

EXTRA EXTRA!

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The runner who crossed a continent

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Russell Cook, the man nicknamed "Hardest Geezer", has successfully run the full length of Africa, crossing the finish line in Tunisia after 352 days.

Before he set off on the mammoth challenge to run the entire length of Africa, he said he hoped to look back at his life and have no regrets.

The 27-year-old from Worthing, West Sussex, said he had struggled with his mental health and wanted to "make a difference".

After running through 16 countries, he has raised hundreds of thousands of pounds for charity and has completed his final run.

As he crossed the finish line at about 16:40 BST in Ras Angela, Tunisia, Mr Cook was greeted by a shouting crowd, with many chanting "geezer".

Mr Cook set off on foot from South Africa's most southerly point on 22 April last year — a journey that would take him through cities, rainforests, mountains and the Sahara Desert.

After ticking off South Africa and Namibia, Mr Cook encountered his first



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major setback — an armed robbery in Angola on 24 June.

However, the ultrarunner soldiered on.

Consistently running more than a marathon a day also began to take its toll. On day 200, Mr Cook was forced to reduce his mileage, even missing consecutive days on day 205 and 206.

But in true Hardest Geezer style, he was not to be stopped.

He said: "I took a couple of days to get some scans. No bone damage so figured the only option left was to stop mincing about like a little weasel, get the strongest painkillers available and zombie stomp road again."

Mr Cook was also forced to halt while he waited to secure permission to cross the border into Algeria from Mauritania.

After the setbacks, all that separated Mr Cook and the finish line was the small task of the Sahara Desert.

Finally, on Sunday afternoon, joined by supporters from across the world, Mr Cook completed the challenge.

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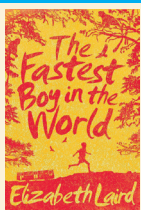
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The Mexico City marathon was cancelled because all of the top finishers cheated.



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