

AID IS NOT A PAUSE. IT IS WHERE THE BODY CHANGES HANDS

PLEASE NO DUST

SUBJECT: WSER | DIRECTIVE: A QUIET RESISTANCE TO THE DISPOSABLE

VISUAL
RESEARCH
DEPARTMENT





PLEASE

NO DUST

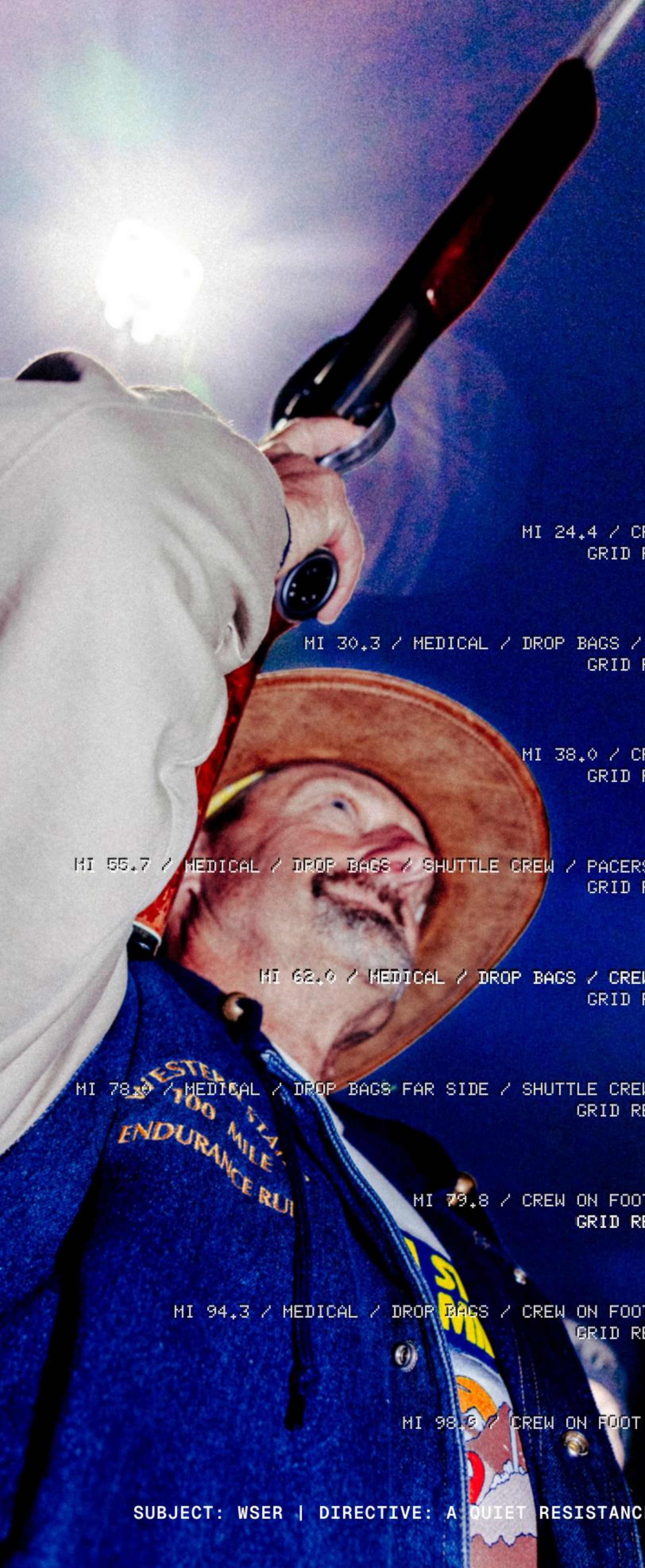
A misspelt aid-station sign that speaks to the chaos.

A small attempt to control the uncontrollable.

Dust, heat, bodies, equipment, food, water. Around each runner, a crew builds a temporary system of care, creating order inside the disparate disorder of each runner's race experience.

