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Lessons From Leadville: Why Weil's Mark Perry Took on a Nearly 12-Hour, 100-Mile Mountain Bike Challenge

By Ross Todd

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Anyone participating in the Leadville Trail 100 MTB—a 105-mile mountain bike race with a 12-hour time limit starting 10,200 feet up in Colorado's Rocky Mountains—is bound to hit some rough patches.

For **Weil, Gotshal & Manges** partner **Mark Perry**, making his second attempt at the Leadville 100 at age 59 last month, it was around eight hours and 80 miles in.

"I was tired and didn't have enough," said Perry, recounting the moment when I caught up with him yesterday.

Perry said around that time, his 21-year old son Thomas handed him a banana. Thomas came along as his dad's crew—a job that had him out in the sun, wind, heat, cold and everything that comes with the Leadville experience, without the time pedaling on the trail. Perry estimated he saw his son for maybe a few minutes total during the course of the day's pit stops.

"It's like Formula One, in-and-out," said Perry of the stops. "We're not sitting there and chit-chatting."



Courtesy photo

Weil, Gotshal & Manges partner Mark Perry competing in The Leadville Trail 100 MTB mountain bike race in August, 2025.

But Perry said getting that banana at the last stop—the first real food he'd had in hours on a day when he'd been drinking carbs in liquid form and sucking down energy gels to get the roughly 5,000 calories his body needed—was a gift.

"I just sat there and I ate a real banana, and it was like going to a Michelin three-star restaurant and having the best meal ever," Perry said. "This was the most beautiful banana I'd ever had in

my life. And it re-energized me physically and mentally and emotionally.”

“I got back on the bike, and that was at the final rest stop where I saw my son. I said, ‘I’ll see you at the finish line. I am going to finish this thing.’”

Indeed, Perry ended up finishing with almost a half-hour to spare on the 12-hour time limit, earning him one of the coveted, hand-made finisher’s belt buckles.

Perry has a busy trial and appellate docket representing clients including household names Apple, Comcast and Kroger. So when I found out he had logged countless miles and hours training for Leadville since December, my overwhelming question was, “Why?”

Perry responded that he tries to set some sort of goal for himself each year along the lines of running a marathon. He also says he has a “general rule” that when a friend asks him to do something and he’s able, he’ll go do it—a practice he said gets a person “into all kinds of interesting adventures.”

About seven years ago, a friend asked him to go to Leadville for the annual 50-mile mountain bike race, which is held in July. “I’d never been in a mountain bike race,” Perry said. “I flew in Friday night and rode the race on Saturday morning at 10,000 feet elevation, which was a terrible idea.”

Terrible idea or not, he finished the race and said he caught “a little bit of the bug for the mountains and the area and the culture.”

The 100-mile race is one of the major races of the year on the mountain biking calendar. And Perry’s finish in the 50-mile race yielded him an entry ticket into the longer race. After scheduling conflicts and pandemic cancellations of the event, Perry made his first attempt to ride the 100 in 2023. Then, however, the Thursday night before

race day, he ended up in the emergency room, where he learned he had contracted shingles.

“The emergency room doctor was so funny. He said, ‘Are you going to win the race, Mark?’ And I said, ‘No, I’m not going to win the race. I just want to finish.’ He said, ‘Good, because we’re going to pump so many steroids into you, you’d fail every drug test.’” Even pumped full of steroids to treat the shingles, Perry pulled himself from the race after 63 miles that year. Although he was still on pace to make the time cut, he said he reached a point where he knew he couldn’t do it—a point no banana was going to bring him back from, it sounds like.

Perry had a trial last year that conflicted with the August race date, but he secured an entry for this year.

“I’m 59 years old this year. If I don’t get this thing done soon, I’m not going to be able to do it at all,” he said. “Every year, I get a little slower.”

This time, Perry went out to Leadville in June for a training camp, rode for a week, covering the entire course twice—once on his own and once alongside mountain biking pros who warned of spots where participants could crash out of the race. He said he spent a total of a month in Leadville getting to know the course and acclimatizing.

“If I’m going to do it, I’m going to do it,” said Perry of his mentality. “I don’t want to do it again. Some people go back over and over again.” For him, Perry said this experience is a “one-and-done.”

Perry said he’s logged more than 1,000 virtual miles on Zwift and Peloton stationary bikes since December. But he said when the weather cooperated, he much preferred to be outside logging miles training on the C&O Canal Trail



Mark Perry.

in D.C. or laps around Central Park when in New York.

“We spend so much of our lives in conference rooms and offices and airplanes,” Perry said. Training rides, he said, are a great “excuse to be outside.”

But he said the training rides have an ancillary benefit, aside from the fresh air and exercise. He said that when he goes particularly long distances, he feels his brain working differently than it does when he’s staring at a computer. “There’s no screen in front of you. There’s no ringing telephone. There’s no calendar,” he said. “I can work through problems in a way that is very different somehow. My mental state shifts, and I figure things out riding that I have struggled with in the office.”

Perry said he sees many parallels between litigation and endurance sports.

“It takes a lot of time. It takes a lot of preparation. It takes a lot of planning. Things go wrong. You need a team. You need commitment. You need to get through those dark, dark, dark places,” he said. “For me, anyway, hitting those endurance events builds up the mental toughness to do the litigation side of things, too.”

In his office, Perry has a map of the Leadville course posted on the wall. He said before the race, he spent about 10 minutes each morning looking at the map and visualizing certain portions of the course where there might be the threat of a crash or a time to catch some rest. Around the corner from the map, he’s got 10 trial themes for an upcoming client matter posted on the wall on a piece of white paper. “You’ve got to internalize these things and visualize getting to the end and delivering the closing argument, or the appellate argument, or whatever it is,” he said. “If you’ve stared at something for months, it imprints on your brain.”

Perry said that the motto of the Leadville race—“grit, guts and determination”—captures something similar to his personal mantra of perseverance. “You’ve just got to keep going sometimes,” he said.

“The pushing through when you don’t think you can is the thing that I’m not sure everybody understands,” he said. “That’s what the job—the litigation job—is about. You will get to a point in every case where you don’t want to read another deposition summary or deposition transcript or interview another witness, or run through your opening statement for the 97th time.”

“If you’ve done something that you didn’t think you could do, and then you do it well, everything else becomes easier. It doesn’t become easy. It becomes easier.”