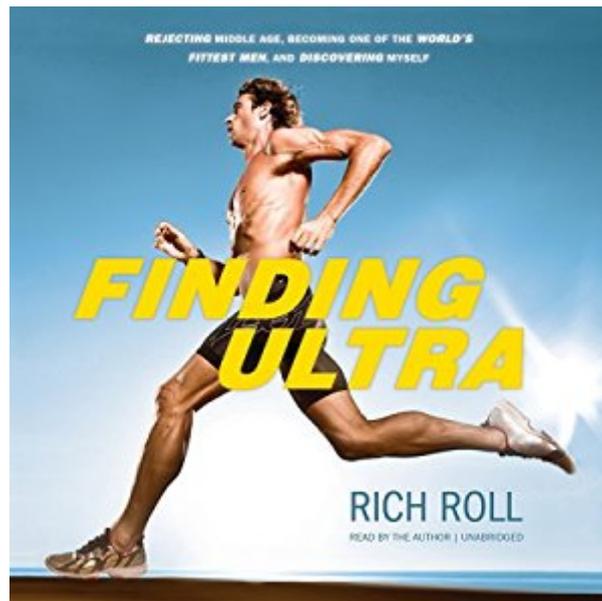


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Finding Ultra: Rejecting Middle Age, Becoming One Of The World's Fittest Men, And Discovering Myself



Synopsis

An incredible but true account of achieving one of the most awe-inspiring midlife physical transformations ever. In October 2006, the night before he was to turn forty, Rich experienced a chilling glimpse of his future. Nearly fifty pounds overweight and unable to climb the stairs without stopping, he saw where his sedentary lifestyle was taking him. Most of us look the other way when granted such a moment of clarity, but not Rich. Plunging into a new way of eating that made processed foods off limits and prioritized plant nutrition and daily training, Rich morphed in mere months from out-of-shape midlifer to endurance machine. Ninety days into his physical overhaul, Rich left the house for a light jog and found himself running a near marathon. It was time to scale up his goals. How many of us take up a sport at age forty and compete for the title of the world's best within two years? Finding Ultra recounts Rich's remarkable journey to the starting line of the elite Ultraman World Championship competition, which pits the world's fittest humans against each other in a 320-mile ordeal of swimming, biking, and running. Following that test, Rich conquered an even greater one: the Epic5 Challenge—five Ironman-distance triathlons, each on a different Hawaiian island, all completed in less than a week. This is more than an inside look at a series of jaw-dropping athletic feats or a practical training manual for those who would attempt a similar transformation. Yes, Rich's account rivets and instructs, providing information that will be invaluable to anyone who wants to change their physique; but this book is most notable as a powerful testament to human resiliency, for as we learn early on, Rich's life has posed numerous physical and social challenges, including a fierce battle with alcoholism. Ultimately Finding Ultra is a beautifully written portrait of what willpower can accomplish. It challenges us to rethink what we're capable of and urges us, implicitly and explicitly, to "go for it."

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I've really come to enjoy books about healthier living, from fitness to improving one's food intake ('diet' is a dirty word!). I've lost a lot of weight myself through improved eating habits and more exercise. Roll's life story is similar to a lot of folks, who struggle with bad diet and addiction (in his case primarily alcohol, but food can obviously be an addiction too). He makes radical changes and voila, he's one of the fittest guys on the planet, competing in ultras. I generally liked the book, particularly some of the information about becoming vegan, and the hidden dairy in products one wouldn't expect to find in some everyday foods- the dairy thing really opened my eyes and has made me begin to look even more closely at what I eat. He reaches a point where he decides to make wholesale changes in his life, and that is a moment I reached as well. It was the point of the book that I most identified with the author; the single moment when we decide that we must make sacrifices to grow and become better people spiritually and physically. What I didn't like was that early in the book, he details his struggles with alcohol, and subsequent stint at rehab for several chapters, but then suddenly there's a chapter about his PlantPower diet, and how great it will make you feel. The enthusiasm for his diet did not match the preceding chapters and felt really out of place- almost like a commercial break. The diet really had nothing to do with his recovery, since the fitness bug didn't truly hit him until several years into his sobriety.

I'm going to be harsh, because frankly I just didn't like this book. I found it boring, albeit I did read the book in its entirety, probably because it actually starts out well in the first page or two and so I guess I kept hoping it'd get better; however it actually just kept getting worse. To begin with, (I could be wrong) but I believe that one main premise of this book is that the author starts out in "middle age" being fat and out of shape and then through a miraculous transformation becomes an elite endurance athlete. Or in other words, he was once just an average Joe down on his luck who found endurance sports and then "beat the odds" to become a racing pro. I would argue that this just isn't true. For one, the author tells you about how in college he was a world class swimmer, almost beating some of the best in the world, only to then "fall from grace" because of alcoholism. Now... > 90% of all triathletes will tell you that they suck at swimming, "it's my worst event", they'll tell you. So, anybody who can go out in the open water on any day and swim 2.4 miles in 50 minutes (which will get you out of the water in 1st to 3rd place in any Ironman in the world) just doesn't get credit in

my book as someone who is an "average guy". In addition to this, the author tells about how he went out on his first run and just kept going for 2 hours or something like that. So, he's lucky to have either good genetics or natural form to allow him to run long without injury unlike most people. Again, this isn't a story that an "average joe triathlete" will tell you. Some people are blessed with excellent recovery times, it's obvious that the author is one of those people; this makes a world of difference. And then, on top of all of that, he's a lawyer.

After reading Rich Roll's memoir/ode to veganism, "Finding Ultra," the reader is left with one undeniable conclusion. Rich Roll is insane. This is not a criticism of Mr. Roll, who may have saved himself through his insanity. But even though Roll writes as if anyone who converts to a healthy vegan diet can achieve the same endurance feats he has, the fact remains that he has transformed himself into one of the most unique athletes in the world. Consider: in less than half a decade, Roll transforms himself from a cheeseburger-slurping couch potato (recovering from a decade of major-league alcohol abuse) into one of the first two guys to complete the EPIC5. What is the EPIC5, you ask? The EPIC5 is a flat-out nightmare - completing 5 Ironman Triathlons in 5 consecutive days, each one on a different Hawaiian island. To put this in perspective, an individual Ironman is the feat of a lifetime and includes - in one day - the following: 2.4 mile swim - in open water, 112 mile bike race, followed by a full 26.2 mile marathon. Most fitness fanatics never even bother with an Ironman, while for others completing a single race is their life's defining moment. Roll slightly misses his goal by needing two rest days, but he still completes the EPIC5 in seven days. This is insane, and something that only a truly unique personality would even consider, much less finish. Indeed, the most frustrating part of Roll's book is his unwillingness to accept how special he is, even as he's telling you this remarkable story. And it is remarkable.

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