For a few minutes, the body changes hands.

And then - the runner leaves, the dust settles and the system resets for the next arrival.



WSER
CREW
AID

DUNCAN CANYON

MI 24.4 / CREW 1 VEHICLE / CUTOFF 12:30
GRID REF 39.1143776, -120.4700218

ROBINSON FLAT

MI 30.3 / MEDICAL / DROP BAGS / SHUTTLE CREW / CUTOFF 14:10
GRID REF 39.1565474, -120.5015086

DUSTY CORNERS

MI 38.0 / CREW 1 VEHICLE / CUTOFF 16:05
GRID REF 39.0980079, -120.5797825

MICHIGAN BLUFF

MI 55.7 / MEDICAL / DROP BAGS / SHUTTLE CREW / PACERS AFTER 20:00 / CUTOFF 21:55
GRID REF 39.0409532, -120.7345584

FORESTHILL

MI 62.0 / MEDICAL / DROP BAGS / CREW / PACERS OK / CUTOFF 23:45
GRID REF 39.0206856, -120.8115313

RUCKY CHUCKY

MI 78.0 / MEDICAL / DROP BAGS FAR SIDE / SHUTTLE CREW / PACERS OK / CUTOFF 05:00
GRID REF 38.9736769, -120.9544633*

GREEN GATE

MI 79.8 / CREW ON FOOT / PACERS OK / CUTOFF 05:50
GRID REF 38.9405362, -120.9183004*

POINTED ROCKS

MI 94.3 / MEDICAL / DROP BAGS / CREW ON FOOT / PACERS OK / CUTOFF 09:40
GRID REF 38.8896463, -121.0160408*

ROBIE POINT

MI 98.5 / CREW ON FOOT / PACERS OK / CUTOFF 11:00*
GRID REF NOT PUBLISHED

we only have what we give - Is



“We only have what we give.” (Isabel Allende)

Words by:
Tom Reynolds

If we only have what we give
What then, of the places, in races
In which both sides give everything?
What does the aid station equation leave us with?
What do they have, what do we give
What do we have, what do they give

We only have what we give

Us athletes?
The trail transients whose transaction is simple
Carry nothing, but the essentials
Give everything, *including* the essentials
What do we have, what do we give?
Nothing, and everything. Everything, and nothing.
Every last drop of our energy, emotional and physical
Until we briefly, blissfully, give up

We only have what we give

Inside the aid station it's a military operation,
awash with symbolism
First comes the surrender
A moment when the movement,
momentarily,
stops.
The control crosses over and it's
our turn to shine
Suddenly, all the athlete has is the trust
they can give to us,
their temporary aid station lieutenants
Refuelling, re-strategising, planning,
plotting their next move
An organised frenzy; a meticulous mania
And then back into battle, back out alone

We only have what we give

So, if we only have these moments of give and take,
what do we have left to reflect on?
When the trail transients move on
Nothing tangible, of course
Temporary trestle table triage packed down,
camp chairs folded up,
discarded wrappers tidied up
It's a wrap.
The aid station interaction is always fleeting
A liminal space, a third place in the in-between
An interim
Somewhere between stop and go.
A comma,
Not a full stop.

We only have what we give



Even if the day goes

horribly....they'll
still be there
for me.



Aid is not
a **pause**.
It is
where
the **body**
changes
hands.

Words by:
Kimi Schreiber

The individual zip bags are laid out across the table, filled to the brim with gels, drink mixes, and flasks. Each one is covered in handwritten instructions and carries the weight of tension and responsibility. Beside them lies a spreadsheet titled "Western States 100 – Race Strategy," meticulously planned down to the smallest detail, leaving seemingly no questions unanswered.

Except one: what happens when the plan falls apart?

How do you improvise when the line between success and failure is no thicker than the finest mesh fabric?

