

“I have a heart that wants to help other people.
I’m just competitive with myself.”



Running alone on the Mt Anne. Living by her values of *being wilder, playing wilder, performing wilder.*

Hanny Allston: Find your feet, find your *self*

Australian orienteering and trail running legend Allston on how she became a businesswoman who is constantly in search of herself.

Reading Osho's *When the Shoe Fits*, while having breakfast felt like a nice way to start my day off at a hotel in Tampere, Finland last July. It was time for the Junior World Orienteering Championships (JWOC), a busy week filled with competitions. Later that day, though, I only had one meeting scheduled on my calendar: an interview with Australian JWOC team manager Hanny Allston.

I have been fascinated by the mental aspects of endurance sports all my life, alongside with the Eastern traditions of inner work, including various forms of meditation. Interestingly, my conversation with Hanny turned out to cover many such topics.

At the lobby of a hotel located in a picturesque Finnish landscape, Allston, known to be the only non-European to ever medal at the World Orienteering Championships, sat down for a chat.

“Can I offer you a cup of coffee?”, asks Allston with a friendly Aussie intonation when I enter the lobby where we were to meet. She seems more than ready and happy to talk about her various endeavors.

I was all ears. I kept nodding while listening to her talk. It was obvious that running was not just a pastime for her. Neither was it just a competitive sport. She definitely had a deeper connection with running, with competing, with confronting herself, and with being alone in the wild. Alone in the wild for hours. Where nobody can find you.

She is now, among other things, a successful business woman. With her company *Find Your Feet*, a multi-faceted company specializing in tours as well as education and outdoor retail, she goes running with people like me and you, to some of the most spectacular places on the planet.

What kind of people join your tours?

—We have a very mixed clientele. In Japan last year we had a 17-year-old on his gap year. He'd saved up to come on our tour. A 63-year-old was the oldest one. And everyone in between. It works so brilliantly. We go running and walking and taking pictures. It is like a mode of transport to see landscapes. You need to take enough food for four hours but you're not running for four hours. You probably cover 15 km or so. In places like Chamonix, if people want, we might take them on a gondola up. Maybe the stronger and younger want to run up.





A Finnish lake. And Hanny Allston.

She runs the tours with her partner in crime, husband, Graham Hammond.

—I actually met Graham about 16 years ago when we worked in an outdoor store together. He's been a telemark, downhill and cross-country skier. In our winter I would come to Europe to summer and run, and he would ski in Australia and then we would swap so that when I was in Australia, he was in Europe. We were just friends, but in 2009 we both ended up back in Hobart, and we were like:

“We really gotta get a real job!”

Did you get a real job?

—I started studying again, and I did get a real job. We became a couple. We always tried to join our strengths

together. And that's when he joined in *Find Your Feet*. It has been by feel more than by planning. We never had a business plan. We were just taking opportunities to improve.

Did you study business?

—No, I studied medicine, primary school teaching, life coaching, and small business management on the side. In 2009 I went back to study paramedics. Then I got offered a job with the Australian Institute of Sport before the London Olympics. I ended up having to stop everything.

Was that job with the medical team?

—It was in athlete welfare. My job was to live in a building like this (hotel) in the residences and keep an eye out for all the different athletes. If there were concerns about an athlete's mental or physical wellness, then I had to liaise with all the different teams around. Maybe it was overtraining so I talked to the coaches, or it might be psychology, or it might be nutrition, and then as the Olympics got closer, it was also dealing with the athletes' disappointments and excitements, when they either did or did not make the team.

—We also had a very strong Paralympics focus in Australia, so I was working a lot with athletes with special needs. It was an awesome opportunity but it also showed the differences of Olympics sports to our sport of orienteering. Someone in the sport of orienteering would never have access to that facility and these scholarships. Some of the kids in the soccer program, they are like 14 years old and their scholarships are worth a lot of money. If you're a

distance runner or orienteer, or non-olympic sport, you can't access that information or services. That was a huge motivation for me with Find Your Feet. I wanted to take as much of that info as I could to the broader public. I always had this feeling that it needs to be as accessible to everyone. I want to give the people the opportunities.

