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Badwater
by **David M. Valadez**

Deshi: You have implied that you are not very impressed with lofty goals. Should we have no motivations to our training?

Sensei: Being motivated is not the same thing as having lofty goals. Perhaps, we can even say, the two are antithetical to each other. After all, motivations see us through to the end of something, or at least we can say they are at the base of perseverance. They often serve us when nothing else can or will. However, lofty goals are things by which we come to fail – in that they cause us to preoccupy ourselves with the unrealistic.

Deshi: Then is that what you are against: a preoccupation with the unrealistic?

Sensei: You have said it better than I could. Yes, that is it.

Deshi: The other day, I was watching a documentary on a famous endurance race. The race is called “The Badwater Ultramarathon.” The race is 135 miles and it starts in Death Valley and ends at the top of Mt. Whitney. In the middle of the race, a 68 year old man was being interviewed, he said something like this: “I always start these events with very lofty goals – like I think I’m going to do something special. And after a point of body deterioration, then the goals get evaluated down. I always get to a point, which is basically where I am now, where the best that I can hope for is to avoid throwing-up on my shoes.” Could this be the right kind of motivation?

Sensei: Looking beyond the surface, which I am sure that runner meant for all of us to do, yes, that is the true Budo spirit – the spirit we must continue for a lifetime, to the top of our own Mountain.