

My First Hundred Miles

Pictures can be found at:

<http://picasaweb.google.com/rokirakun/UltraCentric2009?feat=email#>

Ever since I dnf'd at Arkansas Traveler, at 2nd Powerline aid station after the turnaround, I have wondered if I would ever succeed at getting 100 miles under my feet. That race was early in my short yet late-in-the-day running career and I am not getting any younger or faster. I have entered UltraCentric three times now; twice in the 24 hour event and this year in the 48 hour event. In the first event I showed up with a groin pull and could only achieve 10 miles or so. The next year I suffered from blisters too badly to get past 56 miles. This year, even with a blister, that may have taken me out of this race were it not for the wisdom of more experienced runners; thanks Don Winkley, I was able to achieve my 100 mile goal and officially became a member of the crazies. Now that I have crossed that Rubicon I can begin to build a strategy to complete a 100 mile trail race in less than 36 hours.

The 2009 UltraCentric Experience was not just a rewarding time for me because I achieved my own personal goal but also because of the many personal goals I got to see being knocked down like dominoes, one after another, in so many other people's lives. When you walk and talk late in the night, as I was privileged to do with veteran ultra runner Kim Sergeant, who so kindly helped keep me awake and encouraged me to reach my goal, one of the big things that you realize is that ultra running is a sport that is largely about people. This sport is not lacking in its elite runners like Amy Winters, Ed Rousseau, Don Winkley or Kim Sergeant, all of who ran this weekend, but there is a very obvious lack of an elitist attitude in even the best runner accompanying you on your personal journey to excellence.

Let me enumerate just a few of the personal achievements won this year - I do not mean to slight anyone I may overlook – these are just the ones I personally know about:

Frank Bireley, who has already had one chemo therapy treatment for cancer, had a personal goal to run 100 miles. He entered the 72 hour race knowing the toll it would take on his already stressed body. Frank completed his goal.

Amy Winters who runs on runs on a prosthetic leg (see her story at www.seeamyrun.com) achieved a record time in both the 50K and 50M distances. It was exciting to see the field of runners stop at the distance points and cheer Amy on.

Ed Rousseau who is 70 years young, got a record for 50M and I think also for 100M. He was entered in the 72 hour and ran 205 miles overall.

NTTR's own **Tammy Unangst** ran an amazing 81 miles in 24 hours!

Desiree Fournier who traveled from Austin with several friends and whose longest run prior to this event was 18 miles had a goal of 50 miles; she ran 75 miles.

44 year old **Hung-Kwong Ng** from Orlando took first place in the 72 hour event with 243 miles. After sleeping too long on Thursday and letting Ed Rousseau gain 50 miles on him, it was amazing to watch Hung run almost non stop the next 48 hours. I believe he only has one mode – go!

Running with Hung in the 72 hour race was Ed Rousseau and the ubiquitous Frederick Davis III. Fred and Ed joked about locking Hung in one of the port-a-potties but Hung constantly evaded them.

Fred brought his 86 year old mother, Irma, who accumulated almost 14 miles in 3 days. She cheerfully went from one chair to another - Fred had set out several chairs for her around the half mile loop – cheering on the other runners.

NTTR member **Paula Robertson** completed her first 50 miler in the 12 hour event taking 1st female overall.

Other NTTR members running this year included **Rochelle Frazier**, who took first female overall with a distance of 96 miles and **Karen Riddle** who logged 50 miles and then turned in to study for a test; both ran in the 24 hour event.

Gloria Canchola from Ft. Worth achieved her first 100 miles in just over 31 hours.

Other notable performances included **Sam Thompson** from Seattle who took first male overall in the 24 hour event with a distance of 115 miles. **Doug Ratliff** of San Antonio took male first overall in the 48 hour event with 141 miles and **Kimmie Sergeant** of Galveston took first female overall in the 48 hour event with 131 miles.

I arrived at Murrell Park on Thursday evening planning to camp the night before my race, the 48 hour challenge which started at 9AM on Friday morning. After being advised that the park ranger would not let us set up tents on the loop – we could set up tables and chairs on the loop and park cars in which to sleep and change clothes but tents had to be located in the designated camp areas - I set up my tent and went back to the race start finish to hang out for a while before turning in for the night. Almost as soon as I got settled in it started to rain and I think it rained most of the night. I slept good...

It was drizzling and about 50F at 9AM in the morning at the 48 hour race start time so I put on my poncho and off we went. The course was sort of triangular in shape and just over a half mile long and mostly flat. From the race start the course turns left (we were running counter clockwise the whole time) and then proceeds for about 350 yards south towards the lake with a very slight up grade for the first 175 yards and then an equally slight down grade for the next 175 yards before it turns hard left and is flat for about 100 yards before it curves again to the left about 90 degrees and heads back north. The next 300 yards (approximately; half mile = 880 yards) the course rises gradually with the most

significant rise just about 150 yards before the start finish. As it rises it turns again to the left to complete the circuit.