So they can speak face-to-face with you on your tours and get help?

—Yes. I uploaded the coaching material I put out for everyone even though people say they should pay for them. We do a lot of camps. We opened the retail store because we were finding that people who lived out of the major cities in Australia, because Australia is such a big country, couldn't access quality gear to go on to do what they wanted to do. So we opened the online store and the Hobart store to try and service that market because having a good pair of shoes is crucial.



In 2015, Hanny won the Tasmanian Young Businesswoman of the Year and was a finalist at the National Young Businesswoman of the Year.

—It has been an evolution, a lifestyle that I would have never ever planned. Ever.

She has, for example, published *Find Your Feet Trail Running Guidebook*, available for purchase at www.hannyallston.com.au

—I feel that there is so much support available for youth or elite. Just because the elite can run faster doesn't mean that their goals are anymore big or important or challenging than everyone in the middle. As I became more involved in especially trail running, adults with big goals, maybe they've only ever run 21 km, and now they want run 100 km, and they had no support, they were overtraining or getting injured.

—It wasn't the running, it was how they were running. I wanted to service their needs. But now coming back to this environment again I feel a bit stuck in the middle because I love it when you can take the underdog and make them the champion, I love that. But at the same time I feel this calling to help these people. It doesn't mean that u can't do both but it is easy to get really busy, and I'm also trapped in a system sort of sport, where particularly in orienteering where the system is a problem.

Can you tell us about the system in Australia?

—I want to be fair to my organization, because they have tried really hard over the years but the biggest problem is that there is no funding at all in the system. Orienteering Australia will receive no outside funding from the Australian Sports Commission in 2018, so we will have absolutely no income for high performance sport at all.

—Each state and territory in Tasmania has an orienteering body. They all want to focus their money on grass roots to bring new people into the sport. State Orienteering Organizations are less keen to devote too much funding to High Performance for fear that it will have a big impact on grassroots participation. Everything is volunteer-dependent, so it is very hard to give continuity to the athletes.

—First of all coaches come and go, and they might have one camp over here and another over there and they [athletes] get different advice, and they are expected to go for themselves for 8 months and then suddenly there's another camp. I know for myself and that's one reason why I've come in and out of the sport so much. You get pulled around, because you have to go train with an athletics group or on your own and you get sucked into that. We've got kids here who are soccer players or musicians, and it is easy for them to go home after these competitions, and their soccer club goes "Wow, you've finished eighteenth at the World Champs, you must be good, come and join our soccer team," so it is hard to keep your focus and your belief.

—And the other thing is that they come here and they maybe come once a year and they start idolizing the kids that win. They almost become a spectator in their own sport without the self-belief that they can win, and so it is also to try to change this belief that you don't have to live in Europe to be able to do really well, but it's gonna require a huge amount of focus and dedication. For them to write a goal down when they're living in Southern Tasmania which is like 40 hours of flying from Finland... to write down a goal that I want to win JWOC, it's almost

impossible to formulate that goal because they don't know what's required. When they see teams that look so professional, they come here and it's so easy to be intimidated.

—I find it hard because I have a business to run. I want to help, but to be there enough to say that “You can do it, you can do it”, it's just a huge ask for anyone.

You get no contracts?

—These athletes have to work to fund their trip, so their parents have to have the money to pay for them. We also have a problem that we just pick the six best for juniors (at JWOC, the maximum number of runners is six per gender), so we have a few squads in Australia, where there's meant to be like young talented juniors, and then you come into JWOC and then you go to the potential senior team, and they've got the senior team. For many of the athletes, it's their last year, and it's also their first year. So it means next year we have the same problem, new kids still need the experience.

—I always feel like we should either pick a small team and take only athletes that show potential to fit into the top 50, for example. You could create a higher benchmark so that these ones have to strive hard to get there. Or then you pick six that show potential at a younger age to give them as much experience as you can. So the whole system to me is a problem. I think it requires a very different type of brain to be able to rise above it and perform at best. I probably was one of them where you're just so self-motivated and so self-driven, and you find a way to

develop a little bit of belief and then you follow it. And you don't let anything come between you and the goal.

