

# Ultrarunning World

ROAD, TRACK & TRAIL MULTIDAY & ULTRA DISTANCE NEWS  
ISSUE 16



# SNOWDONIA SLATE TRAIL ULTRA

## 89 MILE ULTRA AROUND SNOWDONIA 22<sup>ND</sup> FEBRUARY 2019

An 89 mile circular ultra marathon around Snowdonias historic slate industry past. Starting and finishing in Bangor, on the North Wales Coast, it takes you through many well-known places such as Llanberis, Betws-Y-coed and Beddgelert as well as some lesser known places.



FOR MORE DETAILS VISIT: [WWW.UPHILLDOWNDALE.COM](http://WWW.UPHILLDOWNDALE.COM)

# Editorial



**Issue 16** is here at long last. Such a busy time and so many exciting things happening in ultrarunning. Camille Herron's phenomenal performance at Desert Solstice setting a new women's 100 mile record and a new 24 hour women's world record was streamed by Aravaipa Running, the team behind Across The Years. This is taking place as I write and there are live streaming sessions from Jamil 'Jamjam' Coury and the crew with nearly 500 folks taking part in this 6 day Ultrafest in Arizona.

We have the much promised interview with TEDx speaker Kristina Paltén who kindly shared a few words with Sarah Cameron about her activity and philosophy.

There are race reports from the UK including Sharon Gayter (who shows no signs of slowing down) and her Coast to Coast in the hands of Mark Cockbain, Stacey Holloway's West Highland Way write up. Leila celebrated Princess Challenge Day on the Cleveland Way and Fiona McNelis celebrated a Canal Grand Slam.

Rachel Fawcett shares her thoughts on Making The Jump To A 100 miles and across the waters on the Emerald Isle, Vinny O'Leary took to the Listowel Endurance Festival.

Even farther across the pond we have race reports from another Irishman, Pdraig Mullins, who rose to the occasion at the NorthCoast National 24 hour Championships. Wasatch Front 100, Bear 100, Cape Fear and Peak Marathon offer stories and experiences from some of America's classic ultras and dedicated ultrarunners.

Hayley White is taking on the 6633 Arctic Ultra starting on March 7<sup>th</sup> and would love you to find out what that's all about. We hope to hear more about what happened in the Spring.

**Next issue** will have a load of things we just couldn't squeeze into 16 including Tegan Edwards Dawn2Dusk in South Africa, Berit Jessen's further adventures in South Korea, Garfield Jones went to Policoro for the Italian Ultra Festival's 48 hour race and Annabel

Hepworth's Adelaide 6 Day race report is a great read (Currently at ATY). Articles from Alex Mason, Stuart MacFarlane, Debbie Coolman, Debbie Bidmead, James Campbell's Hardwolds 80 plus much more.

It's possible to advertise in the magazine and a few events are taking advantage of the opportunity in 2019. If you would like to promote your event or service checkout [the pricelist in the media kit](#) to support the magazine and connect with our ever increasing subscriber base at great prices. Get in touch.

Finally, some people have asked for a printed version of the magazine and we need to know what the demand is for that. We will be sending out a questionnaire in the New Year to prise some opinions and feedback from you.

Thank you for supporting Ultrarunning World.

Best wishes for the New Year 2019.

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Send original and previously unpublished articles to the above email address. Last dates for submissions Last dates for submissions Jan 14<sup>th</sup>, February 10<sup>th</sup>, March 10<sup>th</sup>. Please include a 40-50 word bio and some accompanying photos and a headshot for the contributors page. Thank you.

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# SUMMER REBELLION

**135 MILE MULTI DAY ULTRA**  
**16<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2019 - SOLO & TEAMS**

The summer version of the popular winter Rebellion.

The route is along the full length of Glyndŵr's Way National Trail. The route takes you through some of the most beautiful and remote parts of Mid Wales. Starting in Knighton looping through Machynlleth and then finishing in Welshpool - the route is one of the most picturesque and challenging in the UK.



FOR MORE DETAILS VISIT: [WWW.UPHILLDOWNDALE.COM](http://WWW.UPHILLDOWNDALE.COM)

## A brief round up of the recent IAU news and announcements



The new IAU Area Representative for the Americas is **Arturo Fabián Campanini López** from Argentina. Fabian was elected for the next two years until the 2020 full election.

The 2019 IAU 24H World Championships was granted to Albi, France. The Championships will take place on 26th – 27th October 2019. Albi was the host for the IAU 24 Hour European Championship 2016 and is located in southern France on the River Tarn, 85km northeast of Toulouse. Race website: [www.albi24h.fr](http://www.albi24h.fr)

The IAU was also pleased to announce that the 2020 IAU 24H European Championships was granted to San Giovanni Lupatoto, Verona, Italy. The proposed date for the Championships is 19th – 20th September 2020. The Municipality of San Giovanni Lupatoto is only 8 km south of the center of Verona and has been the venue for the “LUPATOTISSIMA” 24 hour race since 1995. Race website: [www.lupatotissima.it](http://www.lupatotissima.it)

On June 9<sup>th</sup> 2019 following the IAU Trail World Championships (8<sup>th</sup> June 2019) there will be an open race in Mirandha do Corvo, Portugal. It will be around 42 km with 2200 D+.

The IAU is to create an IAU Athletes Commission and a Para-Athletes Committee to address the needs of athletes and impaired athletes. If you are interested and would like to contribute towards a forward thinking policy group please make contact by sending email to Robert Boyce IAU Vice President / Director of Finances and Marketing [Robert.Boyce@iau-ultramarathon.org](mailto:Robert.Boyce@iau-ultramarathon.org) and Jacek Bedkowski IAU Director of Communication [Jacek.Bedkowski@iau-ultramarathon.org](mailto:Jacek.Bedkowski@iau-ultramarathon.org).

### Breaking and Other News

Norwegian ultra runner **Bjørn Tore Taranger** set a new record when he ran 264.5km (164 miles) on a treadmill in 24 hours. Starting October 11<sup>th</sup> at the Aktiv365

Paradis in Bergen, Norway. He averaged 8:46 per mile pace (5:27 per km) raising money for kids at the Haukeland University Hospital in Bergen. The previous record was 261.18km which was set in 2017.

**Pete Kostelnik** wrapped up his Ke2Key journey from Anchor Point on the Kenai Peninsula in Alaska to Key West, Florida on November 5<sup>th</sup>. With a total elapsed time of 97:6:57 minutes and an average of 55.3 miles a day Pete surpassed his 2016 Run Across America (San Francisco to New York, 3067 miles) which he completed in 42:6:30 minutes, breaking a record held by Frank Giannino set in 1980. On December 20<sup>th</sup> Pete ran his 10,000<sup>th</sup> mile of 2018. At **Desert Solstice** Camille Herron set a new 24 hour world record winning the race outright with 162.8 miles. Second was Micah Morgan with 139.93 miles and third was Adela Salt with 124.52 miles – top 5 over 150 miles, top 12 over 120 miles. [Results](#)



### The 2019 Skyrunner® UK & IRELAND calendar has been announced:



Scafell Sky Race on June 8<sup>th</sup> ENG 40 km  
Lakes Sky Ultra on July 13<sup>th</sup> ENG 60 km  
Seven Sisters Skyline on July 28<sup>th</sup> IRE 50 km  
Snowdon Skyline on September 15<sup>th</sup> WAL 40 km  
Mourne Skyline MTR October 19<sup>th</sup> (TBC) NI 35 km  
Website: [Skyrunninguk.com](http://Skyrunninguk.com)

**The American Trail Running Association (ATRA)** recently announced their 2018 awards. Trail runners of the year were Courtney Dauwalter and Mario Mendoza and Road Runners of the year awards went to Camille Herron and Olivier Leblond. Ultra Contributor of the Year was Jamil Coury for his weekly [Mountain Outpost YouTube](#) show. **Rob Donkersloot**, President of AURA and RD of the former **KeP Ultra** discusses the bureaucratic burdens that are proving impractical for road running in Australia after the cancellation of the 2018 Coast to Kosci.

In 2021 a 64 stage, 4689km **Trans-Europe** footrace is being planned from Tallinn (EST) to Lisbon (POR). More details on the [RaceAcrossEurope 2021](#) website.

## The top entries in the Ultrarunning World photo competition.



First place

*Laura Whitton Photo by Pete Jeffery*



Second place

*Running on the moon - Caroline Barichievich*

*This is a picture of me running Haleakalā on the Hawaiian Island of Maui. At 10,023 feet above sea level, this dormant volcano is the stage for feeling like you are running on the moon. This picture was taken by my husband, Alan Barichievich. We are both ultra runners and love to travel and see the world on our feet.*



Third place

*This was taken of me running in Snowdonia with Challenge Running where I was learning about navigation. It was truly beautiful and for me reflects the beauty that surrounds us and it feels so surreal.*

*Photo taken by Andreea Bornaz.*

*Jody Donaldson*

# 3100 Diaries



The dates for the Self-Transcendence 3100 mile race have been announced as June 16<sup>th</sup> to August 6<sup>th</sup> 2019. The field has yet to be announced but rumours are that Harita will be back as will Sopan and perhaps one of the featured runners from the 3100 Run and Become movie, Ashprihanal Aalto, will make a return.

The Walking Diva, Yolanda Holder is in training for the summer and has her heart set on a successful journey in 2019. Yolanda has been motivated by diabetes issues in her family to encourage people to prevent this debilitating condition by exercising.



A recent post on her Facebook page says “Doing a daily headstand has become my signature. I will continue into 2019 along with a daily plank, drinking water daily, and walking one mile or more for 365 days.”

Sahishnu Szczesiul, Associate Race Director, the race statistician and historian has published accounts of the



first 3100-mile race which took place in 1997, following its predecessor, the first and only 2700 mile race in 1996.

- [Six runners chase a legend](#) - the story of the 2700 Mile Race
- [Follow Your Dreams](#) - the 1997 3100 Mile race.

Keep up to date with the race website at: [3100.srichinmoyraces.org](http://3100.srichinmoyraces.org)

Stutisheel Oleg Lebedev is a 9-time finisher and one of only 43 runners in the world to have completed the Race. He has shared two books, **Run. Journey. Become.** and **Eat To Run** documenting some of his experiences during the 3100 mile epic journey. Stutisheel is an ultra-marathon runner and Ironman, an experienced project manager, a journalist, a writer, a trainer and motivational speaker. He was the first runner from Ukraine and former Soviet Countries to finish the worlds longest certified Self-Transcendence 3100-Mile Race. Checkout his website at [www.stutisheel.org](http://www.stutisheel.org)

The new movie 3100 Run and Become is now available on all rent/buy platforms in the US and Canada - on iTunes, Amazon and Google Play. Follow the latest news and showings on the [3100 Film Facebook page](#).







