

Former MLB player Byrnes embraces a different sport

By Kyle Magin, Tahoe Quarterly

A mountain lion stalked Eric Byrnes during the 2016 Western States Endurance Run.

Somewhere around mile 55 of the 100-mile course, the 11-year Major League Baseball outfielder and former Oakland Athletic fled from the big cat. This was immediately before Byrnes, then 40, ran past a pack of trailside photographers situated squarely in the middle of nowhere (Michigan Bluff, Calif., population 672) to capture his sweaty face, and just before he saw an orangutan hanging between two pines in the Sierra Nevada's foothills.

"It was the hottest part of the day; it was 100-plus degrees," Byrnes, a part-time Truckee resident, says. "Once I saw the monkey, I was like, 'OK, my mind is playing tricks on me now.'"

Byrnes, a little better than halfway through the legendary June footrace that stretches from Squaw Valley to Auburn, had begun to hallucinate.

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