—I was the World Junior orienteering coach. and my contract ended and I said I need to focus on my business. So I took a step back and now I have no involvement. This was actually last minute for me to come help. I'm the manager, not a coach this year, so it's a little different. But my other problem is... there's a saying in Australia:

“If you want something done,
ask a busy person.”

—I also do a lot of other things, I work in environment, I work for the national park wildlife council, and provide advice on sports recreation and tourism in national parks. I'm just finding more and more of these kind of opportunities coming up. And the other thing for me in orienteering, the thing that I always love the most was like the physical preparation, so like to get yourself physically lean and mean, and also the emotional, the way you can control your mind to be able to focus, and the self-belief and all of that. And I find the technical stuff in the middle. I mean I can do it but I don't enjoy it. I don't enjoy looking at maps. I don't like course setting. I don't find planning training sessions enjoyable at all. (laughs)

Has orienteering become a bit too technical for you?

—I mean my technical skills are good. I can perform. But when it comes down to maybe being that coach that sets courses...

...so you don't want that role?

—(shakes head) I would need someone alongside to be able to change the system. And I also felt that when I was elite, I've always been very different. In Australia, the focus has always been getting in terrain and reading maps, while my focus was always to be the most elite runner, on top of your physical performance. Then when you go to the competition, you know that you're so fit you can slow down and read the map carefully. And I feel like my way in Australia has been... It doesn't win friends. I don't go to every race and I can't go to every training camp. I've always been a bit independent. I feel like the mentality is a like: "Even though we know you did really well but I'm not as fast or as fit as you, therefore, I have to do it this way." Whereas I think if I went the same way with the Danish team or the Swiss team, my way would be very appropriate. I feel like I'm a bit different (laughs).

I felt like she has a unique mentality. And I kept listening.

—I'm an outlier, as they say.

—It's not a criticism of anyone, the system nor me. It is hard to come to a competition like this. We went to the medal ceremony last night and saw athletes winning medals. We know that we have people in our team who absolutely have that potential [to medal] but they don't believe in that yet. They haven't done the work to be there now.

—To not really know how you can influence them and to speak in a language that matches all the team. Some

people don't want to be champions whereas like the Swiss team or the Danish team they all want to be champions. So you don't want to push these athletes and make them uncomfortable, but then at the same time you really want to challenge some of them to dream a bit bigger. So it is really hard for my brain to understand why wouldn't you want to be a champion if you here and you've done half the work. Why not do all the work and dream bigger and be a champion? At the end of the day I think whatever you dream you can achieve. I really believe that this is so.

So, by the way, you have six men, six women?

—Yeah, we have always had that.

Among those twelve runners, have you found some certain individuals that you would like to focus on?

—Yeah. Definitely. And for me they might not yet be the best but they show an attitude... I would never go to the athletes and tell them what to do. I would wait for that right athlete to come and say: "I want your help." And then I'm always willing to help. So, there are some individuals that when they sit next to you, you feel like you're sitting next to the kitchen sponge. It's soaking up. It might just even be your belief in them or your excitement for them and so our team and our results this year actually haven't... on paper maybe they don't look great for a team from outside, but every day ten or eleven of our athletes have had clean runs navigationally. So, it comes back to that fitness, that self-belief, and that ability to sharpen up their orienteering.

I think you brought up a very nice point about being there for them, and waiting for them to understand it by themselves and come to you, instead of pushing them and telling them what to do.

—I just don't believe that way works. You have to be ready to hear that information. Otherwise, you're talking to a wall. And I find it even with adults. The same with my coaching with them. If someone is really willing to learn and I'm willing to help them mostly, but I won't with the person who come to you and say “I wanna do this, look I have done this and this, my way is the only way, what do you think? You agree with me?” I'm not gonna sit there and make them feel good and say “Yes, I do.” They will have to be willing to listen.

—When you talk with them after the race about their navigation and they say “I didn't see the track, and then I made this error.” My first question is always “Why? Why didn't you see the track?” And if they go “Ah, I just didn't see it, it just wasn't very obvious.” That's not the athlete I want to work with. The athlete I want to work with is like “I was running too fast because I was thinking about the result. Or I was distracted when I saw a competitor. Or suddenly I had this thought that I'm doing well.”