Photo by Ross Langton

# LEEDS & LIVERPOOL CANAL 130 MILE RACE

130 MILES NON-STOP | 40 HOURS | LIVERPOOL TO LEEDS

24th August 2019

From the start at Old Hall Street Liverpool to the finish at Office Lock Leeds, the 130 mile towpath course follows the original Leeds & Liverpool Canal - Britain's longest man-made waterway. LLCR is the last of a three race series "The Canalslam" totalling over 400 miles.

Course Records: Men 20:02 Pat Robbins (2014), Ladies 26:45 Wendy Shaw (2018)

[canalrace.org.uk](http://canalrace.org.uk)

or contact [dick.kearn@canalrace.org.uk](mailto:dick.kearn@canalrace.org.uk) for a race information pack



Carla Dadomo Photo  
courtesy 6 Dias Uruguay

over 25,000ft (7700m). Starting in Knighton the course loops through Machynlleth and finishes in Welshpool. Rebellion was won by Greg Crowley 38:08:04 who took over 3 hours off the course record that he set in the inaugural race in 2017. Amy Norfolk was first woman home in 59:37:08.19 finishers. The shorter 75 mile

The **Green Man Ultra** is a 30 or 45 mile loop around the city of Bristol, following the Community Forest Path and starting at Ashton Park School. There are two versions of the event one in Winter and a clockwise Summer version. This year's Autumn event was rescheduled from March and took place September 29<sup>th</sup>. There were 142 finishers this year led by Barry Bryant in 6:12:23. The women were led home by Emily Cox in 7:41:11. The 30 miler was won by Simon Cardnell in 4:05:12 and first woman was Fanny Thieffry in 5:07:16. 50 finishers. [Full results.](#)

The 2nd **Ochill Ultra** took place September 29<sup>th</sup> 2018. A 50/30 trail mile race along the Ochils from Stirling/Glen Devon to Perth using the Core Path Network. The 50 miler was won by Thomas Doney 8:03:39 and first woman was Angela Reid in 9:36:40. 60 finishers. [Full results.](#)

In the UK on September 29<sup>th</sup> the 100 mile **Two Moors Ultra** took place. The race started at Lynmouth and finished at Ivybridge with 6 participants, three of whom finished together in 27:06:50, Martin Threakall, Alistair Bisatt and Colin Weller. [Full results.](#)

The **Chorley 6 Hour race**, organised by Stan Jewell took place on October 6<sup>th</sup> at Astley Park. Mark Bissell asserted a relentless pace from the start which was to prove successful to record another 70 mile plus performance with 71.232 miles to gain the HOPE shield. Caroline Mclaughlan was first woman, again, 7<sup>th</sup> overall with 57.296 miles. [Full Results.](#)

The 6<sup>th</sup> edition of the **24 heures d'Albi** which was also the French National Championships, took place October 20<sup>th</sup> 2018 and was won by Erik Clavery (FRA) with 254.264 km. Stephanie Gicquel (FRA) was first woman with 215.384 km. 122 starters. The 2019 IAU 24H World Championships was granted to Albi, and will take place on 26<sup>th</sup> – 27<sup>th</sup> October. [Full results.](#)

The **24 heures de Lagarde-Firminon** took place October 27<sup>th</sup> with a modest field. The event was won by Nadine Weiss Castelain (FRA) with 163.100 km and first man was Robert Miorin (FRA) with 161.9 km. [Results.](#)

The **Rebellion 135 Mile Ultra Marathon** started on 2<sup>nd</sup> of November 2018 and follows the full length of Glyndwr's Way National Trail with a total ascent of just

Thwarted Rebellion was won by Graham Cauley in 21:13:32 and Olivia Hetreed was first woman in 22:14:39. 14 finishers. [Rebellion full results.](#)

One of the most popular ultras in Scotland saw 369 finishers at the 8<sup>th</sup> **Glen Ogle 33 mile** race which got underway Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> November. This trail race starts in Killin, Perthshire and sees runners crossing the Glen Ogle viaduct before running down towards Lochearnhead. Shaun Cumming was first to cross the line in 3:58:55 and Alison Rowatt was first woman in 4:11:27, 5<sup>th</sup> overall. [Full results.](#)

The **Bislett 24 hour Indoor Challenge** in Oslo, Norway took place 24<sup>th</sup> November. This competitive and well organised event is one of the few indoor ultras taking place today and drew a fairly deep Northern European field among the 132 starters. The course is a 546m Tartan track that lies underneath the stadium. Dan Väilitalo (SWE) won with 250.743 km and first woman, third overall was Simone Durry (GER) with 228.079 km. [Full results.](#)

# BOB'S BIG TIMBER BACKYARD ULTRA

A BIG'S BACKYARD ULTRA GOLDEN TICKET EVENT

MAY 4-6, 2019  
HUNTER'S TREE FARM - GLENMONT, OH

Many events get under the radar including this one which made it to December before I discovered it existed. The **1000 km of Brazil** which took place starting September 21<sup>st</sup> saw 5 native finishers with the winner being Cleberton Souza de Oliveira who completed the distance in 169:40:00, minutes ahead of second placed Sergio Cordeiro who clocked 169:55:00. The only woman finisher was Deborah Aparecida de Simas who completed in 178:20:00. This is a photo of the [full results](#).

### Beebe Farm Ultras

A new event in East Dorset, VT saw 48/24/12/6 hour races taking place starting the 28<sup>th</sup> of September. The course is a loop 1.4027 km (0.87 miles). The 48 hour was won by Pablo Espinosa warming up for Florida with 262.306 km. Second was Canadian legend Trishul Cherns with 140.32 km and third was women's winner, Karen Giroux with 210.405km. Don Winkley having now turned 80 ran 86.28 miles good enough for 8<sup>th</sup> place. 11 runners. There were two 24 hour events and the runners with the most miles were Eric Despres with 176.738km and first woman was Claire Robinson-White with 130.437km. [Full results](#).

The **Adelaide 6 Day Race** 2018 started on September 30<sup>th</sup> and drew to a close at Thorndon Park with Darren Linney winning with just over 800 km in his first 6 day race. Second place overall and a women's best for the year so far was Annabel Hepworth with 742 km. In second place for the men, seasoned campaigner David Billett set a pb with 677 km and in third place, George Alexandropoulos also in his first 6 day finished with 587 km.

John Timms set a new 75-79 male age group 500km National Record in 5:22:40:41 and Colin Brooks set a new National Age group record (provisional), for 65-69 age group males, 200km in 30:05:10, pending ratification. Second place woman was Sarah Barnett taking part in her third 6 day race in 2018 and producing her best performance this year with 488 km. Also making her debut at this distance was Canadian Karen Bentley finishing in third place with 413 km. Melanie McClave won the 72 hour outright with 210 km and in the 48 hour Stephen Wright held off women's challenger Gail Rynn to win 255 km to 248 km. The event returns Sep 29-Oct 5 2019. [Full results](#).

In France, the **Les 48 heures de**

**Royan** took place on October 5<sup>th</sup> with 31 starters. The 48 hour was won by Jimmy Boubakeur (FRA) with 307.348 km and first lady was Yolande Roches (FRA) second overall with 304.5 km. The 24 hour was won by Philippe Duboille (FRA) with 174.805 km and first woman was Pascale Guesdon (FRA) with 158.098 km. [Full results](#).

The **Via Iberica** is a 7-day staged race spread over 450 km and started October 19<sup>th</sup>. The start is in Urdos which is located in the foothills of the French Pyrenees and after 15 km, (Col du Somport), the route goes through Spain to cross Aragon and finish at Riumar in Catalonia. The second running of the event drew 27 starters with 16 finishers led by Rémi Duboq (FRA) in 39:51:34 and Carmen Hildebrand (GER) was first woman finishing third overall in 48:39:53. The 3<sup>rd</sup> event is planned for the end of October 2019 and on April 19<sup>th</sup> 2020, the organisers are planning an 1060 km 18 stage TransEspaña event from Urdos to Andalusian Malaga. [Full results](#).

### Festival Ultra '6 Días Uruguay'

A new event in South America, the 6 Day Ultra Festival Uruguay 2018

# Recent Multidays

took place at the Mercedes-Soriano Autodrome starting 21<sup>st</sup> October at 16:00. This was the first 6 day race to take place in Uruguay and the festival featured 48,24,12 and 6 hour options with shorter events too.

The course was a 1.1 km loop on the race track. Organised by Washington Sauda Delgado, the event drew 11 men and 3 women to the start line. The race was won by Carla Dadomo (URU) with 690.485 km setting a national record. Carla also holds the Uruguay 24 and 48 hour women's records. First man was Santiago Escobar (ARG) second overall with 617.727 km. Fourth place Choviatt Sheiler (URU) set a new men's 6 day record 557.093 km. [Full Results](#).

The **Druid Challenge Ridgeway Multistage Ultra** is an 84 mile race spread over three stages. Starting at Ivinghoe on 9<sup>th</sup> November the first stage finishes at Watlington, the second stage finishes in Didcot and the final stage of the run along the Ridgeway finishes near Wroughton, south of Swindon. Winning each days stage, Robert Barnes won by an hour in 10:20:42. The women's race was a lot closer with Elizabeth Steward finishing in 14:32:22 just five minutes ahead of Emma Bird. [Full results](#).

## The 6<sup>th</sup> Icarus Florida 6 Day UltraFest

This year's Icarus Florida 6 day

UltraFest got underway November 12<sup>th</sup> at Fort Lauderdale, FL. The course is a 1.0408 Km loop, completely paved, flat and shaded. This year there were 12 starters, 9 men and 3 women. Jeffrey Dimaggio (USA) who won the 3 Days At The Fair 6 Day Race in 2017 set a pb with 676.519 km to win the race. Second place and women's winner was Mara Alexandra Guler-Cionca (ROU) with 653.393 km, who placed 15<sup>th</sup> at the IAU 24 hour European Championships 2018 in Timisoara. Pablo Espinosa (CAN) won the 72 hour with 305.33 km. Stine Rex (DNK) set a new Danish 48 hour record winning the race outright with 335.74 km. Maria Paredes (VEN) won the 24 hour race outright with 163.82 km and Katalin Nagy (USA) won the 12 hour outright with 137.01 km. Lorna (Richey) Michael who just a few days ago was inducted into the American Ultrarunning Hall of Fame was the women's winner of the 72 hour race, third overall with 177.99 km. [Full results](#).

