

Charlie Engle's Story

In early 2006, I was planning the logistics for a 4 month, 4600 mile running expedition across the entire Sahara Desert. While playing basketball with my kids, I twisted my knee. It seemed minor at the time, but over the following month, my pain grew pretty intense. I had an MRI done with my regular doctor and he confirmed a torn meniscus. I was panicked because my Sahara run was only 6 months away. Years of planning had gone into this effort and there was no way I could delay the expedition. I needed to get my knee repaired right away.

I have been an ultra-distance runner for years and I have known other runners whose careers ended with a torn meniscus. I was extremely worried but I had faced many tough obstacles in the past so I knew there must be a solution. I asked around and did my own research. Dr. Steve Lucey's name kept coming up. I called [Dr. Lucey](#) and told him about my problem. I was prepared to get another lecture about how hard running is on the knees and how I should pick another sport. Instead, Dr. Lucey told me that my knees were a bit messy but that I could recover in time for my expedition if I was willing to do my part. I assured him that I would be a good patient if he could fix my knee. His cautious optimism really set the stage for my recovery.

We scheduled surgery for the following week. I was nervous but I knew I didn't have a choice if I hoped to run across Africa. This would be my first surgery of any kind. The surgery was fast and painless but I knew that the recovery might be uncomfortable. But in reality, it was amazingly easy. I used only ibuprofen after surgery and within 3 days, I was gently riding a stationary bike. Within 10 days, I went for my first run. After only 3 weeks, I was back to high mileage training and feeling stronger than ever.

In February, 2007 I became the first person in history to run the entire length of the Sahara Desert, more than 4600 miles in only 111 days. On most days, I ran more than 50 miles and I never took even a single day off. This all happened less than 6 months after Dr. Lucey repaired my knee. Without his amazing help, [Running the Sahara](#) never would have happened.

Since that run across Africa, I have completed many more long races and events. I am a firm believer that age is not the determining factor to health. In 2012, I once again called on Dr. Lucey to repair my other knee (basketball again) Less than a year later in July, 2013 I finished the Badwater Ultramarathon in Death Valley for the 6th time. This race is ranked as the world's toughest foot race. It travels 135 miles across the hottest place on earth. I finished 5th overall and set a new over-50 age group record by more than 3 hours.

Dr. Lucey can't tell me how many more years I can keep this up but I don't plan to quit anytime soon. I do however plan to stop taking on my kids in basketball.

Charlie Engle