—This all says a lot about the emotional side. I love that side because I feel like there are very few people in our sport who are willing to go to that really truthful level, the honest level where you're like “I made a big error because I thought I was doing really well and the ego came in.” If you're not willing to confront your ego, you will never be a champion. You might win once, but you won't come back time and time again. So the athlete who is willing to come

back and say “I really screwed up because I was so worried about what Mum and Dad would think of me.” That's the athlete I want to work with.



Team meeting snacks in Finland.

That's a nice way to put it. To me coaching is a lot about mutual commitment. And really coming down to the lowest level of understanding what is behind it.

—That's why you meet the likes of Simone [Niggli], Thierry [Gueorgiou], Martin Hubmann, all these guys are so humble because they have had to confront their ego over and over again until they can keep it in a box where it can't come out too often. Every now and then it will always come out but I think humility in sport but particularly in orienteering is so important.

—I think that one thing that I wish our athletes in Australia and not only in orienteering but in any sport (trail running and ultra running are becoming very big for us in Australia) is that you don't need to come to Europe to be a champion. I feel like when people actually do make that decision to come, a lot of the time it is not really thought through very well. And they get here and they really come unstuck because they lose the support structure that had made them as good as they were already. And I feel like when we live in Australia we are really lucky because we don't have your winters, so we can actually train all year round. You can really think about when will a period of rest fit in for me. You're not forced to have it just because suddenly it is snowing. So your training can be a lot more consistent.

—Australia has huge fun run and athletics scenes. So if you're willing to work hard alongside these sports and keep your focus, you can become a very good runner very quickly. I've always felt that living in Tasmania I used to love going home from big competitions because I could go back into this secret little place where no one could watch me. I could just go in and train really hard in the mountains on the track and on the road, and no one would know where you're at. I love it.

—It is a place where I don't have to think about orienteering for eight months or something and you're not competing against people all the time, so you're not in this dangerous environment.

—Before say Scotland two years ago when I made the podium again in the sprint, I did one sprint orienteering race in like 9-10 months, and I didn't do any training for

the sprint really but I feel that it's really really good because when you finally get to that week before competition and start to focus in, you haven't brought with you all these skills or these bad habits that you have embedded because you're doing them over and over again, so you just come in and you're 150% focused on understanding the terrain and the map and what speed is safe to run in that terrain and then you go into that race with like 180% focus and discipline and you execute and you don't make a mistake and you achieve the result.

—I feel that's really a good thing in the sprint. And in the forest, I feel like because we are not running in the terrain 2-4 times a week, we are actually keeping a higher speed. I feel like forest running makes you kind of slow, and it can make you kind of heavy as a runner, whereas I always find that in the events like the sprint and the long you have to be able to run fast. You have to be able to go wide, run tracks, come in, and keep a clear head as the distance goes on.

—I think we are really lucky. I wish Australians could understand how lucky we are to be able to have that resource available to us. And also these big ultra races. The thing I see for Europeans is that they spend all their time orienteering, mostly, like the Swiss maybe not so much. But when you've gone through the experience of racing over 50 maybe 80, or a hundred kilometres, then when you stand on the start line of a long distance orienteering, it just doesn't feel as hard. You know how to fuel yourself in the race, you know how to keep yourself mentally focused. It's just easier. I feel like even if I worked in the Scandinavian or European system for orienteering, I would probably do it quite differently to

what they've done to try and get better results. I think the Danes have done that and the Swiss have done that, and I think, I'm not so sure about France, but I think, to some degree they have also slightly changed the way they work.

Here one name comes up: Thierry Gueorgiou. He's in the forest all the time, but he doesn't slow down. It seems like some of the runners hate the road and love the forest, while for others it is the other way around. But speed work on the road is important for everybody?

—Definitely. Even when you hate the road, you have to stand up to your fears. I've come to learn this through ultra running especially. When you feel fear, it's telling you that you have to go through that to the other side. Because then when you suddenly go to a world championships, like in Switzerland they have had endless amounts of track running, and it's about wide route choices. Or Japan, which is another classic example. When you hate road running, then you set yourself up for failure. You have to have that skill as well.