From the one and only official aid station at the north side of the loop you could virtually see the entire course. Port-a-potties were strategically placed around the loop. Various runners placed chairs and tables and coolers around the loop and parked their cars where they could nap or change clothes as needed. Run Far set up at the race start to time each lap and Richard was very punctual about posting the lap results every 30 minutes. Timing was done with rf chips.

I started out running whole loops then changing to running and walking; running from the top of the rise before the start/finish to the bottom of the rise on the south side of the loop. Then I mixed in more walking and by 9PM or so I was walking mostly at about a 17 to 20 minute pace and kept this pace for most of the remainder of the time. It rained or drizzled off and on for the whole first day and night. It was difficult keeping dry because if you did not wear a poncho you would get wet from the outside and if you did wear a poncho you would tend to sweat more and get wet from the inside out. I almost ran out of dry clothes by the night. At around 9PM I stopped at my car and changed into some dry long pants and a dry sweatshirt, donned my poncho and started out for the night. I was happy to have met Kimmi Sergeant who walked with me for several hours. Kimmi kept me company and she told me about her running experience; she has completed 35, 100 mile races including 8 Arkansas Travelers and 13 Rocky Raccoons.

This year Lorrie Gray was the head chef and she is to be congratulated for whipping up some of the best food I have ever had at a race. Besides the regular junk food race fare and water and Heed, Lorrie cooked up several great meals for breakfast, lunch and dinner. On Friday evening she cooked up a pasta spread of spaghetti and meat or veggie sauce and baked ziti, French bread and brownies for dessert. On Saturday Drew Meyer and Mark Blenden arrived to help Lorrie and her husband, Ken, cook hot dogs and hamburgers or veggieburgers for lunch. Shelly Turner was such a great encourager tirelessly offering aid day and night. Shelly's mom Celia and Jazzy Boxwell also supported the aid station.

On Saturday evening Lorrie and the crew made beef and chicken fajitas with all the fixings. Other great offerings included some great homemade minestrone soup, chicken noodle soup, macaroni and cheese and of course - more brownies. Sunday morning we were treated to a great spread of pancakes, scrambled eggs, sausage and bacon. In addition they provided an awesome fruit spread with huge blackberries, strawberries, pineapple, cantaloupe, grapes and yogurt. Orange juice, coffee and hot chocolate were available every morning.

By midnight Friday I was plenty exhausted and decided to take a nap which turned out to be 6 hours. I now wish I had spent more time walking the first night so I could complete my goal of 100 miles sooner on Saturday but I needed the rest and I did have 48 hours. But I was also developing a fairly large blister on the pad of my left foot. By noon Saturday - which turned out to be a very nice day, cool and cloudy, the sun peaked out for

about 30 minutes and it became warm but then hid again for the rest of the day behind the clouds – I wondered if I would be able to continue past 60 miles because of the pain.

I stopped at the aid station and put some duct tape on my foot hoping it would help but it did not. Fortunately I began to walk with veteran distance runner and record holder Don Winkley and asked him what he did for blisters. Don said, “Lets get around to my van and I have all the things you need to fix the blister and I will show you how to do it.” Don instructed me and left me with the tools and I fixed my blister according to his instructions and put the tools back into his van and took off. The next lap was somewhat painful but after that the pain was gone; Don’s help saved my race!

Other than that blister I pulled or bruised a tendon on the front of my leg near my ankle on the foot that had the blister. Either because I was walking funny to avoid putting pressure on the foot or because of the slight roll off of the road in the counter clockwise direction I don’t know; it is still sore. My legs, knees and hips all recovered quickly; less than 24 hours.

Saturday night was clear with a bright partial moon and stars overhead. In addition to that Robert had 2 large, diesel powered, light systems which lit up the whole course except the southern most part. Late in the night fog settled in creating a beautiful yet eerie scene as people walked and talked through the night.

After getting 80 miles I stopped to eat dinner and then my strategy was to knock out 5 miles at a time; rest, then another 5 miles. This strategy changed after the first 5 miles and became 3 miles then 1.5 miles. At about 2:30AM I crossed the finish line for the 200th time and had 100 miles. To be sure I went one more lap; 100.78 miles; second male overall. But I know if Don Winkley and Marvin Skagerberg had wanted they could have surpassed my mileage significantly.

Sunday morning I watched as the final runners completed as many laps as they could under a sunny sky before the horn blast at 9AM. We were served a wonderful breakfast and the award ceremony was filled with laughter and applause and lot of talking among new friends; everyone was a winner.

Rick Carr