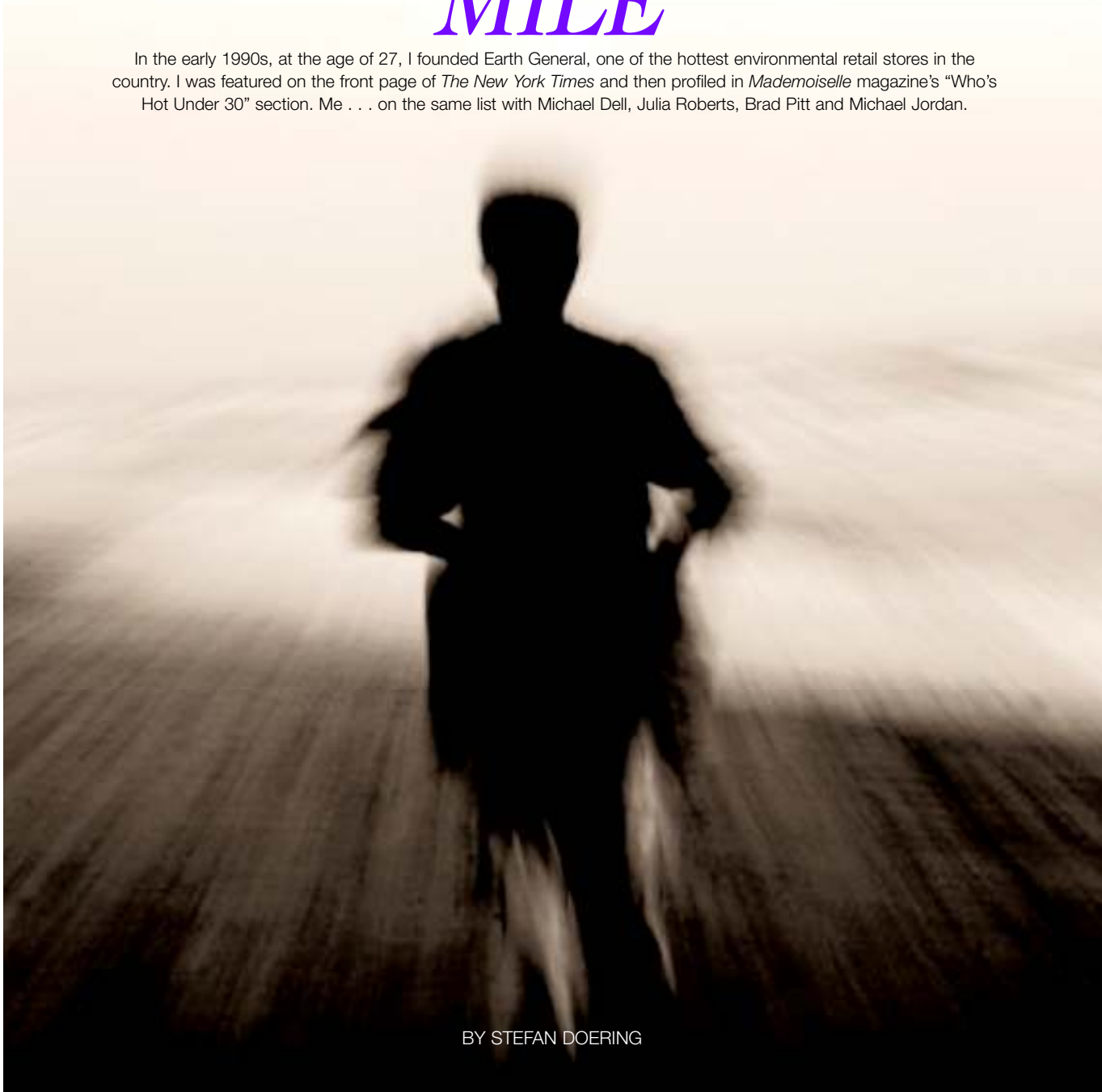


35- MINUTE MILE

In the early 1990s, at the age of 27, I founded Earth General, one of the hottest environmental retail stores in the country. I was featured on the front page of *The New York Times* and then profiled in *Mademoiselle* magazine's "Who's Hot Under 30" section. Me . . . on the same list with Michael Dell, Julia Roberts, Brad Pitt and Michael Jordan.



