

Doug Ryan Race Report for the **Mother Road 100**: November 11, 2006

The Mother Road 100 was a one time ultra to celebrate the 80th Anniversary of Route 66. It started at the historic Round Barn in Arcadia and traveled 100 miles along Route 66, utilizing the oldest alignment when ever possible, and finished at the Carl's Jr. in Sapulpa, OK. After blowing up at Western States in June, I really wanted to finish this one.

My dream goal was to run under 20 hours, but I didn't know if that was possible. My training had gone well in the previous 4 months. I averaged 80 miles/week for 10 weeks, and peaked out at 130/week. I intended to run two weeks of speed work; however, I went way overboard with 6 fast runs in 8 days, and strained my hips and back. After two weeks of healing and tapering, it was time to toe the line.

Since the course followed Route 66, I was able to have the assistance of a crew van the whole way. This was one of those rare opportunities to buy speed. The price was the hard work of my five crew members. My wife, Sherry, worked by herself for the first 4 ½ hours. I would see the van parked along side the road every two miles and run over to grab a gu, drink, or kiss. The first 30 miles I ran with Richard Smith from Oklahoma City. We originally met during a 42 mile training run in August. He's a wonderful runner who loves to talk and has a great sense of humor. The early miles are the easy ones and we ran 9:00 minute pace, except for walking the hills. Having van support was a time saver. At Heartland last year, an aid worker asked me if I wanted a breakfast burrito. After I said yes, I sat down and waited 5 minutes as he cooked it. This time, Sherry stopped at Sonic and just held it out the window as I ran by.

Around 33 miles, I began to feel ill and fell off Richard's pace. For the next five miles, I dealt with nausea and diarrhea and felt depressed as I slowed down. At one point I found myself a mile from the van along an empty stretch of highway when the Mother Nature's call came suddenly. Luckily, I made it to a pawn shop at the top of the hill and ran in and used the bathroom and avoided what would have been an ugly incident to handle along the side of the road.

At mile 38, my daughter, Katie, and her friend Anna, joined Sherry in the crew van. At the stop, I sat down for the first time and drank a Coke. I was fretting about how badly things were going, when Sherry pointed out I was still ahead of schedule. After the sugar and caffeine from the Coke kicked in, I started to feel better and began to run again. I hammered out 12 miles and made it to the half way point in 8 hours and 39 minutes, about 11 minutes ahead of schedule. However, at the next stop, instead of a Coke, Katie held out a yogurt. They had talked with Drew on the cell phone and he told them it was too early for me to be drinking Coke and to cut me off. So for the next 15 miles I drank chocolate milk and yogurts and made steady time. I felt a sore spot developing on the ball of my left foot and stopped to change shoes. I found a more comfortable pair and put on padded socks; however, the new shoes were a half size smaller and my feet were beginning to swell. The new shoes made my foot feel better, but cramped my big toe a bit.

I knew Drew Meyer and Mark Blenden were getting closer and I didn't want to suck in front of my friends, so I got as far down the road as I could before they arrived. Somewhere around mile 70, ice chests and extra cloths were transferred to the new crew car, and I started running the final 30 miles with Mark, who was suffering from a bad cold. Sherry took the girls out to eat and Drew was left to baby-sit. It had been 40 miles since I'd been able to have a conversation with anyone, so I was thrilled to have Mark along side, although his ears were probably getting as sore as his feet. As it got dark we added layers of cloths and headlamps and keep rolling up the miles. Hot chicken noodle soup began to show up on the menu and really made us feel warm and strong.

When we followed the course onto an abandoned section of road that crisscrossed the country side, Drew sat in the van 2 miles down the current Route 66 wondering where all the runners went. While it didn't take him long to figure out something was wrong, it did take him an hour to find us. That was the only time during the race where I ran out of water and felt low on calories. When we got to the van, we had a feast of chocolate milk, yogurt, Coke, and almonds and had a good laugh. A health check at the next aid station required all runners to weigh-in. Once the captain realized I gained 6 pounds since the last check, he got concerned and Mark and I had to convince him I was doing fine before we could leave. We made great progress for 10 miles and anxiously waited for Drew to tell us at each stop how we were doing against the clock. At the time, I was well below 20 and looked like I would break 19 hours. Then the pain in my left foot just got too much to handle and I started walking more and more and had to accept sub 20 as a victory.

We caught and passed my friend Richard Smith with about 10 to go and jogged, limped and hiked the rest of the way home. At the 97 mile mark, Drew drove to the finish line and down the road behind us. At the break, he gave us an accurate status report on what was happening: I couldn't catch the guy in front of me and the guy behind me was too far back to catch me. If I could just finish the race I would have 7th place. I crossed the line in 19 hours, 20 minutes, and 19 seconds, a PR by 3 hours and 55 minutes. I have a polished piece of the original Route 66 road bed, a belt buckle, a 3x3 inch blister on the ball of my left foot and a wrecked big toe that will soon yield a donation to NTTR's toe nail necklace. I went to the doctor the next day and got a tetanus shot and some antibiotics to insure an infection didn't set in. The Mother Road went well because I trained hard, had a wonderful crew and didn't have to run 100+ degrees temperature over mountains.