



The Jerusalem Marathon is part of Zwihaft's training program ahead of his next ultra-marathon tour event in Italy in June.

asked him to run a full marathon for the first time in his life before they agreed to sign him up. He did so and enjoyed every moment of his first ultra-marathon event.

"I wasn't tired during the race and never stopped smiling," he says. "That is why I continue taking part in these races. These competitions give me freedom, both to my thoughts and my body, to run like there are no boundaries."

Zwihaft admits that people are often perplexed by why he would want to take part in such grueling competitions, but he sees things very differently.

"I do it because I can," he explains. "It is like when Sir Edmund Hillary was asked why climb Everest and he said 'Because it is there.' I'm trying to break boundaries. I don't have any countries to discover, but I have a curious soul and want to try to go where no one else has been before. I have a need to try to keep breaking the boundaries I set myself and reach the next level."

He adds, "There was a South Pole explorer who once apologized to his wife for being an explorer, telling her that he did it because he was trying to resist his natural inclination to be lazy. I think that I, like any other person, am lazy, but I really fight it. I don't want to give up. There is nothing more fun than spending all day in bed, but afterwards I feel bad about myself for wasting my time. It is an eternal war not to be lazy and not to be mediocre and to always strive for success."

Zwihaft uses his knowledge as a biochemist to achieve the best possible results in extreme conditions.

"I know my body from a biological standpoint, and I use my knowledge to make my training more efficient," he says. "My laboratory at the Weizmann

Institute studies the connection between the biological clock and metabolism. We have expanded knowledge about how the body works. There is a certain characteristic regarding our body for every hour of the day. For example, the best time for physical activity is in the evening, while at three o'clock in the morning my body will find it difficult to wake up. As soon as I understand that, I will plan my course accordingly and will not push myself at night. The races are sometimes more than 24 hours long, so I encounter all the hours of the day."

Zwihaft owns a hypoxicator machine, which simulates high-altitude conditions. Ahead of major competitions, he erects a tent over his bed and breathes reduced oxygen hypoxic air throughout the night to prepare his body for the high-altitude conditions he will encounter during the race.

Despite his remarkable accomplishments, Zwihaft is eternally in search of a major sponsor who will help him finance the costly sport.

"One of the biggest problems in Israel is finding financial backing. It is difficult to live off a student's salary, especially with these additional expenses," he says. "The sponsors in Israel usually back sports that include a ball. An ultra-marathon runner should be a classic target for a sponsor, as this is a person who can cope with difficulties and is determined, and those are regarded as positive attributes in society."

Last year's UTMB winner finished almost eight hours ahead of Zwihaft, but he believes that he is nowhere near to realizing his potential.

"If I didn't have any financial concerns, I would become a full-time ultra-marathon runner while practicing science in my free time," he says. "I wish it were possible. I think I could be ranked among the world's top 20." •



He finished the 166-km. Ultra-Trail du Mont-Blanc in 73rd place, last August.