Teamwork becomes the defining race strategy. Runners are no longer relying solely on their own legs, they are just as dependent on the organisational skills, quick decisions, and calm execution of their crew.

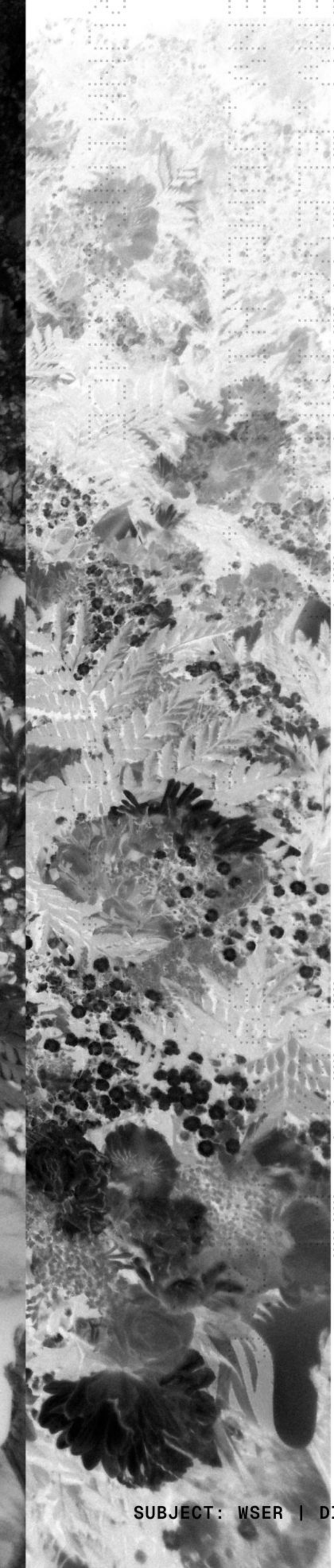
Where aid stations were once places of rest and recovery, they have increasingly become spaces defined by efficiency and precision. For a brief moment, runners hand over not only their nutrition, but also themselves, into the care of their crew.

Aid is not a pause. It is where the body changes hands.

Every movement follows a well-rehearsed rhythm: practiced gestures, familiar phrases, knowing glances, and, on the hardest days, improvisation and empathy. Choosing a crew is therefore an almost intimate decision, one that can ultimately determine the fine line between success and failure.

Running becomes a team sport.

Being **mean**
is part of
the game.



Michigan Bluff Aid Station. Mile 54.4

Michigan Bluff sticks out to me. When I reached there, it was like I could hand over the doubts I had in my mind and just let my crew take care of me, trying to fill me with their belief that I had it in me to go harder and push further. That's how I left the station. Sometimes it is that belief that gets you through the next section of the course, and I truly believe it lifts you in a race like Western States, where the course can feel insurmountable at times. – Dan Jones

After 54 miles the faces and bodies of all the runners already tell a story: a story of the hardships they have endured. A trained eye recognises clenched teeth, focused movements and reckless speeds. The spectators cheer for the runners and their pace, without noticing what lies between the lines.

The runners themselves react from whatever emotions they are experiencing at that moment, and their crew must deal with it. Because they are not spectators. They are not outside the performance. They are part of the system that keeps everything moving.

The routines are clearly structured. Efficiency is the order of the moment. The used running vest is tossed aside, the one that has already been packed is put on. The ice bandana is tied around the neck, ice cubes rattling inside. A fresh cap is dipped into cold water and placed on the runner's head.

A pat on the butt. A friendly signal that slowing down is not an option.

There is only time for emotions when the plan falls apart. Only then, improvisation is required. Only when the façade of a strong race begins to crack does the crew need to step in and provide emotional support.

The goal is to keep moving and overpower the pain through movement. Not to give in to the pull of a break, but to switch into functional mode.

On a good day, this conviction is not necessary. On a hard day, this very exchange becomes an intimate encounter. How far can you go as a crew? It is a balancing act. Being mean is part of the game.