—Again, that's why I love living in Australia. It's hard because I would of course love to spend time in Europe, but we do have it good in Australia, because we can have a bit of everything... But even someone like Thierry, I'm sure he does the hard work, but his strength is that he's a master of technique. Some of our strength, like Simone and I, our strength is more our running ability.

How long are the ultra running races that you do nowadays and how long have the longest ones been?

—My longest one race was 100 km this year in the mountains. It had about 5,000 vertical metres of climbing. My first ultra ever was actually before my first or second JWOC. I actually ran an 82 km race in Tasmania. I knew right from the start that not only did I love this feeling of isolation but I love that feeling of being confident that you can look after yourself, and you can be strong, over a long period of time. So it made coming into competitions... It just makes it feel easy, and that's not ego, it just puts it all into a bit of perspective.



In 2006, Hanny became the first non-European to win a World Orienteering Title, and the first junior to win a junior & senior title in the same year. She was 20 years old.

—But for me, my favorite distance is and has always been around that 20-50 km. I just love to be able to run fast and hard right from the start. Once you get over 50 km, it does

become more about pacing and looking after yourself. I call it *plodding*, it's slow, and a bit of a suffer. It is about you can suffer the most. And I also think it's my road in running background as well. I did a lot of marathon running and was Australia Marathon Champion in 2007 at the Melbourne Marathon. I love that feeling of running fast and free.

It is a bit funny when you say that when it's only 20 km you can go *fast*.

—But I think for me, my brain is like, I want to be a champion but I'm not a competitive person against other people. I actually have a heart that wants to help other people. I'm just competitive with myself. For me, the best thing I have ever done in my entire life was running the entire length of the Tasmanian South Coast. It is really wild and rugged, endless mud, swimming across rivers, running across mountains. It was 95 km and I got to the end of that and I realized that I had found myself out there. This is why I run.

—Yes, of course it's lovely to win a gold medal but at the end of the day, I want to be able to do this forever. Again, when we were talking about “Do I want to support this system in Australia in orienteering?”, my heart struggles with that question because my husband doesn't orienteer, my life is in a state which is not an orienteering location and I have these opportunities to use my skills for both myself and for other people in other ways. But the South Coast is so awesome! (laughs with a smile)

I'm so glad you brought this up. Because I really wanted to discuss this question “Who do you run against?” Is it

the people, or is it the struggle against yourself and everything that comes up during your long runs that you have to confront and stuff like this? To me, it really sounds like you don't care about what's happening with other people, you just listen to yourself. For example, if you have some fear, you will need to work through that, and so on. Is this so?

—Definitely. And because also seeing a lot of life at a really young age. I watched parents go through mental, depressive episodes, and parents divorcing, and I went through ankle reconstruction and they said I would never run again. That was just before my world titles in 2006, so six months before my father was in hospital, I was in hospital. It was a really tough time and I think that when you've seen the other side, it puts it again in perspective, like winning is not everything.

“If you do things that make you proud of being you, it will help you be you.”



Running wild with her clients on a tour to Japan.

—I realized then that you need to learn to be a really strong person in yourself and you need to be able to explain to yourself who Hanny is when you can't run or when you're not Daddy's daughter, or you're not a medical doctor, like who is Hanny when you peel back all the layers and go to the bottom of that. And if you have a really, really strong sense of what we call 'self', of you as a person, then you can build the rest of the framework on top of that.



Running into the finish at the World Orienteering Championships in Scotland, 2015. Hanny was 5th in the Sprint Distance.

But if the sense of self is really rocky and all you ever see when you look in the mirror is someone you dislike or

someone you don't know, then I don't think you will ever be that champion who can perform over and over again.

—I don't know if I'm answering the question, but to me even now, I still put in a lot of work into trying to understand myself especially as I come out of the other end of my career and go “Wow, what do I do with all these skills that I have learned?”, and “Do I still wanna race?”.

