycoon in the family is.

With the strict diet I am currently on, I have seen progress in my endeavour to lose weight, now down 3kg, I am more mobile (and according to Elisa, my gut doesn't “stick out as much”). Although it has not been as simple as just eating right, because I am not getting as many carbs, I have been Burning out quite quickly at rehab, so over two weeks I trialled different meals before different workouts, more hydration and different times for meals. This trial and error period came after I passed out whilst on a machine and in general was feeling extremely lightheaded after my cardio sessions. I can confidently say now, I understand where my flaws were and adjusted where I needed to. I have

introduced some interval-based training in my own workout time, this change comes after feeling as if I was just going through the motions and not pushing myself to my limits I know I can hit. Due to the fact I cannot raise my heart rate like I used to prior to my accident, I feel that this interval -based training is the closest thing I can do to get high intensity workouts that I was once accustomed to.

This morning I pushed it a little too hard, I got a bit too cocky and attempted a machine I've never tried before. The principle of this machine is the same as the FES bike I sit on and have my legs and glutes stimulated to simulate riding a bicycle. Although in this machine, I am standing, elevated off the ground by a harness, I have pads on my shins, calves, quads, hamstrings, glutes and lower back all sending electrical impulses to my muscles. Speaking to clients who have used this machine before, they have all spoken of the toll it takes on the body, how hard it is to stay on the machine for more than 15 or 20 minutes. "That won't be me" I thought, arrogantly and as I would soon find out, incorrectly....

Once I was set up and ready to start, we began stimulation at 1%, as it grew more and more over the next couple of minutes I then began to realise what the "toll" was. Every current was BLASTING my whole body. I hadn't felt this much of my body being utilised in three years. I begin to sweat, not because it was painful, but because I was working hard, Im watching the clock, telling myself I could beat 30 minutes, no worries. How wrong I was. At the 15 minute mark, I hit 'the wall'. I could feel breakfast beginning to come back up, my vision was closing in on itself, hearing was going, and my coordination started to Drop off. This put me in quite a precarious situation, here I was about to pass out, but I was strapped in to a harness and my feet were buckled in. The only thing I could think about, was getting down from the harness and laying down. Fortunately, the trainers I was with at the time lowered me quickly and safely from the harness, sat me down and gave me some much-needed rest, elevated my feet allowing the blood flow back to my head. Unfortunately and bizarrely this was not the end to my discomfort. Another client came up and attempted conversation with me, but I could not understand what he was saying or make sense of it, I told Elisa "I have to go to the toilet" and just before we got to the door not 30 seconds after I said that, I forgot what we were doing. We then decided it was time to go home, skipping my regular Half an hour on the hand bike, avoiding conversation with anybody on the way out. In the car park we bumped into another client and struck up a conversation, I called one of them

the wrong name twice, have no recollection of the conversation then returned home. All I had in mind was going to bed and sleeping for the rest of the afternoon, but, “When it rains, it pours” as we pulled into our driveway, our next door neighbour came out for a ‘brief’ chat. Fortunately he understood my body language and I went inside, cutting the conversation short and having a much needed sleep. I woke to the smell of dinner in the slow cooker, Elisa, You are a legend! (I will attach a link to the video showing in this machine).

Last week I saw some major progress in achieving my goal of standing. Previously, I have been able to activate my quads, but when it comes to pulling my hips through, and turning my glute spasm on, I was unable to achieve this. The trainer I have worked with the most towards achieving this had an idea, he placed an abdominal binder around my belly so that when I stood it would not only assist in my blood pressure, but I would be able to push my stomach out against the belt which generally creates more spasm in my legs, giving me more control and the ability to turn my spasm on when needed. He was right. Although it was only once, there was clear indication in my ability to bring my hips forward, thus, completing the motion of locking out my legs correctly. The next part, the hardest part, Will be to know how to hold those spasms. Let's not forget the most important one, dropping more weight so that my spasms can hold my bodyweight up!

A massive thank you to a great friend of mine Darcy Barden who back home has so modestly and quietly gone about it with nowhere near the recognition it deserves has raised \$5,500. On the 7th of May, he set out to run 25 km or more in the “Wings for Life” run, raising money each km he ran, for “Joels Journey”. In what is a massive achievement, running injured, he hit 27km! This amount of money is enough to get me nearly two months of state-of-the-art rehabilitation at “Project Walk”. Something I am very very grateful for. I was later told that Darcy was joined by two of my other close mates, one of them who is all too familiar with running for my cause, the Flannagan Brothers. It was said that Ben had been backstage with extremely overrated artist whom he has shamelessly followed around the country, jumped in the car and then selflessly with his brother ran alongside Darcy for 22km!

See "JOELS JOURNEY" on Facebook for video of Joel on the FES RTF600 machine

Joel