

Behind the Scenes

We go Behind the Scenes with Brand Ambassador **Lara O'Byrne** as she puts in the hard work on the road to the Women's World Decathlon Championships. The last few weeks have involved Training Camps, Competition and participating in the amazing Red Bull "Can You Make It?" challenge.



As you may know, I am training for the first Women's World Decathlon Championships in August in Ohio. Consequently, my training has been quite demanding.

I just returned from a training camp in Portugal. Leading up to this camp, I focused on improving my speed, which is definitely my weak point. Speed doesn't come naturally to me, which might be surprising given my choice of sport. However, the more you practice running fast, the faster you get, even though it's a slow process. Speed will remain my main focus for the next few months.

A significant challenge is that many of my training sessions are done alone. Running fast without anyone to compete against can be difficult, but I am pushing through and already seeing improvements. The training camp in Portugal was quite successful. Let me take you through it.

Every morning, we would wake up around 8am and go straight to

breakfast, where I fueled my body for the long session ahead. It was a 3 km cycle to the track each day, so we rented bikes. During this particular week, I had six track sessions and three gym sessions. My daily routine included warming up for my track session, followed by a gym session on three of those days. The program included speed work, javelin, shot put, high jump, long jump, and some 800m work.

“I review my performance, identify weaknesses, and train harder”

After training, we refueled with a big lunch and rested for the remainder of the day to prepare for the next morning. The decathlon events also include discus, pole vault, 400m, and 1500m, which are not part of the heptathlon. The dreaded 800m is swapped with the 1500m, and I honestly don't know which is worse. I am only just getting back into pole vaulting, which has been interesting due to its complexity. There are a million things to think about while jumping, and the poles add another layer of complexity. Constantly

moving up to bigger poles and ensuring the right pole is at training and competitions is challenging, but my pole vault coach is an angel and handles this for me. However, it will be a task to figure out which poles I will need in Ohio since they are constantly changing.

Discus is completely new to me, but I personally think it's my best throw, although my coach might disagree. I

picked it up quite quickly, especially compared to javelin, which I still haven't perfected after about ten years. It has been fun trying out this new event.

I had my first competition of the season, starting with a 200m and pole vault. The main problem I always face as a multi-eventer during individual competitions is when two events are scheduled at the same time. That's what happened last Sunday. I ran my 200m, finishing just 0.1 seconds off my personal best. It wasn't a bad opener, though I expected a faster time considering how well my first 100m felt. But that's part of the process: I review my performance, identify weaknesses, and train harder so my next race will reflect my hard work.

Then, I had to go straight to pole vault with jelly legs. It wasn't the best start as I was dealing with lactic acid buildup. Despite this, I ended up jumping a personal best, clearing 10 cm higher than my previous record in my first pole vault competition since I was 16. I know I can jump even higher and am excited about my potential. I just have to continue with what I'm doing.

My coach, Gerry, is an absolute legend. He is very patient with me and is working tirelessly to get me in



the best shape for August. The plan for the next four weeks is to focus on different events with an emphasis on speed. I will compete every Sunday, followed by another four-week training plan.

In addition to my training, I recently participated in the Red Bull "Can You Make It?" challenge, a race across Europe to Berlin using Red Bull cans as currency. The rules are simple: you can only use Red Bull cans in exchange for food, accommodation, and travel. Your wallet and phones must be locked in a ziplock bag, and opening it results in disqualification. We were given a Red Bull phone to complete challenges along the way and reach checkpoints marked on a map. Each checkpoint had a challenge, and points were awarded for each completed task. The team with the most points at the end would win. However, my two teammates, Bill and Higo, and I were part of the creator team, which meant we were allowed to have our phones to create and post content on social media.

saw my Instagram story and decided to help. He took us to Lake Como and Switzerland, where we stayed in an apartment he arranged. We traded Red Bull cans for pizza and gelato and explored the beautiful surroundings.

Our next stop was Lugano, Switzerland, where we traded Red Bull cans to swim in a pool and jump off diving boards. A family then bought us tickets to our first checkpoint in Locarno. From there, we decided to head to Zurich, which turned out to be a mistake. We heard that Meininger Hostels, in collaboration with Red Bull, offered free stays to participants, so we made the long journey to Zurich. Unfortunately, the hostel was full, and we ended up sleeping on the lobby floor.

"There are so many kind individuals willing to help, but you have to be courageous enough to ask"

Our journey began in Barcelona, where we met a kind couple who paid for our bus tickets to the airport. There, we persuaded a French couple to buy us tickets to Milan. Outside Milan airport, we faced rejection after rejection until my friend Alex, who was living in Milan,

The next morning, we took a bus to Strasbourg, where we completed a bike challenge in a skate park. The people in Strasbourg were incredibly kind, and after the checkpoint, we headed to Metz with the help of some amazing train station workers. In Metz, a woman and her husband

bought us tickets to Luxembourg, where we met another kind soul who bought us lunch. We used Luxembourg's free transport to reach our next checkpoint, where Bill performed BMX tricks.

Our luck took a turn when we tried to get to Cologne. The train we were on broke down, and we found ourselves stranded at a random station in Germany at midnight. It was a scary experience, but we eventually found help at a McDonald's. A girl and her conductor friend let us ride the next train to Cologne for free. We reached another Meininger Hostel in Cologne, where I ended up sharing a room with six strangers. Although it was uncomfortable, I managed to get some rest.

The next day, we completed a VR challenge at the checkpoint and found generous people to buy us train tickets to Berlin. We finally made it to the final checkpoint. This experience changed my perception of people. There are so many kind individuals willing to help, but you have to be courageous enough to ask. 🙌

