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I'm a Cat Living at Altitude Camp. Ask Me Anything.

Shelby Houlihan's favorite feline, Miko, sees the comings and goings of some very speedy pros.

By [HAILEY MIDDLEBROOK](#) JAN 31, 2020





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During her first few training camps as a pro runner for Bowerman Track Club, [Shelby Houlihan](#), 26, desperately missed her five-year-old cat, Miko.

Luckily, head coach Jerry Schumacher was willing to add another member to the travel roster and Miko started going to training camps with the team. When Houlihan packed up to go from Portland, Oregon, to Colorado Springs, Colorado, for the team's current six-week [altitude training](#) stint, which started January 1, her cuddly furball came along.

What does Miko think of camp? He called *Runner's World* from altitude camp to discuss his views.

***Runner's World:* Nice to meet you, Miko. How are you liking training camp?**

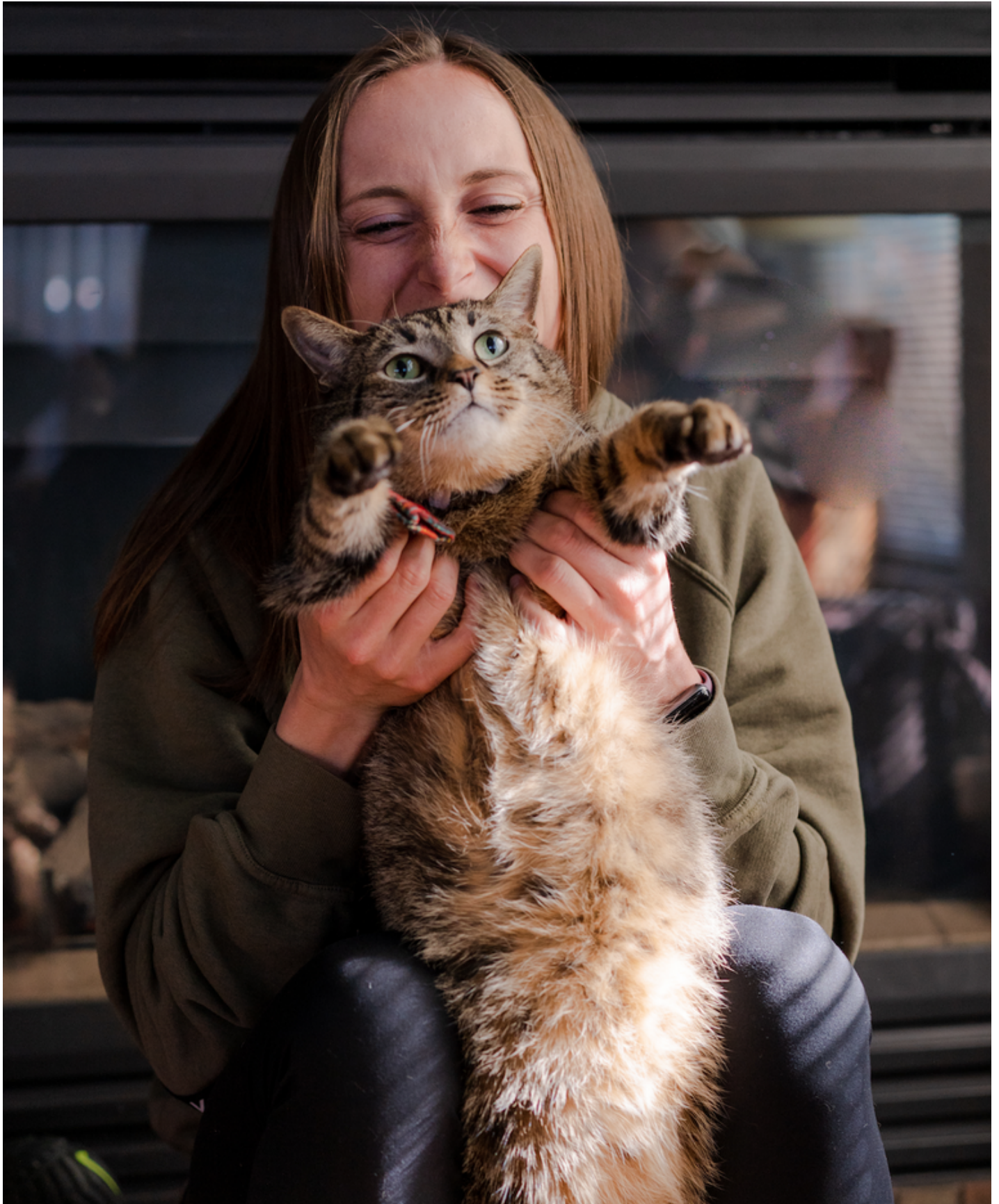
Miko: It's exhausting! I've been sleeping much more than normal and I'm not even doing the [workouts](#). Shelby says it's because the air is thinner here, but I'm skeptical.