If the race is going well, it's simply a checkpoint. Your emotions don't really matter. You do what needs to be done and keep moving. But if the race isn't going as you'd hoped, it comes with a sense of shame. – Jeshurun Small



I think to
myself: I'm
safe, I'm
here, and
I'm doing it.



The Aid

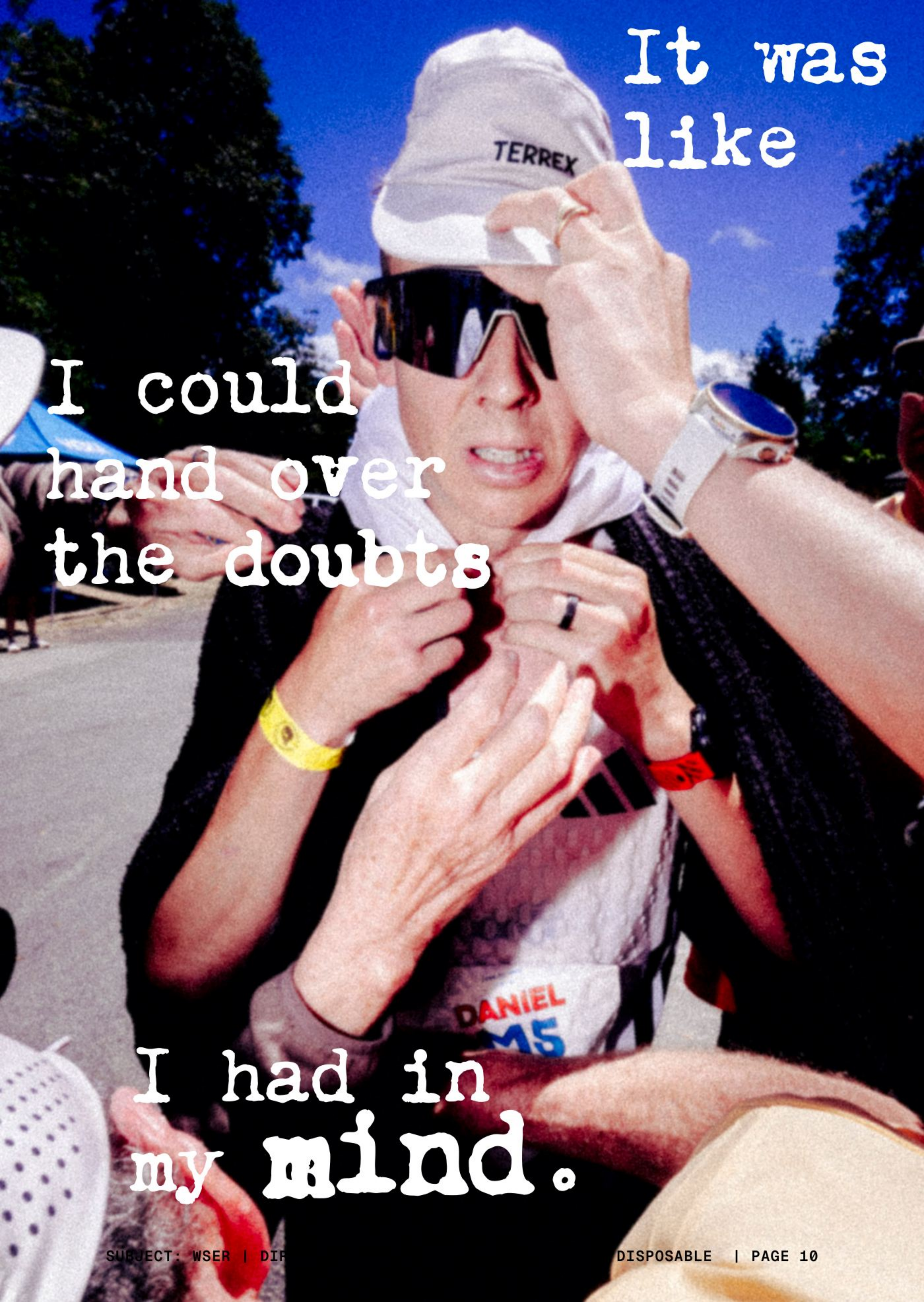
Robie Point, Mile 96. Hannah switches off her headlamp. She wants to disappear into the darkness. The fear of being overtaken in the final miles and losing her place in the top ten is still there. Her crew is waiting for her a kilometer from the finish, excited to run her home. Relief is written all over their faces. Only Hannah keeps pushing toward the finish in silent stubbornness.

