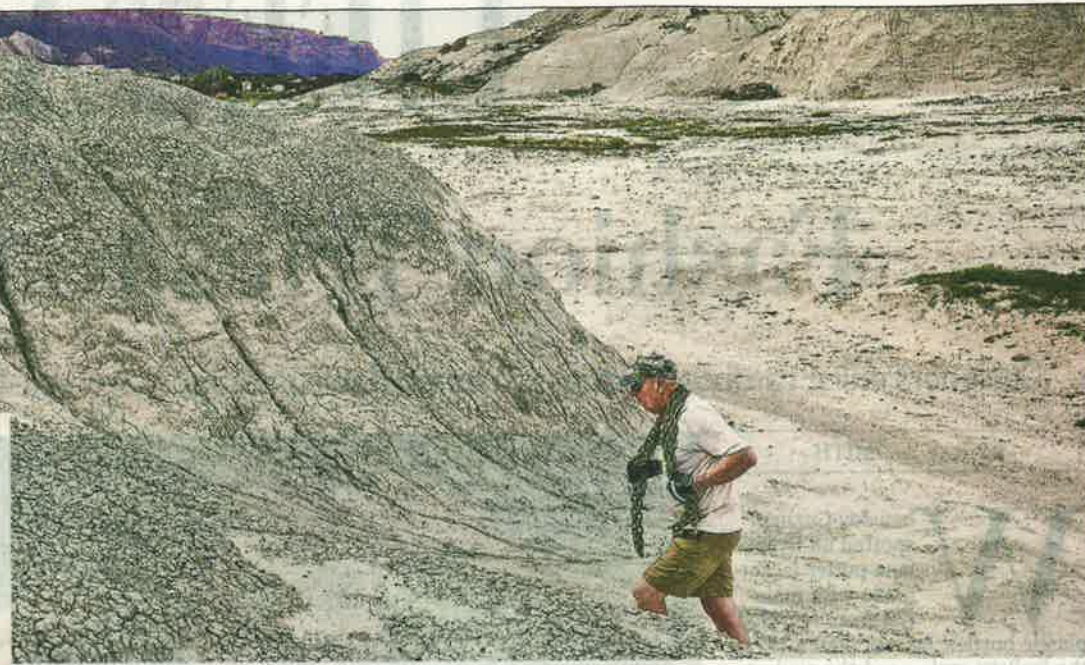


LIFE & ARTS



Paul Lachance, a 77-year-old real estate appraiser in Grand Junction, Colo., prepares for Spartan races with training runs at Colorado National Monument.

WHAT'S YOUR WORKOUT? | JEN MURPHY

He Conquered Cancer, Then 15 Spartan Races

WHEN PAUL Lachance began radiation and chemotherapy for lip cancer, he had one question for his radiologist: How soon after treatment can I start training to crawl under barbed wire and run through the mud?

Mr. Lachance, now 77 and cancer-free, competes in Spartan races. The popular obstacle-course events combine trail running with grueling challenges like climbing up cargo nets and scaling inverted walls. Spartan offers three core race distances: sprint (3 miles and 20 obstacles), super (8 miles and 25 obstacles) and beast (13 miles and 30 obstacles).

Completing races in all three distances in one calendar year is known as a Spartan Trifecta, a feat difficult even for healthy 20-somethings. Mr. Lachance wanted to conquer five Trifectas in 2018.

A residential real estate appraiser in Grand Junction, Colo., Mr. Lachance did his first Spartan race in 2014 at age 73 after seeing the TV show "American Ninja Warrior," where contestants compete in obstacle races. "These people

were climbing over inverted walls and nets and I thought, 'I could do that.' It reminded me of my Navy days," says Mr. Lachance, who served as an aviation electronics technician. He enlisted his 50-year-old son, Sean Lachance, to join him in a sprint race and was instantly hooked.

His medical team had advised him to keep exercising during treatment, which began in January 2018. But a lack of appetite from radiation took its toll. By the end of that March, after six bouts of chemo and 33 days of radiation, Mr. Lachance had gone from 230 pounds to 180 pounds. "I was very gaunt and had no energy," he says. "Even though I looked and felt like crap, I wanted to start my Spartan season."

He toed the line of a sprint-distance race in Jacksonville, Fla., the next month, his clothes baggy. In his weakened state, a 3-mile sprint-distance course took him around 90 minutes to finish, a super-distance 3.5 hours and the beast six to seven hours, all slow times for him. "My philosophy is that no matter how long it takes, I

still get the same medal and banana as the person who came in first," he says.

Sean joined Mr. Lachance for many of the 15 races, some of them on back-to-back days, and his wife, Davida Lachance, was his biggest cheerleader. He took that September off from racing and spent six weeks working with a personal trainer to build strength, then raced through the fall. In December 2018, he completed his ambitious goal with back-to-back sprint and beast races in humid, stormy conditions in central Florida, becoming the oldest person to ever complete five Spartan Trifectas in one year.

According to Spartan spokesman Jonathan Fine, Mr. Lachance was one of only 500 racers to complete a Trifecta five times in 2018, a year that saw more than one million participants world-wide. Mr. Lachance is gunning for six Trifectas in 2019.

The Workout

Mr. Lachance wakes by 4:30 a.m. He trains for 90 minutes, five mornings a week at Mesa Fitness in Grand Junction. Mondays, Wednes-

days and Fridays he focuses on upper body and Tuesdays and Thursdays legs and core. Pull-ups and hanging knee raises are staples.

Balance is crucial on the courses' uneven trails, so he performs exercises on a balance board. To build endurance, he jogs five laps around the gym carrying 60- to 65-pound sandbags, and he pulls a 120-pound sled across the gym. Mr. Lachance lost his left thumb in a wood chipper accident years ago, which makes rope climbs particularly difficult for him. He has a rope in his backyard for practice.

In the late afternoon, he jogs 3 to 5 miles outdoors, either along the Colorado River near his home or on the trails at Colorado National Monument. To help him build up endurance for beast races, he's been competing in two to three Spartan sprints in a single day.

The Diet

Mr. Lachance says his appetite hasn't quite returned to pre-cancer levels. "Radiation burned my taste buds, so anything I ate tasted awful and salty," he says. He has a

bowl of Honey Nut Cheerios with 2% milk and a banana for breakfast and oatmeal for lunch. "My better half is the cook," he says.

Dinner might be scrambled eggs and bacon or pizza. He eats light the morning before a race. "The only facilities along the trail are big trees," he jokes. He fuels with energy gummies and trail mix. He drinks water at every aid station.

The Gear and Cost

Mr. Lachance has a size 13 foot but buys Altra King MT trail sneakers (\$110) in a size 14. "Your feet get wet out there and your toes expand and then they're slamming into your shoe on the downhill," he says. "If your shoes are tight you end up losing toenails." He likes to keep his shoulders free, so instead of a hydration backpack he wears a fanny pack around his waist filled with snacks and extra gear, like a poncho.

He runs with a canister of Boost Oxygen (the company sponsors him). His gym membership is covered by the Medicare senior-fitness program, SilverSneakers.