—That's a big question for me. Am I still an athlete? And again, who is Hanny now that I'm not physically as fit as I used to be. You constantly have to do this work. I think the more work I've done, the better I have actually become as an athlete and also as a person for example in business. I feel like it's helped me develop more empathy. I think we overlook that side of champions all the time. It's the side that I love working with. It's challenging people. In this kind of environment, you can see the people walking into the room, they don't care what they're wearing, what other people think of them. They're gonna do their thing. That's so important!

**So you said the word *self*. Is that like the *inner self*?
How would you describe that?**

—Someone once said to me when I very first started Find Your Feet... And back then I really wasn't in a good place. This was back in 2009. It was after my World Titles. That was a really hard time for me, when so much was going on in my life. I decided that I needed to do something to fill in the time until I worked out what I wanted to do with my life, and I decided to start Find Your Feet. I was trying to help adults with their running and make them feel better about themselves because a lot of the time we would have

people who might be overweight or single Mums, single Dads. You were trying to give them this love but I was just beating myself up. I probably didn't look healthy, I was probably underweight, withdrawn, and this person tapped me on the shoulder and said:

“Hanny, it doesn't matter how beautiful the gift is that you give someone if all they see is someone on the other side of the gift who doesn't love themselves. Then how can they accept this gift and take your love?”

—I realized then that you really have to love yourself, find compassion for self. Self is the person if you were sitting in a quiet room with no stimulation... Can you then sit with yourself? When you're on these long distance trails and you're stuck in the middle of somewhere where the closest help is a helicopter flying an hour in to find you... Can you then be with yourself and trust yourself? And keep yourself happy? It has taken me so long to understand. And some people explain that it's like the marrow in your bones. It's like the inside of your bones. It's the voice that is not influenced by the outside.

This really reminds me of meditation. Have you been through anything like this?

—I'm fascinated by all that. I'm fascinated by every element of health from what you eat to how you think to who you let into your world to how you respect your environment. I think that all of that comes into self. If you do things that make you proud of being you, it will only help you be you. I don't think meditation needs to be sitting in a quiet room with crossed legs trying to calm your mind. Meditation is being aware of your environment

and your place in that world. I don't think you could ever stop yourself from thinking but realizing the difference between thinking and the mental work. There is a big movement around meditation and mindfulness, and I think it's probably confusing people a lot. I think it's just about being mindful of your actions and the way you walk in the world really.

**“If you search,
you're not
gonna find it.”**



Friendship is a key component to some of Hanny's wildest adventures, this one the rugged craggy peaks of Tasmania's West Coast.

Long distance running is often said to be similar to meditation in the sense that you need to pay attention to what comes up. What do you think?

—There is a big risk when I talk about this with people because people are like “Yeah, yeah, I get that, when I run I feel better.”, and I call that *running away from things*. Because it is really easy to suppress an emotion when you're being athletic so it is about listening to what comes up and realizing what is healthy and what isn't. Just

because you're feeling down and sad or you don't like what you look at in the mirror, people go for a run. To me that's running away. So, that's what I mean when I say that you must have done the deep self-work before you can find that harmony and that balance.

It is a bit like taking a drug.

—And the risk is that... when injuries happen because they will... or when suddenly you can't run because of less fortunate circumstances, you fall apart, because that's the only way you know how to keep yourself happy. It's the same with people with drugs. The same with people with food. That's about doing that deep work. I just believe that if you can't love yourself, and it took me so long to understand what loving yourself means, what compassion means... Yeah, I go and get massages but that's because I've beaten myself up, now I need a massage. But what is self-compassion? Say for myself who just got married two weeks ago, so I can't love my husband if I can't love me first.

—People say putting yourself first is selfish but it's not. It's just building yourself into a position where you can empower other people.

—It is important to read and talk to other people but I fell in a trap of trying too hard and it wasn't until I went to Japan on a running tour and I was sitting in a spa one night, in a hot pool, I was the only one there, it was dark, the rain was falling off the roof, and I just had this realization that I felt like I had been living with my walls up... I think that from going through some really hard times, you put a little barrier between you and other

people to stop you from getting hurt... and I suddenly had this realization that I don't want to live with these walls around me forever. I feel like I'm not connecting to other people as strongly as I want to, even to my partner. I just suddenly had this feeling that these walls were crashing down around me. It was a really crazy experience. You're never gonna read that in a book.