The **4<sup>th</sup> Authentic Phidippides Run** Athens-Sparta-Athens a 490 km road race in Greece is organised by the Athenian Runners Club. This year the race began on November 16<sup>th</sup> and 22 brave souls began the run to Sparta. Only 5 made it back. Lukasz Sagan (POL) won in 75:36:57. [Full results](#).

## No Finish Line

No Finish Line® is a fundraising

event that began in 1999 in Monaco. Featuring an 8 day race for about 40 runners, the event is open to everyone to come and run or walk kilometres on a flat loop at Chapiteau de Fontvieille which, thanks to registrations, donors and sponsors, for every kilometer traveled Children & Future donates € 1 to support projects for disadvantaged or sick children. This year more than 15,000 participants raised €432,662. In addition to the 8 day race, the only such event in the world at this time, there is a 24 hour race as well. The 8 day race which gives official 6 day splits as well, was won by Didier Sessegolo (FRA) with 900,625 km. First woman, 4<sup>th</sup> overall was Mimi Chevillon (FRA) with 842,875 km. [Full results](#).

## Moab 240 Endurance Run

Completing the Triple Crown of 200's - Bigfoot 200, Tahoe 200 and lastly Moab 240 which took place October 12<sup>th</sup>. This trail event takes place in Utah starting at Marble Mountain Sno-Park and finishing at Randle, WA. With a time limit of 112 hours this year's race saw 111 finishers first amongst whom was Piotr Hercog (POL) finishing in 60:14:47 ahead of Jovica Spajic (SRB) and Wes Ritner (USA) finishing together in 62:40:49. Jessica Pekari (USA) was first woman in 77:26:01 9<sup>th</sup> overall and outright winner of the Triple Crown. [Full Results](#).

**Big's Backyard Ultra** continues to fascinate and is now in its 7<sup>th</sup> year. Johan Steene was the Last Man Standing with 68 laps and 283.335 miles. Courtney Dewaulter was second with 67 laps and 279.168 miles. Laz posted on the Ultralist "This year there were about 500 people wanting to run. The entry list is an unbelievable collection of talent even the wait list is studded with amazing athletes... other backyard ultras have sprung up all over the world, so this year (2019) we have a collection of affiliated backyard races with golden tickets to the Big's for the winners, 10 around the world and 7 more in North America." [Full Results](#).

Multiday Non-Stop 6 Day Road Races 2019			
Dates	Country	Event Name	Distances
28/12/2018	USA	Across The Years	6d/72/48/24 hours
18/01/2019	GRE	Athens International Ultramarathon Festival	1000 m/km/6d/72/48/24 h
22/4/2019	USA	Sri Chinmoy Self-Transcendence 10/6 Day Race	10/6 day
9/5/2019	HUN	EMU 6 Day World Trophy	6 day
13/5/2019	USA	3 Days at the Fair	6d/72/48/24/12/6 hours
16/6/2019	USA	Self-Transcendence 3100 Mile Race	3,100 miles
18/8/2019	FRA	6 Jours de France	6 day
23/8/2019	USA	Six Days in the Dome - The Redux	6d/48/24 hour
16/9/2019	ITA	Italian Ultramarathon Festival	6d/48/24/6 hours 100 miles
29/9/2019	AUS	Adelaide 6 day	6d/72/48 hours
16/11/2019	MON	No Finish Line	8 days

# Atacama Crossing 2018

running the planet®  
WHORETHARACE



## Competitors from nine countries represented in top 10 at 2018 atacama crossing

The 14<sup>th</sup> edition of the grueling 250km / 155 mile Atacama Crossing ultramarathon finished in main square of San Pedro de Atacama.

Wong Ho Chung, a fireman from Hong Kong, was the overall winner in an impressive time of 24 hours and 20 minutes. In the Top 10 there were nine different countries represented including **France, Japan, Switzerland, Holland, Canada, New Zealand, Poland** and **Romania**, as well as **Hong Kong**.

Among the Top 5 women a further five countries were represented: **South Africa, United Kingdom, China, Hungary** and **Australia**. The 1st place team was from **Korea**.

Among the twelve British competitors were Fiona Oakes, a vegan athlete who is also known from her recent documentary film Running for Good. Fiona won her age category in the race. Leon Clarence, a film producer and actor best known for Sense8 (2015), Blake's 7 and Kodachrome (2017) completed his third 4 Deserts Ultramarathon this year – Leon is after a bigger goal to complete the 4 Deserts Grand Slam, all 4 Deserts races within one calendar year. Victoria Connelly from the UK earned the second place (and came 18<sup>th</sup> overall).

Asia, North America, Europe, Africa and Australasia were all represented in the top places among a truly international field that included thirty-six countries in total! The most represented countries in the race were the United Kingdom, the United States and Switzerland.

88% of those that started the race completed it despite intense heat, freezing nights and harsh terrain including water up to their thighs, salt flats that are like walking on coral, climbing soft sand dunes and long flat sections going on beyond the horizon in the driest desert in the world. However racers were rewarded with stunning desert landscapes, running through narrow canyons and spectacular starry skies.

The last person to cross the finish line was Korea's Lim Chunghyun who took 71 hours and 21 minutes to complete the race.

For more information: [results](#), [photos](#), [videos](#), [blogs](#), [stage updates](#)

## TOP 5 MEN

RANK	BIB	NAME	COUNTRY	AGE	TIME
1	107	WONG, Ho Chung	Hong Kong	31	24:20:56
2	100	WAKAOKA, Takuya	Japan	34	29:12:46
3	86	SANTINI, Christophe	France	47	30:51:53
4	7	BECKER, Maik	Switzerland	48	32:51:19
5	83	ROADLEY, Greg	New Zealand	44	33:42:19

## TOP 5 WOMEN

RANK	BIB	NAME	COUNTRY	AGE	TIME
1	82	REYNOLDS, Lara	South Africa	48	39:29:07
2	26	CONNELLY, Victoria	United Kingdom	37	40:07:29
3	61	LE, Ping (Denise)	China	39	41:33:32
4	68	LUBICS, Szilvia	Hungary	44	41:49:13
5	9	BELL, Jacqui	Australia	23	41:54:50

# The Kristina Paltén Interview



by Sarah Cameron



I was delighted to be given the opportunity to interview Kristina Paltén, a female athlete of a similar age to me, 47, who has achieved so much. Whilst I have been waiting to become a grown-up and patting myself on the back for being brave enough to occasionally run through the woods at night alone, Swedish-born Kristina has been setting world records for long distance running in timed events and completing epic personal challenges, not least running across Iran as a solo western female. A diminutive character, exuding warmth and confidence, for our interview Kristina is somewhat appropriately seated beneath a Gustav Klimt print portraying a strong image of the female form.

I imagined Kristina to be absolutely fearless. I was wrong; she has as many fears as anyone else, but unlike most of us she is courageous enough to confront them.

Part of this courage comes in actually conceiving and embarking upon these challenges, therefore potentially setting herself up to fail. Attempting a world record is saying 'I think I could be the best person on the planet at this'.

Falling short is a public, as well as a private failure.

This fear of failing almost prevented Kristina from going for a world record attempt for distance covered running on a treadmill for 48 hours in 2014. She knew she could beat the existing women's record of 309.8kms but she couldn't just jump on a treadmill in private, see what happened and show the world the data afterwards. Rightly so there are a lot of formalities that have to be in place for an official Guinness world record attempt, so she had to enlist independent witnesses, 11 in total, to cover the entire time period, and she had to ensure that the entire run was filmed. One of the logistical issues was ensuring the recording equipment had enough memory space to capture the full 48 hours. Kristina was officially allowed to press the buttons on the treadmill but strictly forbidden to touch the handrails in case she used them to lean on.

Kristina already had form; two years prior to this attempt she had set the female world record for 12 hours on a treadmill, beating the previous distance of 93.43kms by a considerable margin,

logging 107.49kms. 48 hours, however, was 60% longer than she had ever run for before and she knew she was going to have to dig deep.

**'I was afraid that it would hurt and I would get tired. I remember the moment I realised "It will hurt" and accepted it. It was the solution to deal with the pain. Managing fatigue includes coffee, music, friends and endorphins.'**

It did hurt, in some ways that were unexpected. Kristina suffered from huge blood blisters to the bottom of her feet, from the heat of the moving belt. 'It was the worst thing I have ever put my body through because it was so monotonous. It hurts in the same places, all the time. There's no variation, just the speed.' She also lost her voice because of the fan that was positioned in front of her that was constantly blowing out dry air at 16 degrees. 'It was so funny because Swedish radio were doing interviews with me and each time my voice got raspier. It sounded like I'd been drinking lots of whisky!'

# Interview



Kristina had a table glued to the treadmill so that she could plan her efforts. Her schedule was to run 8 kilometres per hour for the first 15 hours, meaning that if she ran at 10kph then she could take a rest of 8 minutes every hour. If she ran faster she would get more rest, slower she would get less. 'I did 8 kms an hour for the first 15, then 7 for the next 12, then 6 for the next 21 hours. During two of those 21 hours I had scheduled 30 minutes possible sleep but I didn't use the first one. I did use the second one, mainly because I was bored and I wanted to do something else, but I couldn't sleep. My goal was to run 322 kms and I ran 322.93 so my plan went really well! I like that accuracy.' In doing so, Kristina also beat the Nordic men's record of 318.54 kms.

For nutrition, Kristina's preference was to use a sports drink but one with a higher protein content than regular formulas. 'It was more like drinking food; I have a problem eating solid food when I have been running for a long time.'

There were various ways that Kristina kept herself entertained during the

record attempt. 'The gym put on special 5-hour spinning classes right in front of me to cheer me up. People were singing, dancing and screaming. It was crazy.' People could sign up to run on treadmills alongside Kristina's and surprisingly the hours that filled up first were during the nights. Kristina wondered what could motivate a person to run during the night and go to work the next day having only slept on the floor of the gym for 3 hours. 'People wanted to be a part of it; they were there because they wanted to experience it, to enjoy it. It was just wonderful. There were 68 people who



ran with me during the 48 hours. Sometimes we had music, sometimes there were classes, sometimes it was quiet and I also watched four different Harry Potter movies.'