She won't let go of the fight until it is truly over. Until she crosses the finish line. She will collapse into one of the chairs in the finish area and surrender to her emotions. Above all, to the disappointment of a day that didn't go according to plan. She will search for answers, wondering why the plan didn't work out, while her crew gathers around her. Searching for answers themselves. Was it their fault? Did they make mistakes?

Can you look for someone to blame when race day doesn't go according to plan? Or do you celebrate making it to the finish line healthy, no matter what?

The clearest things I remember are honestly how valued I feel with the people closest to me. I think that is a huge thing. I am really blessed to have people that have travelled all over the world to be part of my crew. I don't think everybody gets to say that. Those are moments that I leave with a lot of...[fighting back tears] love and appreciation for having people that believe in me.

In those moments I just feel cared for, and I know that everyone around me just wants what's best for me and they do everything they can to make sure I have a day that I'm proud of and happy about. Wow I'm getting emotional... [laughs]. I think that is a huge thing that I remember most clearly. It's having the people that I know will be there, even if the day goes horribly They'll still be there for me. Those are the moments that I'm gonna cherish forever. – Hannah Allgood

A man wearing a white bucket hat with "TERREX" on it and dark sunglasses is the central figure. He is surrounded by several hands reaching towards him, some holding his arms. He is wearing a white shirt with "DANIEL 45" on it. The background is a bright blue sky with some greenery. The text "It was like" is in the top right, "I could hand over the doubts" is on the left, and "I had in my mind." is at the bottom.

It was
like

I could
hand over
the doubts

I had in
my mind.

Aid Stations.

There are people waiting.

People who watched the tracker, counted the miles, memorised the splits. People who know which flask to hand over, how many gels are left, whether the runner needs ice or simply a few words. They can read a face before a single word is spoken. They know when to ask a question, and when not to.

At Western States, these moments become part of the race itself. Each Aid Station carries its own atmosphere, its own memories, its own small dramas. A runner arrives with a plan and leaves with something entirely different. Confidence can return in 30 seconds. So can doubt.

For the crew, these encounters are brief but intense. They see the cracks. The exhaustion. The fear. They see the person behind the race number. And yet they are expected to remain calm, precise and efficient: to turn emotion into action.

Then the runner leaves again.

And the crew waits.

That might be the strange beauty of crewing: you are part of every mile without running a single one. You carry the race in your head, in the preparation, in the waiting, in the silence between tracker updates. You suffer in a different way. You celebrate differently. And sometimes you have to watch someone you care about walking away back into a battle you cannot fight for them.

At Western States, the trail eventually leads everyone back to Auburn.

But before the finish line, there are all these places in between. Places where runners are briefly caught between exhaustion and hope, between doubt and determination, between wanting to stop and knowing they will keep going.

Not the spectacle of endurance, but the seconds where endurance depends on touch, trust, memory and speed.

Maybe that is what an Aid Station really is.

Not a place where the race stops.

A place where, for a moment, you are reminded that you don't have to carry it alone.



A woman in a red tank top and black shorts is running through a spray of water at an aid station. She is wearing a black cap with 'TERREX' on it and a white watch. She has a joyful expression. In the background, there are spectators, trees, and a tent. The scene is set outdoors on a dirt path.