BY STEFAN DOERING

With the business booming, I decided to open a second store, never bothering to ask anyone else's input. "Hey, why mess with success?" I thought. My store was rocking, and I was the one who made it happen. Unfortunately, I didn't have a handle on what was making the first store so successful or building a solid infrastructure to expand. And while I had some incredible entrepreneurial skills, I was sorely lacking some foundational skills.

Within a year, the business went bankrupt and I was getting divorced. My entire life felt like it was crashing down around me. In just seven years, I had raised and lost almost a million dollars

of my investors' money — including my mother's — and I couldn't even look at myself in the mirror. My over-inflated ego was reduced to incredibly low self-esteem.

The only thing I found joy and peace in was running. I ran several times a week and had it down to a seven-minute mile. But other than my five-mile runs, my life was at rock bottom.

One day, I was walking across the street near my home in Brooklyn. Out of nowhere a car came barreling around the corner and hit me head on, catapulting me onto the

sidewalk and fracturing my skull. While I lay in a coma for weeks, the doctors told my family they didn't know if I would live or die; if I lived — if I would be able to walk again.

When I woke up three weeks later, I had no memory of the accident. In fact, I didn't remember anything. One night I was at my parents' house with some family and friends. I thought, "Wow! A party. I wonder what it's for?" They told me the party

was for me . . . to celebrate the fact that I was alive. At that moment I began to piece together what happened.

During the next few months I went through the most intense hell you could imagine. I had lost virtually all my hearing and vision. The doctors said I might never be able to walk again, yet alone run. Before the accident, I had started a mastermind group of people who supported each other in making things happen in our lives. After hearing the doctors' grim prognosis, I told the group, "I'm going to come up with an unreasonable goal. Ninety days from today I'm going to run five miles in Central Park."

They looked at each other as if I were crazy, but then said, "OK, we'll support you." And so I began to train. And every time I became discouraged — and there were a lot of times during my new "35-minute mile pace" that this would occur — my hope and faith were tested to the nth degree. I was determined to prove my doctors wrong and to prove to myself that I could pick myself up and make something positive out of my life. Every time I would fall down or want to give up on my dream of running again, the group encouraged me to keep going.

That's when I learned the value of a team and the necessity of a strong support structure. I realized I had failed in business because I was too arrogant. It had been all about me. Now I realized that I was only as strong as the team around me. They gave me inspiration.

On December 28, 2002, 87 days after I set my 90-day goal, I met 22 friends and family in Central Park. Together we ran five miles, six months after doctors said I might never walk again.

As I crossed the finish line, I realized the power of a crystal-clear vision, intense determination and most importantly, an awesome support structure. I came to realize that there is absolutely nothing that we can't accomplish if we set our minds to something and it resonates deep in our core.

I took the same strategy I used during my recovery and applied it to my future business. Within two years of the accident, I created two healthy and thriving companies, one of which now allows me to share my passion and lessons learned with other entrepreneurs. Many people said that this terrible accident would change my life forever, and they're right. I'm one lucky guy. ♣

"I'm going to come up with an unreasonable goal. Ninety days from today I'm going to run five miles in Central Park."



Stefan Doering, president and founder of BEST Coaches Inc., creates and facilitates breakthrough "90-Day Dream Teams" specifically aimed at entrepreneurs. A groundbreaking process, he brings to the table nearly a quarter-century of hard-earned business savvy and four decades of pure heart, helping other entrepreneurs achieve equally ambitious and outrageous goals in their businesses and personal lives.

The entrepreneurial spirit became evident in Doering when, at age of 17, he started his first business — Doering Housepainters — with the motto of "Help us paint our way through college." After receiving an MBA from Pace University in New York and rising to vice president at Citigroup, Stefan launched and managed four more companies, two of which were firsts of their kind: Earth General was a one-stop retail store for more than 3,000 environmental products and became one of the largest environmental outlets

in the nation, and VentureMate, an innovative Internet business that traded shares in private companies before going public. VentureMate was designed to make investing in private companies easier for investors. To learn more about Stefan and BEST Coaches Inc., visit BestCoachesInc.com.

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