—Again, it's about being able to sit with yourself when you're so uncomfortable with what you're feeling and giving yourself the ability to find out what you need to find out.

—We just got back from Nepal doing some charity work there and all these charity workers and people going over to spend time meditating on a mountain peak somewhere, I just felt like they were trying too hard. A lot of people were searching for this thing. If you search, you're not gonna find it. You almost have to go the other way around.

—Just start accepting, and when you start accepting, then you start to find meaning to what you're doing. If we now bring this conversation back to the start, this is where I'm not sure whether this environment, orienteering and coaching is really for me because there is so much more that I want to offer now that I understand a bit more. I'm not saying that I know everything, I want to learn as well and do more work for me. Is this too much for this world? I'm not sure. But then to work with seniors, you have to have the system behind them to get to a place where they are ready to hear this.

You don't feel that this world is ready for this deeper stuff?

—It's hard because I wish it was. I'm not sure, I don't know if it's ready because maybe I'm just coming to understand this now. I don't really know but I'm at a point in my life that I'm not trying to search but to sit and understand where do I fit in now that I'm not an athlete, now that I have this business which just kind of happened. How responsible am I to that? When do I release control over that to others and do something else? And that's why I started writing what I hope will be a book. Because I feel that there are lot of lessons in it and it's a nice way to understand some more of what you've learned.

Do we have a title for the book?

—It is called *Finding My Feet*. Not that I've found my feet. I don't think you will ever find your feet. Like I said, I think it's a constant evolution.

I think every day we evolve in some sense. And once you think you're there, you're already gone.

—Absolutely. I think that if you're not waking up every day and not trying to be a better person but always believing that you can be a better person, then I don't know why you get out of bed. That's how my brain works. Every day I'm trying to learn something new, or do something a little bit differently, or challenge a thought that I've had. And it's not conscious. I just want to be the best version of myself I can be because life is... you only get it once. You

might as well enrich it and make it the most amazing experience you can.

—My husband and I have two rituals: one is that we always do highlight of the day. It doesn't matter how hard the day has been. At the end of the day we ask each other "What was your highlight?" And it's always the simple things. The other thing is our motto: "We wanna live a life that would make others jealous when we get to the end." And it's not that we want praise and people doting over us...

...but that you've reached your highest potential?

—Yeah. And you've had fun, you've had this rich life full of exciting experiences and challenges and love and friendships. I think I say it more in Australia than I say it over here that we live this very routined lifestyle like you get up, you eat breakfast, you get in the car, you drive to work, everyone drives, you go to work, you drive home, you flop on the couch, you might go to the gym three times a week, you eat dinner, you watch TV, you go to bed. And then you do it again. And again. And again.

That's not for you?

—No way! (laughs)

There are definitely people who are stuck in that loop.

—Yes, even athletes. "I do this on a Tuesday. I always do these reps on a Thursday. I always go to the same park. I always do my long run on the same loop." Why? Why not try something different? Every time you race, every time you perform, or challenge yourself over some crazy run

somewhere in the wild, you're gonna face things that you've never faced before. Again, my way is like, you might do the same hill repetitions but do them on a different hill. Or if you have to go back to the same hill, do a different session. Or run your loop backwards if you can't think of another loop. Make it different. That's the way my brain thinks.

You are definitely a person who likes challenges and exploring, exploring yourself and exploring the outer world.

—My husband is not as philosophical probably as me but he just loves to play. We play lots. And he loves exploring. He doesn't have a competitive bone in his body. He's my perfect balance.

The yin and the yang?

—The yin and the yang definitely. We are both looking forward to going home and playing in Tasmania. It's the most beautiful place. One day you will have to come and experience it. So wild. So awesome.

Would you say you can find your feet in Tasmania?

—I definitely think you can find your feet in Tasmania.

What's in store for Hanny Allston in the future? Probably only her heart knows the answer. Meanwhile, you can follow her adventures at:

www.hannyallston.com.au
www.findyourfeet.com.au
www.findyourfeettours.com.au

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