I always leave
the aid station
with

a little smile
and extra little
bit of gratitude
no matter the day



Confidence
can return in
30 seconds.

SO CAN DOUBT.



VRD GPX BINARY VIEW // CAITLIN WSER
SOURCE: OlympicValleyRun20260627140001.gpx
POINTS: 56919
SAMPLED_LINES: 475 (every 120th point)

RAW BINARY FILE

Caitlin_wser_raw_telemetry.bin
Header: magic(8) version(1) point_count(4)
Record format (24 bytes each):
lat_i(int32, lat*1e5)
lon_i(int32, lon*1e5)
elem_m(uint16)
time_from_start_s(uint32)
hr_x10(uint16, 65535=missing)
cadence_x10(uint16, 65535=missing)
speed_x100_mps(uint16, 65535=missing)
distance_m(uint32)

TEXT BINARY VIEW FIELD ORDER

[LAT OFF_12] // [ELEV_12] // [HR_8] // [SPD_8] // [DIST/100M_14] // [TIME/MIN_10]

EMPHASIS LOGIC
high elevation chunk: duplicated when elevation is in top quartile
high heart-rate chunk: duplicated when HR is in top quartile
upper-mid values: chunk repeated with a middle dot separator
This is a cryptic visual representation not meant for straight forward reading.

I probably get more from an
aid station emotionally than

I EVER
GIVE BACK.





▶ PLEASE SEE BELOW A LETTER THAT EXISTS TO MAKE OUR POSITION CLEAR

*ARCHIVE INDEX
VISUAL RESEARCH DEPARTMENT
RECORD // VRD.001

CLASSIFICATION:
PUBLIC POSITION

SUBJECT:
HUMAN ACHIEVEMENT

METHOD:
EMBEDDED OBSERVATION

ARCHIVE NOTE:
THIS DOCUMENT SHOULD BE
READ BEFORE EXPECTATIONS
FORM AROUND OUTPUT, SPEED
OR CO-OPERATION

WESTERN STATES

THE GREAT RACE TO AUBURN

What You Need: 1 six-sided die (d6), and paper to track miles
Goal: Be the first runner to reach 100 miles.

How to play: On your turn, roll the die to move forward



Roll	Result
1	+3 miles
2	+5 miles
3	+7 miles
4	+10 miles
5	+12 miles
6	+15 miles



Trail Events

After rolling, if you land on one of these mile markers, follow the event:

- 5 miles - First Over the Escarpment: Lose your next turn.
- 35 miles - Smooth Trail: Move ahead 5 extra miles.
- 55 miles - Heat of the Canyons: Move back 5 miles.
- 80 miles - Feeling Good at Green Gate: Bonus roll.
- 92 miles - Wrong Turn: Re-roll. Unless you roll a 6 skip your next turn.



To whom it my concern.

Visual Research Department operates as an ongoing observational study into human achievement.

The study sits at the intersection of story, science and lived practice. It is concerned not only with outcomes, but with how ideas, technologies, and ambitions are conceived and carried forward.

Story is central.

Not as a narrative device, but as a structural necessity. Human achievement unfolds as sequence. Intention precedes action. Hypotheses are formed. Tools are introduced. Methods evolve. Progress is made, stalled, revised, or abandoned. But without continuity and commitment to story, these processes are fragmented.

Our research approach is therefore embedded rather than extractive. We remain present from the early stages of conception through periods of adjustment and uncertainty.

If you are reading this as a partner, collaborator, or institution, it is shared in the spirit of alignment. It should be read before expectations form around output, speed or co-operation.

If you recognise the value of remaining present through uncertainty, iteration, and long-term development, alignment is likely.

If you require immediate resolution, simplified narratives, this document will feel incomplete.

This study is ongoing. It accumulates rather than concludes.

Story remains central. Research remains active. Observation continues.

VRD is a quiet resistance to the disposable.

/

ALL CORRESPONDENCE archive@visualresearchdepartment.com