It was a lot of fun but it was painful. After a few hours I got too tired to change the speed too so I stopped doing that. I wish had thought to get someone to change the speed for me just to vary the rhythm.'

**10,000 followed the event online and realising how many people she could reach through running was partially the inspiration for her run across Iran the following year.**

The seeds had already been sown during a personal adventure Kristina







conceived in 2013, when she and her friend Carina ran from Istanbul to Tallinn, covering a marathon distance every day for 75 consecutive days. They had overcome their prejudices about what it might be like running through countries like Romania and Poland and they had had to be resourceful when met with unexpected difficulties. Carina hadn't been able to train properly for the challenge and sustained an injury, but instead of her having to drop out, they bought a bicycle so Carina could manage her issue by initially cycling alongside Kristina and then gradually building her running back up again.

'We had a baby jogger for our tent and clothes. When Carina was running she was pushing the baby jogger and I was running with the bike, hands on the handlebars, because if I could run I wanted to run, not cycle. I've never had so many bruises on my shins! I calculated I ran 700kms with the bike.'

Kristina now knew she had the resilience and endurance to take on an even bigger challenge and after her treadmill experience she also knew that she could reach a huge audience. The motivation for planning her run across Iran was that 'Xenophobia and racism is growing in Sweden and I don't want that. I want trust between people. Xenophobia is the opposite of trust. If I hadn't been doing ultras I would never have thought that as one single little person I could affect Swedish society. This is not a Sweden versus Muslim issue, it is the Western world versus the

Muslim world and I want to affect the whole Western world and its prejudice. It was a huge target and I would never have attempted to do it if I hadn't had the mental training I get from ultra running.'

To help raise awareness, Kristina had a film crew with her for parts of her journey. In the first shot of the movie 'Alone in Iran; 1144 Miles of Trust' she was clearly very scared, but even after one day her fears were diminishing.

'I felt better the first day because I arrived at a campsite and I was sitting outside my tent when the guy who was running the campsite came over and gave me his food. Then in the evening I went to a restaurant because I wanted to upload some photos and the owners refused to receive payment because I was a guest in their country. I also went to a shop and the guy refused money for the things I had selected. I had met people in Tehran who came to my tent that evening just to check on me. There were so many signs of friendliness that after day two I was not scared. Everything was just settling.'

Kristina only spent the equivalent of €1,200 during the whole two months because so many people invited her to stay in their homes and gave her food, citing 'A guest is a friend of God.'

When Kristina had been running for a month she started realising that most policemen she met were just curious and they gave her water and apples, but there was one incident with a policeman who complained about her cap. Kristina had thoroughly researched the dress code before she

left but found that it was open to interpretation. 'As far as I understood it, I needed to cover my hair, but there are no absolute rules which made it difficult for me because I didn't want the police to stop me and tell me I was dressed incorrectly just because they didn't approve of what I was doing.' Kristina did consider actually shaving off her hair to eliminate the problem of having to cover it, but as it was so hot she was obliged to wear a cap for sun protection anyway.

Kristina once again commissioned the baby jogger to carry her kit, which she kept to a minimum. 'I only had two pairs of shoes with me and I only used those two pairs of shoes. I usually run in shoes that are 2 sizes too big for me to avoid getting blue toenails and blisters. I took a pair of women's shoes and a pair of men's shoes with me because the men's shoes are wider and my feet swell in the heat.'

She admitted that one of the mistakes she made was not doing any specific heat training before leaving for Iran. 'I checked the temperatures for September and they were generally 35 degrees, which I felt was hot but manageable. I didn't realise that the measurements were taken in the shade and it was 50 degrees in full sun, so it was much warmer than I expected'. During the Istanbul to Tallinn run, it had also been extremely hot and both



# Interview

times Kristina felt that it took around two weeks for her body to adapt.

Since the epic Iran adventure Kristina has experimented with another genre of ultra running: 6 day events.

In 2017 Kristina set a new Swedish record of 667kms at the EMU 6 Day World Trophy event in Hungary. She bettered it this year, in exactly the same race, by an impressive 54 kilometres to win the ladies' race and place 7th overall. It is the best global performance over 6 days of the year to date. Kristina puts finding those extra 54kms down to having a poor race the first time, where she believes she made a lot of mistakes and feels dissatisfied with how she coped with it mentally. She changed both her nutrition and rest strategies for the second race.

'In the first race, I had almost planned too well. I felt like a prisoner in my own plan which was not good. The second race was in May, and it was only 16 degrees in Sweden but 30 degrees in Hungary. My body hadn't adjusted to running in the heat so I was more flexible with my schedule and I decided to switch it round so that I ran during the night time and rested during the day when it was cooler. My breaks were when it was most hot, so at midday I came off the course and avoided the heat until 5 or 6 pm. It wasn't because I needed to rest but because purely to avoid the heat. I don't get sleepy so usually I don't have a problem running during the night.

'I can't just sleep either. I need to wind down for half an hour beforehand; I can't fall asleep instantly.'

'During the 1st 6 day I had gels, chocolate, fruit and nuts. In the second race I didn't have gels because I don't really like them. When I ate a lot of of them my mouth felt really strange, like there had been acid on my tongue, so in the second race I only ate regular food. Chocolate, nuts and cola, anything I could get down. If I have a problem just give me food and I will be ok!'

In an article in Middle East Eye, Kristina described ultra running as "a process of constant self-discovery and self-development". When asked exactly what she has discovered about herself,



she immediately answered with the word 'limitless'.

'Before I started ultra running I didn't know what incredible capabilities we have as humans, both mental and physical. In ultra running I choose my thoughts and I choose the ones that are carrying me forward. I dismiss the ones that are not carrying me forward and this affects the rest of my life too. There are a vast amount of possibilities that I can do.'

Over 20 million people have watched the documentary 'Alone in Iran; 1144 Miles of Trust' and 12 million viewed a film that the Guardian produced, totalling over 32 million people reached. Kristina has also presented two TEDx talks and written a book.

'I wrote a book about the Iran run that is currently being translated into 6 different languages. I am making a living out of this now. I would never imagine I would start a company and stand up in front of people public speaking, sometimes with an audience of 1,500. I was a very shy little girl and I would never have done this if it wasn't for ultrarunning. It has been empowering, discovering opportunities. **Limitless** is once again the word that comes to my mind.'

Kristina is currently looking for an English publishing house for her book, which is proving to be another challenge. The fact that 10 million people watched the Guardian video during the two weeks following its

release proves that there is an English audience for the story. Please contact Kristina directly if you would be interested in helping her spread her message.

The 60 minute documentary will be available for download from October at [alonethroughiran.com](http://alonethroughiran.com)

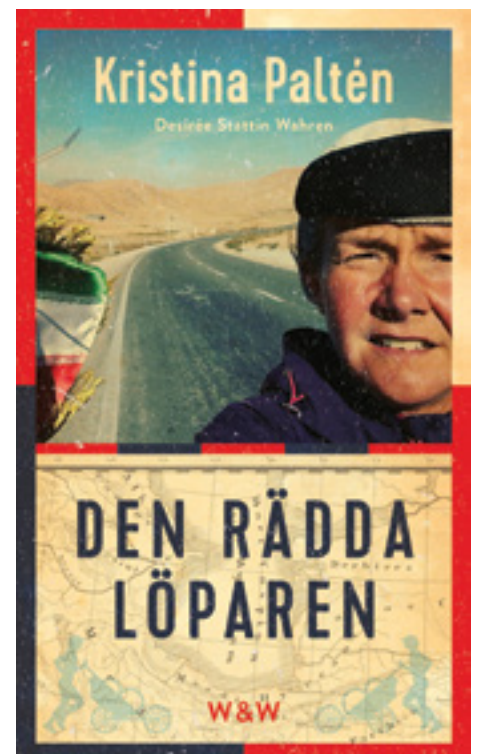


Photo 1 [bjornsthlm.se](http://bjornsthlm.se)

Photo 2 by Soroush Morshedian

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# Coast to Coast (C2C) Ultra by Cockbain Events Ltd

7am start, 25<sup>th</sup> August 2018, 140 miles in 38 hours

Sharon Gayter

My plans for 2018 had changed frequently. A 3cm tear in my hamstring tendon (top) in February (slipping on ice during the Livingston Half Marathon in bad conditions) along with an enthesitis had put me out for three months and I had struggled to run pain free upon my return. The shorter runs seemed to hurt more than the longer ones and a 50 mile run along the Calderdale Way Ultra in June and another 50 miles in "Afoot in 2 Dales" in July had given me hope that the longer events did not worsen the problem, and so, with just under four weeks to go until the event I entered the C2C ultra. That weekend with three weeks to go I took part in the Whitehaven parkrun and then cycled to Tynemouth with husband Bill supporting in the van.



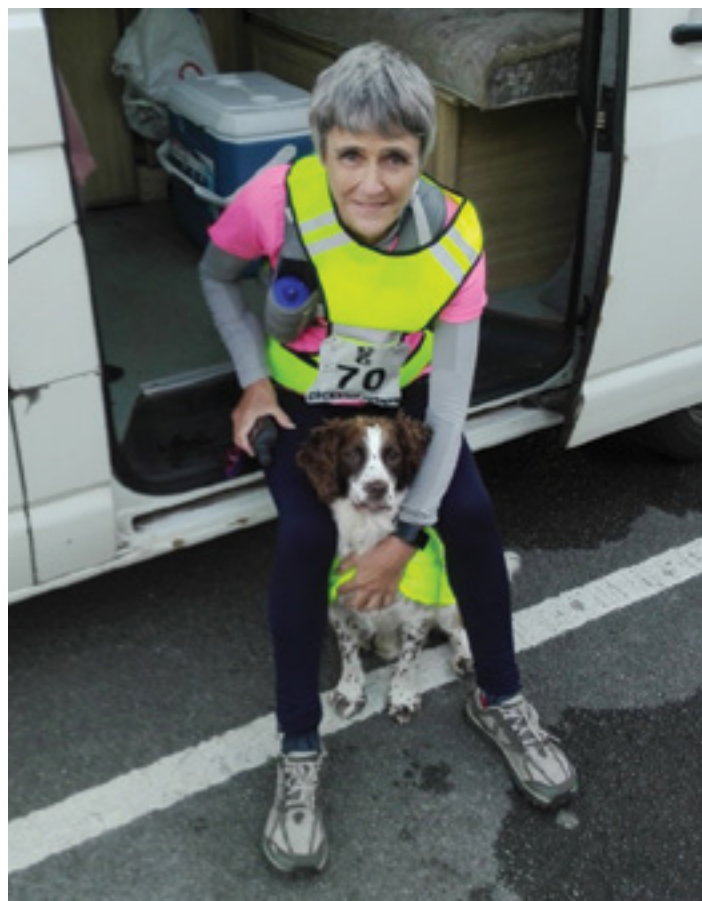
Having seen the course first hand and understanding the underfoot conditions and undulating nature of the event I then tried to estimate my time and wrote a schedule to finish in 36 hours, giving me a 2 hour window for any problems I encountered.