Why do you get to come on these trips anyway?

Last summer, Shelby asked Jerry if I could start coming to camp. It wasn't too hard to convince him. I'm registered as Shelby's [emotional support animal](#). She struggles to be away from home, but she knew that if I tagged along, [training camp](#) would feel a little more homey. Luckily, the other girls like cats, too.

Who else is around?

I'm sharing a house with [Amy Cragg](#), who is preparing for the [U.S. Olympic Marathon Trials](#) on February 29 in Atlanta, as well as [Marielle Hall](#), [Karissa Schweizer](#), and [Courtney Frerichs](#), who are training for some [indoor](#) races.



Shelby Houlihan and Miko hang out during downtime at training camp.

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Are there any other Bowerman pets to hang out with?

A few of the girls on the team have dogs, but only cats are allowed on this trip. More like one cat: me. Also, dogs are the worst. Except for [Pie](#), Colleen Quigley's pup—she's great.

What do your mornings look like?

I know exactly when Shelby's alarm clock goes off each morning—I'll climb on top of the covers right beforehand and wait for it to ring. Once she wakes up, she usually takes her time getting out of bed. Sometimes she opens the door to let me out, but I refuse to leave the room before she does. While Shelby's getting ready for practice, I'll tell her I'm ready for [breakfast](#). We have a secret language.

What do you do while the team works out?

I have the whole house to myself, so I lounge *everywhere*. My favorite thing to do is to [sleep](#). I know Shelby and her teammates are excellent runners, but I'm a champion sleeper. Shelby brought a bunch of toys for me play with, so I'll spend some time with them. I count this as my exercise for the day. Shelby told me that I'll probably lose a few pounds at [altitude](#). I can already feel myself getting toned.

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Do the pros take nap after their workouts, too?

Shelby isn't much of a napper usually, but she's been taking naps much more at altitude. (I approve.) I'll greet everyone at the door once they get home from their morning workout, and after they're done eating lunch, I'll join in on nap time.

Do you like your space or are you more social?

I'm not going to lie, I like attention. If you're watching a movie on the couch and you pull a soft blanket over you, I can't help myself from snuggling into your lap. Sorry not sorry. Most of the team seems to like me as much as I like them.



While the Bowerman team works out, Miko holds down the fort at home.

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What do you do to support Shelby during race season?

I like to think of myself as a calming presence. I just chill on her lap while she pets me, which helps her relax before a stressful race. When I'm there, I try to make her feel like she's at home, rather than at a flashy meet. Since she adopted me as a kitten five years ago, I've traveled to almost all of her races in the country, so I know the drill.

When is Shelby's next big race?

The date circled on our calendar is February 14, when Shelby heads to the USATF Indoor Championships in Albuquerque, New Mexico. She's planning to double in the 1500 and 3,000 meters. Last year, she won the two-mile title and was second in the mile, so we're hoping for medals again this year.

Where's one place you haven't traveled to yet?

I'm dying to go with the team while they train and race in Europe, but I'm too afraid to fly for that long. I'm an ace at U.S. flights, though.

What do you do on the plane?

When we're flying, Shelby puts me in a soft-sided carrier, then she tucks me under the seat in front of her before takeoff. I don't need any sedatives before the flight, because duh, I'm a great napper. I always go right to sleep on the airplane.

What are you most excited about this year?

The Olympics, baby! I was just a kitten during the 2016 Games. I can't wait to watch my Bowerman friends compete at the 2020 Olympic Track Trials this summer. Who knows, I might even take an international flight if Tokyo is in the cards.

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Hailey first got hooked on running news as an intern with Running Times, and now she reports on elite runners and cyclists, feel-good stories, and training pieces for Runner's World and Bicycling magazines.