

by Julie Mais
Editor



True grit

I'm not sure why that day was different, but it was the day I decided I needed to make a change. The thump of my increased heart rate by the time I reached the third floor of Umberger Hall to start a shift for my on-campus job was louder than before. And it took a little bit longer to catch my breath.

I was just 22 years old and about to graduate college. Climbing a few flights of stairs made me winded. I was otherwise healthy, but I knew I could do better.

Arbitrary ambitions, like “go to the gym more,” weren’t working. I needed a concrete goal, and I needed accountability.

I soon found myself talking to a friend and agreeing to run a half marathon with her the following April. We formulated a plan and picked the race — the Country Music Marathon and Half Marathon in Nashville.

I quickly realized those were the two easiest steps of this entire process. In the following months I found myself sacrificing Saturday mornings for long runs, running in the cold and heat. There was blood, sweat and maybe a few tears.

While I played sports from childhood through high school, running never came easy to me. Running, for me, took grit. And, once you become complacent, it’s easy to lose stamina.

That spring came, and I found myself among thousands of other runners in Music City. I was unsure

if I could make it the 13.1 miles to the finish line. Had I not spent months of consistent training, I wouldn’t have been prepared physically, and mentally, to keep pushing even when it hurt to move one leg in front of the other.

But, we did cross that finish line. I successfully completed my first half marathon.



Predicting success


I was recently listening to TED Talks on success. A high-powered consultant turned New York seventh-grade schoolteacher, Angela Lee Duckworth, shared some research. What makes her students succeed in the classroom? Is it IQ? Talent?

To answer these questions, she eventually left teaching to pursue psychology. During graduate school she studied kids and adults in challenging settings and tried to predict who would be successful in various situations from attending West Point Military Academy to competing in the National Spelling Bee.

Duckworth said one characteristic emerged as a “significant predictor of success.” Grit.

“Grit is passion and perseverance for very long-term goals,” she said. “Grit is having stamina. Grit is sticking with your future, day in, day out, not just for the week, not just for the month, but for years, and working really hard to make that future a reality. Grit is living life like it’s a marathon, not a sprint.”

Preparing for this issue, “Feeding Success,” I cannot help but think about the true grit our Angus breeders have. There’s no overnight success in the Angus business. Instead, it’s years of persevering and doing the right things for your operation and future generations that develops the longevity of an accomplished Angus breeder.

Duckworth ended her talk with this: “We need to take our best ideas, our strongest intuitions, and we need to test them. We need to measure whether we’ve been successful, and we have to be willing to fail, to be wrong, to start over again with lessons learned.” 

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Julie".

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