Cockbain Events Ltd organise "no frills" events that are "extremely hard to achieve". A start, some timing points and a finish with a t-shirt and medal if you finish before 38 hours and not one second longer. It was a tough cut-off time and the pre-requisite was at least a 100 mile event completed. The finish rate prior to this year was 43% and

no female had ever finished. It was compulsory to have a support crew. Mark Cockbain provided a race number, a written route description, a map in booklet form and a book full of photographs of potential parking places and timing points that proved useful. Race rules were clear and the vehicle must have hi-viz "caution runner" signs, runner and crew must wear hi-viz at all times and front and back lights during the night.

We travelled over to Whitehaven the night before, Bill and dog Baxter were my support crew and we parked up in front of the harbour just before 10pm and slept in the van. The alarm clock was set at 5:30am for breakfast and I registered just after 6am to collect my GPS tracker.

It was a cool morning and I wore tights with a long sleeved top and pink t-shirt on top of this. I wore Altra Lone Peak 4 shoes (trail shoes) and Hilly merino wool socks. I carried a bottle in my Raidlight pack along with half a jam and peanut butter bagel, a few liquorice allsorts, a packet of tissues, survival bag and asthma pump. On top



of this was the compulsory hi-viz vest. I carried the route description and map in my pack but used a handheld GPS for navigation. When I had cycled this route three weeks earlier I had recorded the route taken, saved it and now navigated along it again. I found it easier to see the map on the GPS and follow the pink line, rather than trying to read maps and felt confident that this would keep me on route. In reality the route was well signed most of the way.

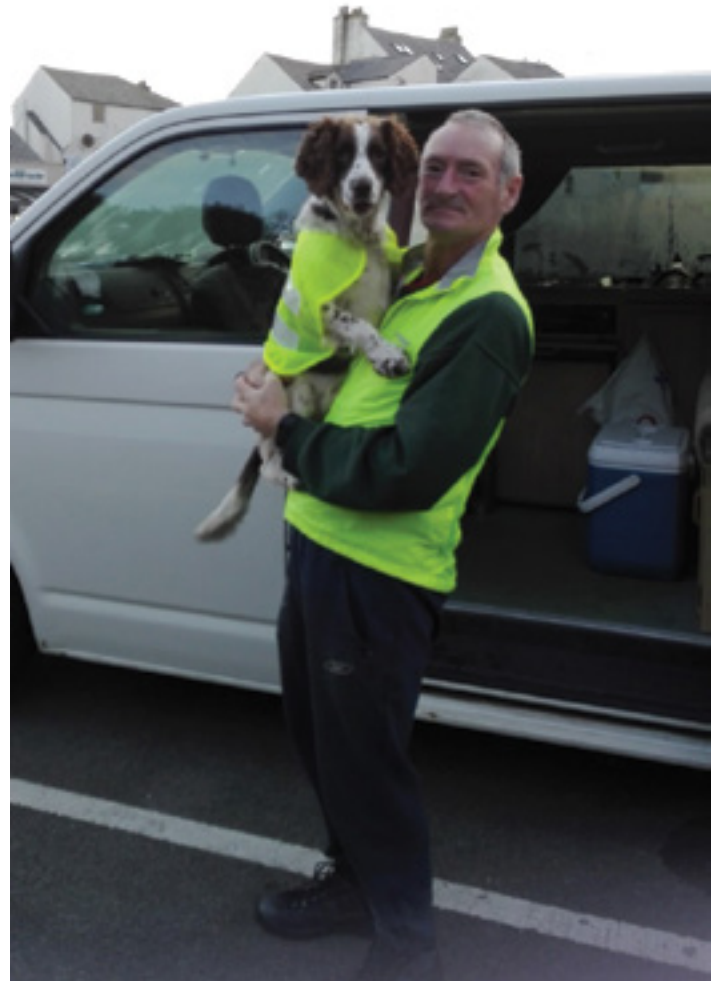
## Prior to the start.

There were 22 people entered and I believe 20 started, four females were entered of which only three started. Mark reiterated some of the instructions at the start, spoke about a section in Whinlatter forest where there was a diversion and an extra mile dog-leg to do to make up the distance. If you didn't finish in less than 38 hours there was no t-shirt or medal. After a few photographs we were off.

## Start

I tried to settle in slowly and soon we were spread out in our own space. I found myself running alongside Andy for most of the first 10 miles, we parted company near Lamplugh School. After leaving Whitehaven, you run through an estate and then hit the main cycle path around 2 miles from the coast where the parkrun starts. The route then follows a tarmac cycle path that gently climbs for most of the 10 miles, the 10<sup>th</sup> mile turning to a more gravel and dirt track before hitting the road. It was very easy navigation and incredibly well signed. Bill was waiting to swap bottles with me at Lamplugh and I didn't stop. Andy was changing shoes as he had forgotten to put his race shoes on and was wearing a worn out old pair.

The minor road then undulates and steeply descends to Loweswater around 16 miles. Bill was waiting at Loweswater and what seemed like a runners layby, the crew had taken over the parking spot and after swapping bottles again I could see another runner in the distance. This was Matt, who had been rather lively at the start and had set off at speed. Matt was travelling at a more sedate pace now and



we exchanged pleasantries for a while. The route was still on minor roads that continued to undulate to Low Lorton around 21 miles in. Another swap of bottles and finally I ate my half a bagel. Matt had a crew that was also supporting a couple of other runners that were behind us. I had checked to make sure he didn't need anything more and he said he would like some coke if we had any. He was obviously carrying a few more bits in his backpack than me and Bill kindly gave Matt a can of coke as we were well stocked up.

There was quite a climb now to Whinlatter forest. We seemed to swap and exchange places a bit, I kept pace and run slowly up most of the hills while Matt walked but had a faster pace when running, he likened me to the pace of someone called Murdo McEwan. Matt asked if I knew him: well yes, he did crew for me on my LEJOG world record. At the forest the cycle route followed an off-road track parallel in the forest that I had cycled, but the instructions had been to stick to the road. There was a crew person watching and I asked which way the runners had gone, he said "both ways!" I chose the road and Matt chose the trail.

Bill was again waiting with food and bottles at the timing station at Whinlatter Forest, but there seemed confusion as Mark was not here and no signs of any timing station. I did remember that the diversion was to go down the road and we would be signed off to take an extra mile dog-leg to make up the distance. The road was steep downhill and

# Race Reports

I passed a runner coming at me in the opposite direction. He was looking for the visitor's centre that I had just passed through but I told him there was no timing station or anyone there, he carried on and I carried on downhill. My GPS indicated another good track off and I wondered if this was what I should be taking but there were no signs. I carried on further and thought that I would soon be at the bottom of the road at Braithwaite and thought I must have missed the extra bit. I arrived at a viewpoint and decided to stop and ring Mark to check that all was in order. It was. Mark was about 2-300m further down the road and just as I continued the familiar sound of Matt arrived from behind. A big yellow sign with Mark taking times and I was almost on the 5 hour cut-off time here for the 25 miles. Mark had instructed the cut-off times were for guidance for finishing in 38 hours and he wasn't going to be strict on this and it was up to the individual to estimate finishing times.

The instructions were to follow the track to a fork, take the right hand fork and continue to the road in a dog-leg adding an extra mile. Reality for me was different. The track narrowed and was very uneven underfoot. Matt sped away in the distance while I watched my footing to keep my balance. After around 400m a path joined from behind. Was this the fork? I wasn't sure and Matt was out of sight. I took the track downhill for a bit looking for footprints in the dirt track. I could not see any and was unsure if this was the track to take. I heard a dog barking that sounded nearby and assumed Matt had run by a farm with a dog and so I re-traced my steps and looked at my GPS. There was an obvious path that hit cross-roads further up and I decided to proceed to this point. There was a sign there which said road closed and to follow a diversion. I assumed this was the end of the forestry diversion and turned right on a good track. This went by a few houses where a couple were pottering around near a car. I asked if a runner had been by, "not in the last 10 minutes", was the response. Well Matt was a mere minute or two ahead so I assumed he had taken a different route and I was still unsure which was the correct route, but my GPS indicated this track led down to a road that went back to Braithwaite and so took it.

From Braithwaite it was plain sailing again, following the quiet, minor roads with good signs leading to Portinscale, which was heaving with people that took over the footpaths and so I ran along the roads. I briefly saw Jon Steele arrive from a different direction along with another runner, they had been behind me. Bill later heard that others had ended up running along the A66 from the diversion. After this was Keswick, again very busy with people enjoying their weekend, it was after all around 1pm and I had covered about 31 miles by the time I reached the leisure centre. I had a brief stop to strip off my long shirt and tights as it was warm (and empty the stones from my shoes), and a really pleasant day.

Matt was nearby, he had stopped to buy an ice-cream

in Keswick and I must have left ahead of him. The route briefly took the gravel railway track where Keswick parkrun starts (yes, another one I have run) and then forks uphill back to the road which continues uphill to Castlerigg Stone Circle. A few more crew were waiting for runners here and Jon Steele was sat with Shirley tending his needs, it was a small tourist spot for some to walk to the Stone circle. I passed another runner who had stopped to buy an ice-cream from the van here and he was walking while he ate it. He said it was a shame that it was a downhill section now as he couldn't run while eating his ice-cream.

