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## Dean Karnazes' run across America ends in victory

Tue May 10, 2011 10:03 AM EDT

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*Frazier Moore, AP Television Writer*

**NEW YORK** — Mega-marathoner Dean Karnazes crossed the finish line Tuesday morning, completing a remarkable run that had taken him from sea to shining sea.

Viewers of "Live! With Regis and Kelly" saw Karnazes arrive at the talk show's Manhattan studio more than two months after he set off from California's Disneyland on Feb. 25.

Accompanied by a clutch of fellow runners on this final leg of his cross-country odyssey, he ran down Columbus Avenue waving an American flag, turned left onto 67th Street, and paused with a high school marching band and a throng of spectators beneath a burst of confetti. Then he dashed into the studio's red-carpeted entrance, where his wife Julie and 13-year-old son Nick held the tape that marked his long-awaited finish.

He hugged co-hosts Regis Philbin and Kelly Ripa and greeted the cheering studio audience. He urged everyone to chase their dreams, as he has.

"It's been a dream of mine for 75 days to be standing right here," he said, wearing a wide grin and clearly feeling pumped. "God bless America! Go get 'em, people!"

Teamed up with "I live!" for his run across America, the 48-year-old Karnazes has been promoting fitness for Americans and young people in particular. The show regularly aired updates, tracking his progress along a route that covered nearly 3,000 miles and took him through 16 states and the District of Columbia.

Other notable stats from his pilgrimage:

— an average of 40 to 50 miles run daily (from eight to 15



In this Feb. 25, 2011 publicity image released by Disneyland, mega-marathoner Dean Karnazes, center, starts out his 3,000-mile run across the country at Disneyland park in Anaheim, Calif. Karnazes has crossed the finish line in New York after his coast-to-coast run. (AP Photo/Disneyland, Paul Hiffmeyer)

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hours daily).

— more than 50 pairs of shoes exhausted.

— \$177,865 collected during a dozen 5K fun runs Karnazes led en route, to benefit Action for Healthy Kids, a nonprofit and volunteer organization that fights childhood obesity and undernourishment.

Moments after "Live" was off the air, Karnazes took a break in the show's green room, where, still damp from a spray of celebratory champagne, he enjoyed his first sip of post-ultra-marathon water.

"Running 3,000 miles doesn't tell the whole of it," he said, trying to sum up his experience. "The weather conditions, the mountains, the desert — I mean, it was just intense."

Karnazes spent Monday night in Fort Lee, N.J., across the Hudson River from New York. Then come morning, he had polished off an "easy" 9-miler.

The best moment of the run?

"Coming into the studio," he said, "coming in here, seeing my family, finally knowing I actually made it. So many days I was questioning it: Can it really be done?"

The San Francisco Bay area native came to the challenge seemingly well-qualified. His lengthy list of endurance derring-do includes this amazing feat: 50 marathons run in 50 days in all 50 states. He not only is a mega-marathoner, but also a fitness advocate and author whose latest book is "Run! 26.2 Stories of Blisters and Bliss."

The worst moment of the run?

"The end of the first day," Karnazes replied instantly. "I was destroyed. I thought, 'How am I going to do this for 74 more days?' It had been so easy to talk about it, but after that first day it hit me: the enormity of what we were about to undertake. Then I told myself, 'Get up in the morning and try your best. You may or may not make it, but your commitment is to try your very hardest.'"

"Live" executive producer Michael Gelman said he had thought Karnazes was up to the task, even while nursing a few nagging doubts of his own.

"Dean was so confident when we first brought the idea to him," Gelman recalled. "He said, 'That's a great idea! No problem! Let's do it!' If I'd known he was doubting himself I would have been even more nervous.

"I was afraid, but I also believed in him. And I was right," Gelman said with a laugh. "Thank goodness."

Karnazes heads home on Wednesday, and he can put his feet up for the journey — he'll be flying, not running — while, proudly, he ponders where he has been.

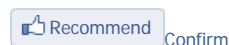
"It's a great, vast country, and you fly over it and look down and wonder, 'What's down there?' I know what's down there," he said. "I just ran right across it. I saw it first-hand."

—

Online:

"Live!" Run Across America: <http://tinyurl.com/4lt8e6m>

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