Shortly after a couple were walking down the road towards me. They were familiar and I could not believe it was my good friends Shirley and Will Gibson. For some reason I assumed they were on their caravan holiday, they had seen the tracker details and came to see me. No, it was a complete coincidence. They were out for a walk and were just as surprised to see me as I was them! They are from Darlington, but were on a caravanning holiday. A quick hug and a suggestion to look on facebook for the tracker for the race and I continued on my way.

The Old Coach Road soon became visible climbing in the distance and was the roughest section of the whole route. When cycling this my bike could not cope with the recently repaired old track which was covered in large chunky stones that made it far too bumpy to ride over and even walking it would throw you off balance. Bill was to meet me at the far end of the road as there was no access for the duration of this section. I knew the gradient and nature of the surface would mean a big section of walking and so settled down to tackle the scenic route. When nearing the end of this section, the track improves to finer gravel and I could see one man in orange way ahead and just before



arriving at the checkpoint. Andy who I had been with for the first 10 miles overtook me along with another guy.

## High Row, the end of the Old Coach Road around 40 miles.

The end of this section was High Row at around 40 miles and was a timing station. My goal had been 8 hours and I arrived at 3:10pm, a mere 10 minutes over my planned time. I had to empty stones from my shoes again while I had a quick exchange of bottles and another sandwich. The pit stop was probably on 2-3 minutes in time and after hitting the tarmac road again Jim joined me. He had been the person wearing the orange shirt I had seen in the distance. Jim said I had overtaken three people having a break at that point with my quick stops. This is normal for me, as a 24 hour runner you could not waste time and had to keep moving, and that principle is still with me in all long races I do.

I spent a wonderful few miles with Jim, first taking a farm track to Matterdale End and then back to minor roads again that undulated very gently. I loved Jim's ethos and the way he treated each race as an adventure, the journey taken and the people he meets along the way, how he relays the stories to his children. I gave him a few stories to pass on to his children and Jim gave me a story about onions and garlic that will live with me for ever. Jim had made a navigational error on the Old Coach Road and taken the track that ended up in a quarry resulting in a hard steep climb back to the course and was why he had suddenly appeared in the distance and I had gained ground on him. He laughed as he remembered Jon Steele had done this when he had run the event previously. I was happy that I had done a reccie to avoid any extra miles. I had another exchange of bottles with Bill before crossing the A66 and Jim and I parted company at Greystokes as he was due a more lengthy pitstop than me and was having some soup, we could not resist a brief hug to wish each other well as he somehow guessed I would stay ahead.

The route would now continue on roads until around the 100 mile mark. My legs were feeling tired and I did have a little fleeting thought at 40 miles that it was now the start of a 100 miles to go.

Next up was Penrith, 60 miles and around 6pm was my arrival time. The evening was setting in and the heat from the sun fading. At the lovely village green at Langwathby, Baxter had been playing rings on the fields and was full of life still wanting to play some more, but Bill was busy digging out a thick, bright, long sleeved top for the night. The next pit stop would be to put my leggings back on, switch on my rear red flashing light and collect the torch for the night and this happened a short distance before Renwick.



## Arriving at Penrith, approximately 60 miles.

A long, steep climb followed. It was now 7 miles to the burnt out remains of Hartside café. It was dark and although I knew a long climb was ahead it seemed to take forever. This marked the start of many long steep climbs and so I was surprised to hear Bill update me that on reaching the top of the climb I was now an hour ahead of my schedule. Pleasing to hear and that simply meant an hour nearer to the finish. I celebrated with half a cup of luke warm tea and a pot of custard. I had put my clothes on at exactly the right point and was comfortable continuing on my way. Hartside was another timing station and a word of warning to watch out for traffic from Mark as I was now on the A686.

The roads were quiet at this time on a Saturday night, now around 10:30pm as the route continued down to Leadgate, followed by another never ending climb up and over to Nentheads, and again to reach Allenheads. The only time I stopped here was when a vehicle dazzled their headlights at me and stopped right in front of me and stalled. It was Bill. He was beginning to panic that he had taken a wrong turn and this was not the route. I asked if I was slowing down, no, bang on time, but in the dark by van I can guess with a network of minor roads to turn and few runners around it could be difficult to navigate. Problem solved, he did a u-turn and parked back in the layby he had come from. I was now in 4<sup>th</sup> place overall.

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From Northumberland I now hit the cairn after Allenheads where Bill was waiting as I crossed into Durham. The night time seemed to fly by and I had not realised it was now 3am and I seemed to be making steady progress. I was not keeping track of distance run and my next goal was simply arriving at Parkhead where I knew there was just under 40 miles to go and the big gradients would ease.

From Allenheads the hills continued to Rookhope and yet another steep climb and downhill to Stanhope. Daylight had suddenly arrived and I left the torch with Bill as I started a steep climb to Parkhead that must have been 2 miles long after 100 miles of running. The red sky was fantastic that morning, but as with the warning I knew the weather that had been forecast and hoped the wind and rain would arrive later than expected.

Over 100 miles run in less than 24 hours and I was tired. The last climb had felt very laboured and I did take a glance back at this timing station. I could see three yellow dots in the distance climbing the hill that I had conquered and knew there were others following me. Imagine starting out on a 40 mile run when you have 100 hilly miles in your legs and already missed a night of sleep. It was simply mind over matter now. My feet felt fine and I could not feel any blisters, my ankles and shins were feeling rather bruised and stiff and of course my quads were grumbling a bit, but nothing major and the troublesome hamstring was non-existent. I asked Bill what the scheduled time should have been here, nearly two hours ahead of schedule was so pleasing to hear. This meant I could possibly finish at 5pm rather than 7pm and hoped I would not lose this time gained.

The next section was wonderful. I could see where I was going and the change in terrain and gentle downhill gravel track on an old railway line was what I needed to tick off a few more miles and give my legs some relief. The only issue I had was the need to keep emptying the gravel from my shoes and how I wish I had brought some gaiters with me.

The light drizzle began to fall on arrival at Rowley picnic site, and after this I ran through Consett. It was on the next section, mainly a mixture of tarmac paths, firm dirt tracks and gravel tracks, between Derwent Walk Inn and Rowlands Gill that my body decided it didn't want to run and really this was my first "bad spell". Well I had run 120 miles now, but that still meant another 20 to go. One foot in front of the other and eventually the goal would be achieved. There were many runners around on this section out for their Sunday run, it was nice to hear some support from those that realised how far we had run and had words of encouragement. The rain was squally showers now and I had put on my waterproof jacket. The route then followed the river along the Derwent Walk.

The route was still very well waymarked and I had a small network of bridges to cross on the approach to Newcastle

to follow the river Tyne. I later heard Jon Steele ended up running in the wrong direction along the Tyne and can easily see how this was possible with the water crossings, not a stage I would like to add extra miles. I managed to bring myself around from the doldrums with a mere half marathon to go. All I had to do was follow the river Tyne as the batteries in my GPS gave up at 1pm, 30 hrs of use wasn't bad. Bill was waiting at the penultimate meeting point and had batteries at the ready as I had expected them to run out a while back. Yet more cheering, this time from runners I knew as I continued on.

We were to meet one more time at the cycle hub and then I would bash out the last 10 miles and give Bill a chance to drive to the finish line at Tynemouth and get some sleep before the drive home. Compared to when I had cycled this three weeks previous the quayside was much quieter, probably due to the adverse weather as it was raining heavily now. Under the famous bridges and then a section where there was a market going on that was congested with people but quite honestly I was happy to have a reason for a slow walk through the crowds.

## **A sit down with 130 miles done, 10 miles to go. Baxter looking on behind my shoulder!**

Arriving at the cycle hub and I could finally begin to feel I was near the finish and have a quick chat with Bill and thank him for the brilliant job he had done. I sat down for a few minutes to have a cup of tea and cream cheese





bagel with grapes. It was soon time to go and my lower shins were feeling quite painful now, but the journey was nearly over. At the cycle hub I stocked up for the last 10 miles anticipating anywhere between 2.5 and 3.5 hours depending on how much I could actually run.

From St Peters the route continued on a cycle track that headed towards the harbour. After the bridge near the toll section for the Tyne Tunnel the signs were erratic and pointing in the wrong direction as I had found out on the recce and knew to follow the pavement alongside the main road to reach the Royal Quays and pick up a cycle path again. I was progressing slowly and still managing a shuffle rather than a walk and I finally emerged at the sea front to follow the harbour side. The effect of the rain was to keep the tourists away and it was a quiet run towards the castle with the wind blowing and rain in my face. Mark must have deliberately put the finish line at the top of one last short sharp climb. I saw it and had no intentions of running it. The finish line was achieved in under 38 hours and I had maintained the time made up with a finishing time of 33 hours 42 mins (4:42pm).

## Finish at Tynemouth.

As for Bill, he was nowhere to be seen. I guessed he was sleeping in the van somewhere, but Mark said he had been there a short while ago. Bill's story? On arrival he had no idea what direction I would come from. He had tried to



find the finish line by wandering off to the priory and castle to no avail. There was also a cycling event finishing here at the same time which was bad timing and after asking someone he was pointed out where the plaque was denoting the finish on the sea front. Having found the finish line flags he watched the third man finish. Bill anticipated it would be at least 45 mins before I arrived as this person had been nearly an hour in front of me when he had last seen him and so returned to the van rather than wait in the rain. I arrived in 4<sup>th</sup> place twenty minutes behind 3<sup>rd</sup> place, hence Bill arrived about 10 minutes after I finished. I had run that last section in 1 hour 52 minutes.

The prize for everyone who finished was the same, the coveted medal and t-shirt (of which not that many have ever been given out) and a bottle of Newcastle brown ale that was donated to Bill for his crewing services. The challenge of many an ultra is simply the goal of finishing. It is always immensely satisfying to have a battle against yourself and overcome all obstacles to achieve the goal of finishing. I had become the first female to finish the event and so set the course record for others to achieve. Of the 20 starters, 13 were to finish and no other females.

The great thing about this event was that it was only an hour's drive home and Bill had one last duty to perform. I was freezing by now. Stripped and changed out of wet clothes with the heater on full blast wearing a down jacket to stop shivering. Having posted on Facebook and Twitter about the event I thought I should use the drive home to post the result. I had a text from friends Izzy and Andy Russell. They had been tracking me and after having family around for a Sunday roast dinner had made extra and planned to watch me finish and bring me some dinner. That plan had backfired when they saw how far ahead of my schedule I was and so plan B was to collect the dinner on the way home as we drove by their house. There was heaps of food along with a piece of Izzy's birthday cake and a bottle of champagne to celebrate. That's what you call support as there was no way I was cooking Bill any dinner. I was home, fed and showered and in bed by 8pm! Another adventure achieved.



# Race Reports

My shins were bruised, my ankles swollen, my quads tender, but not a blister to be found. These recovered quickly enough to allow me to run the Carlisle parkrun the following Saturday. Bill and Baxter finished nearly a minute behind me, apparently not recovered from 140 miles of crewing!!

2018

TREMAYNE DILL COWDRY 28:46 CR  
 JON DAVIES 31:30  
 BARRY MILLER 33:22

SHARON GAYTER 33:42 (FIRST EVER WOMAN)  
 ANDREW NESBIT 34:25  
 JAMES MCNAMEE 34:55  
 MARK ODE CORNES 34:55  
 RICCARDO GIUSSANI 35:45  
 MATT LEMMON 35:45 AND 10 SECS  
 PETER WRIGHT 37:20  
 CHRIS ETTE 37:22  
 STEVE HAYES 37:22  
 JON STEELE 37:38

## Sharon Gayter's schedule (mileage only approximate).

CP	Place	Time to CP(mins)	Miles to CP	Clock time	Total Miles	Actual time
1	Lamplugh School, CA26 3XU Between Rowrah and Kirkland	120	10	09:00	10	08:47
2	Loweswater	60	6	10:00	16	09:50
3	Low Lorton (near telephone before corner).	60	5	11:00	21	10:50
4	Whinlatter visitor centre. <b>TIMING STATION</b>	45	4	11:45	25	11:40
5	Keswick leisure centre	75	6	13:00	31	13:05
5a	Old Coach Road B5322?	45	3	13:45	34	Chose to miss
6	High Row – nearer to 40 miles, but kept mileage as of map. <b>TIMING STATION</b>	105	7	15:30	40	15:10
7	Thackthwaite or nearby? A66	60	5	16:30	45	16:10
8	Great Blencow	75	6	17:45	51	17:10
9	Penrith, carpet shop.	60	5	18:45	56	18:05
10	Langwathby, village green.	75	5	20:00	61	19:20
11	Renwick - ish	75	5	21:15	66	20:25
12	Hartside UPHILL!! <b>TIMING STATION</b>	120	7	23:15	73	22:25
13	Leadgate	60	3.5	00:15	76.5	23:10
14	Nenthead	120	6.5	02:15	83	01:00
15	Before Allenheads	75	4	03:30	87	02:05
16	County Durham border cairn.	75	3.5	04:45	90.5	03:05
17	Before Rookhope	75	4	06:00	94.5	04:05
18	Before Stanhope, caravan entrance near A689.	75	4.5	07:15	99	05:20
19	Parkhead <b>TIMING STATION</b>	60	3	08:15	102	06:25
20	Waskerley Way.	60	2.5	09:15	104.5	07:00
21	Rowley.	90	5.5	10:45	110	08:15
22	McDonalds/KFC/Tesco?	50	3	11:35	113	Chose to miss
23	Derwent Walk Inn	50	3	12:25	116	09:35
24	Rowlands Gill	65	4	13:30	120	10:44
25	River Tyne	120	7	15:30	127	13:10
26	Cycling Hub	50	3	16:20	130	13:50
27	Roundabout after tunnel or Royal Quays?	100	6	18:00	136	Chose to miss
28	Priory / Finish	60	4	19:00	140	16:42

# 2019 Coburg 24 Hour Track Carnival

**13 to 14 April 2019**

**Harold Stevens Athletics Track  
Coburg, Victoria, Australia**

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**12 Hour Run / Walk**

**Marathon Run / Walk**

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<http://www.coburg24hr.org/>

# The West Highland Way Race 2018

Stacey Holloway



I chose to enter the West Highland Way Race (WHW race) as my first 'long' ultra for two reasons.

1. The incredible route.
2. My previous experience of the heart warming and inclusive community that is the Scottish ultrarunning scene.

The race follows the iconic and much-loved West Highland Way, a national long-distance walking trail in Scotland running 96 miles with 14,760ft of ascent. The route begins at the Glasgow suburb of, Milngavie and carries you to the Scottish Highlands via the shores of Loch Lomond ending in Fort William. The Way passes from city to lowland rolling hills, clambers over rocky loch shoreside, across remote moor to skirt the shadows of the Buachaille

Etive Mòr, and then finally brings you all the way to the foot of the UK's highest peak, Ben Nevis before reaching the Fort William high street.

There are 3 unique aspects to this race. One being the start time of 1am on midsummer's night. This start time requires those expecting to take over 24 hours to complete the race to run through two consecutive nights. The second is the West Highland Way race family. A strong community with a large online presence via John Kynaston's regular podcasts in the 6 months leading up to race day, the availability of online profiles for each runner and their personal blogs, and the active 'WHW race Family' Facebook group. Training events and Q&A sessions, plus the fact that many runners choose to use the 53 mile Highland Fling race as their longest run means you are likely to make a lot of friends in the lead up.

The race requires crew



support, so for every runner there will be at least another two people out on the course with them during the race. For those who cannot find support, the race organisers aim to help match you up with someone.

### *So my running background...*

Prior to entering the WHW race I had completed a total of 2 marathons and 2 ultras (a 53 miler and a 6 hour race in which I ran 31miles)... I was, relatively speaking, pretty inexperienced. Despite my lack of ultra-racing (or maybe because of it?) I was chuffed to be invited onto John Kynaston's podcast. Every year John follows the progress of a couple of WHW race newbies. The podcasts are essential listening to anyone undertaking the race, and include interviews from race winners, multi-finishers, the race director, sports psychologists

etc... and can be found at [Westhighlandwayrace.org/podcasts](http://Westhighlandwayrace.org/podcasts)

I am a proud back of the pack runner and my goal was simply to finish the race within the time limit of 35 hours. I was going to be tripling my weekly mileage in the lead up for the race and realized I required a 10 week pre-training period before I could embark on a 6 month 100 mile training plan. So in mid-October, 2 weeks before the ballot opened I began building my weekly mileage from 15 miles a week to 26 miles a week. I also decided 80% of my training would be in the form of hiking. I was going to need to learn to walk fast, fast! Walking also meant I could up my mileage with less risk of injury and less fatigue.

My longest long run in the build up was 53 miles, and my biggest weeks totaled 60 miles. On average I covered 35 miles a week and I did strength training twice a week. Training was not

perfect; I had a full time job and a large commute. It was the best I could do and it was enough.

## Race day

Race day arrived and I stayed in bed all day attempting to recover from a head cold. I could not sleep, so I ate. My husband Max, and my friend Neil would crew me for the entire race and we headed to registration around 9pm. We had 3 other crew members joining us

1<sup>st</sup> night running towards Loch Lomond – photos by Andrew Condron



was as I imagined right up on the cut-offs for the first 50 miles, but keeping spot on schedule. I struggled through the first night with low feelings (I had never run through a night before), but these lifted on sight of my crew and coffee at 20 miles in.

I began to feel fatigued at 50 miles, close to the longest I had ever run before. At 53 miles I had a full kit change and my family had arrived to surprise me. I now had my best friend running with

throughout the 2 days to take turns running sections with me.

As midnight drew near race director, Ian Beattie addressed the field and it hit me, I had made it to the start line. Months of training, planning and the constant thinking about the race were over. All I had to do now was run.

The race began well for me, we had perfect weather – not hot, not cold, not wet, not windy, but a bit windy so midges were tolerable. I

1<sup>st</sup> night running towards Loch Lomond – photos by Andrew Condron



# Race Reports

Beinglas checkpoint at 42 miles – pizza, mac n’ cheese and clean socks!



me and after an ice cream I was feeling grand again. My spirits lifted we pushed onto the next checkpoint and the one I considered to be where the real race started, at Bridge of Orchy, 60 miles in and the beginning of the Rannoch Moor and the ‘true’ Highlands.

At the summit of ‘Jelly Baby Hill’ – the high point before the moor, every runner is surreally greeted by WHW race veteran, Murdo McEwan to be offered a jelly baby while another marshal played the Star Wars theme tune on a penny whistle – naturally! It was after this descent that the difference between running a 50 mile ultra marathon and a 100 mile one really made itself known. Waves of nausea and dizziness flooded through me. A general feeling of exhaustion

and awfulness filled all of my awareness and I was flitting between cold, hot and hunger, but was unable to eat anymore so I sipped at sugary hydration

drinks and plodded on. My inner thought process had become so dire I was relying on counting to 10, over and over again to keep despair away (a tip I learnt from John’s podcasts).

At this point I had two excellent support runners who gave me something to focus on other than the bleak and unending moor and the monotony of silent counting to the time of my footfalls. You can see the road for miles, ascending into the distance and the hard rock road became brutal on feet already beat. Through a regime of 30 seconds walk, 30 seconds run we made it to Glencoe. On seeing my husband the first tears of the race arrived. I had a little sob into my hot chocolate as my bewildered crew encircled me. Exhausted and overwhelmed I was grateful that the Rannoch road was now behind me. While in the checkpoint darkness fell and worse was to come.

Unlike the first night, there was no light in the sky. The only light was from our head torches and those few bobbing around somewhere ahead of us. As the Devil’s staircase ascended deeper into the cloud, visibility even with torches dropped. My last rational thoughts were reflections on the myths of drunken miners falling to their deaths as they made the treacherous journey from the nearest bar at the Kingshouse, back to their homes in Kinlochleven. Having made this climb three times before with relative ease, it was not until now, in darkness, that I appreciated its name. We were, unknown to me, ascending 500m into my own mental hell. On the summit I sent a text Max to let him know we were at the top and found I had no signal. For the first time in the race, I could not contact Max and, looking back, this may have been the trigger

Furthest I had ever run at 53 miles (Right: Stacey, Left: Kristin)





Kinlochleven checkpoint and my 'realistic' selfie!

to my mental breakdown. As the race progressed, physical pain melted away and I now had little feeling or awareness of my body and struggled to read its needs.

Neil and I skirted the mountainside towards Kinlochleven. I could not feel my body and in the darkness I did not know where I was. I must find light again. I asked Neil to tell me stories as I could not cope anymore. He talked about his family and mutual friends and races and it helped take my mind somewhere other than where it was drifting. Eventually, we made it to the next checkpoint. Runners were lying on mattresses with ice strapped to them and in a terrible state. I sat on a mattress crying, trying to explain

that I was upset because I was scared of the dark and I could not tell if I was thirsty, to the bemused look of the medical team. Max surrounded my mattress with food options – cereal, milk, porridge, pasta and other goodies. I refused to leave until the sun was up. The darkness, an absolute terror, no one could make me face again.

### *The finish and the end*

The final section was a long and slow slog full of hallucinations and songs only I could hear. All I can say, was that I had nothing left. However, there was no choice other than to carry on. On the long walk, Max coaxed me to the top of the fire road and we were greeted with a view of the Ben. As we descended to

Fort William, my entire crew came out to finish the race alongside me.

The end was not overwhelming emotion like the previous checkpoints, there was no joy, that would come later. There was just the awareness that it had ended, it was over. In just over 33 hours of moving, 12 hours without food and close to 50 hours without sleep I was done.

The third unique thing about this race is the award giving.

Each and every finisher is called up in turn to collect their crystal goblet in front of the entire race team, the race field, their crews and their families. It is a heartwarming and emotionally charged event as you see everyone who finished, and realize who

had not. 235 stood on the start line 35 hours previously, and 198 crossed the finish, I was 193<sup>rd</sup>.

The final finisher is then awarded their goblet, not by the race director, but in full circle by the race winner. This year, in true sportmanship and WHW race Family fashion the winner, David McClure, not only awarded the final finisher their goblet, but met them on the course and ran in the end of the race with them! After a nap, many of us headed to the Wetherspoons for the after party and I began to enjoy what we had all achieved. The next morning waking in Fort William I was confused as how I got there, then I remembered, I ran!

The organization, community, support and safety of the race was



Final checkpoint around 91 miles

# Race Reports

The walk into the finish along the fire road



Jason Main, Susan Barley and my husband Max Holloway I could still be out there somewhere! I cannot thank each of them enough

for helping me accomplish this goal, they were all absolute heroes.

*Stacey was sponsored by Body-Balance Sports Massage and featured on the WHW race podcasts and has her own running blog [wayrunning.wordpress.com](http://wayrunning.wordpress.com). Follow her on twitter @staceholloway and instagram: @wayrunuk*

impeccable, I cannot think of anything they could have done more for the runners or the crew. I loved this race and though I swore on finishing 'never again' and regaling to anyone who asked how horrendous and what a nightmare experience it was, I am already wanting sign up for 2019!

My takeaways for anyone, who like me, wants to try a 100 miler, but is not too sure are:

- If you are stubborn enough and can run a 50 miler then you can run a 100 miler (and if you can run a trail marathon, you can run a 50 miler).
- Run through a night before racing through a night, especially if you have to race through more than one night!
- 100 miles is not 2x50miles, there is no way to prepare for this, just be aware.
- Fast walking is a really useful skill

I completed the 95 mile race in 33 hours and 5 mins. I am under no assumptions; my finishing was part of a team effort. Without my crew, Neil Scott, Kristin and



Recovering with my goblet!



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**WHERE**  
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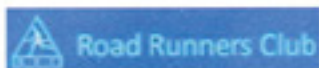
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**RULES**

# Princesses on a run for Scarborough Mountain Rescue Team

Leila Majewska aka Lili Insane



Finish: Paul Burgum, Rebecca Devine, Leila Majewska & James Campbell

On the first of September over the past couple of years it's Princess Challenge Day.

Runners regardless of gender dress up in tutu skirts (quite often in a full outfit) and gather from early morning to run either 8.5/17.5/31 miles on the Cleveland Way.

I will be doing the Hardmoors Super Slam next year, so I've decided it is a great way to test myself and see the route before I will race it on New Year's Day.

I got up early in the morning to make sure I was dressed up and waiting for Paul (a colleague runner who kindly offered me a lift). It was a long way to travel but in brilliant company, as Paul is making a study about emotions runners experience during ultra races, so we had a very interesting

conversation about the importance of mental strength in ultra running. Paul is a barefooted runner, so I am sure many of you know who I am talking about.

We reached our destination and made our way to registration. I picked up my number, carefully pinned it to my dress and chatted to friends. A lot of Hardmoors family members were there so lots of catching up to do. Before I knew it, it was time to set the watch and... go!

It usually takes me 4-6 miles to properly warm up and I power walk those first miles but here we had to make it before they closed part of the route for cows to cross the fields, so time was a very important factor. I had to run from the start - something that I do not like to do in races



Robin Hood's Bay CP - 2nd time at it

as my legs feel really heavy at the beginning. Luckily I made it through before the cows. 🤔

There was a detour in the forest and I was worried I had taken a wrong turn, as I lost most of runners from my sight, but after few meters we found a pink ribbon and knew we are on the right path - others were not. We met them after around a mile at a crossroads after a tiny wooden bridge, so they found their way back onto the right path.

Now I could relax a little as I had 26 miles left and 9 hours to complete it - seemed a lot, but it was very deceiving. My leg hadn't fully recovered after L50 and around 8.5 miles it started to ache. 🤔

I met up with Rebecca who I met during the Hardmoors White Horse marathon which I was marshalling. It was her first marathon and oh boy! it was a really hot day, but she completed it with style and on her birthday! 🥳

We chatted and decided to run together. I was worried about my leg, she was worried about distance as it was her first ultra, so we worked out we would drag each other until the end.

The heat slowed us down as many sections of the route were exposed. I must admit tutu isn't the most comfy outfit to run in!

The miles dragged - we were chatting and checking our watches every few minutes. We jogged bits but mainly power walked it as we figured out that if we kept a steady pace we would make it on time.

One of the tail runners told us that if we didn't start running we wouldn't make it on time to Robin Hood's Bay - all I can say it was very discouraging. It was a challenge not a race and it was written on the instructions "aim to be at Robin Hood's Bay the second time before 4pm" not "CP cut off is 4pm" plus the challenge cut off was 10 hours, so we knew we would make it even if we were late to RHB.

The first time I crossed RHB I asked the marshals if they would pull us out of race if we were late but they told us not to worry as they wouldn't pull us. So we didn't worry from then on and luckily other sweepers were brilliant and supportive - we had lots of occasions to chat to them because they kept catching up and perhaps encouraging us with the thrill of the chase 🏃 and I must admit sometimes it worked. My left leg was reminding me about itself and Rebecca got blisters which make it really painful for her to run. So there we were both pushing through pain and lifting each other's spirits when it was needed. Once we reached Whitby I had a can of cold coke which really helped to take off the edge of the heat.

And there they were, the famous Whitby Abbey steps (all 199 of them!) - just what my knee needed 🐻



Steps at Whitby Abbey - Leila Majewska & Rebecca Devine

# Race Reports

After a long climb we were back on the Cleveland Way aiming for RHB for the second time. Rebecca's blisters got worse and worse making it very painful to even walk, my knee after all the steps was basically complete rubbish and we still had around 10 miles more to go.

Slowly we carried on, slowly but still moving forward. We only stayed a moment at the CP (where one of the trail runners was stung by a wasp) in Whitby and then carried on the Cleveland Way. While opening the gate I felt a horrible pain on my finger like a needle - I also got stung. Question was - was it a wasp or a bee? I am allergic to bees. I couldn't see the sting in my finger and it didn't swallow more than it would on someone not allergic, so I've assumed it was a nasty mean wasp!

A long stretch and lots and lots of stairs up and down - those will be a real killer in winter covered by snow and ice on New Year's Day's Hardmoors30 race!

We reached RHB for the 2nd time - an hour later than we should have aimed for, but the marshalls were waiting for us as they said they would. 😊 Our friends - Jan and Fiona from Sunderland Strollers (my running club) who run the short & sweet 8.5 mile route were sitting in the restaurant next to the CP enjoying well deserved wine. It was lovely to see friendly faces plus thanks to them I have a lovely photo to always remember this day.

View from Cleveland Way (I am not sure but I think it's on the way to Ravenscar)



Finisher tee and bling



Just before we left the CP Paul "The one in the middle" came in, he decided to help drag us to the finish.

A few minutes of chat and we carried on to the finish - more steps and more steps and steps! Started to feel there will be nothing else but steps, yet there it was a big hill at the end, what a lovely change 🙄😅

I was just happy that it was only a bit more than a mile till the end! I just wanted to it be over.

Finally the last turn and a straight stretch to finish! I jogged the last 200m and finished with a time of 9:28. Not my brightest run but what's done is done and at the end what matters the most is that we finished and a few minutes after Rebecca finished her first ultra!

Got my pinkish bling and sparkly t-shirt and several cups of juice 🍹

It was a nice day out, didn't go as planned but we finished and experienced the route.

At the end of the day time on legs is time on legs! It doesn't matter if you are sprinting the whole 30 miles or crawling it, as long as you are trying and pushing yourself it's all about moving forward!

When someone asked me how did I get started and what motivates me to push through, I reply with the words of Napoleon Hill "The starting point of all achievement is desire".



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# Canal Slam 2018

Fiona McNelis



Fiona McNelis Photo by Claire Turton

This was the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of the Canal slam and a woman was yet to complete it. It was made up of:

GUCR (Grand Union Canal)	145 miles (closer to 150 miles in actual distance run)
KACR (Kennet and Avon Canal)	145 miles
Liverpool to Leeds Canal	130 miles (closer to 128 miles in actual distance run)

When I sat down to write this report, I didn't want to become bogged down in describing the terrain, wildlife, countryside and such like. A canal is flat with

perhaps a few bumps along the way and the terrain does not vary that much. Canal runs can be very scenic but they can also be very remote and boring. Instead, I wanted to share my experiences with you in the hope that it may make you smile and consider giving one or all of these fine races a go. So here goes...

## Grand Union Canal Race, weekend of 26.6.18 to 28.8.18

The Grand Union Canal runs from Birmingham to Little Venice in Paddington. It took me 42 hours and 55 minutes to complete it on foot non-stop. We started at 6am on Saturday morning at Gas Street and had to arrive at Little Venice by 3am on Bank Holiday Monday.

This was my second finish of the event out of three attempts. I first tried it in 2015 and finished and I bailed last year 64 miles in and despite carrying an injury (bursa on the heel of my foot where the ankle meets the plantar fascia) I made some really silly mistakes which I was determined not to repeat this year.

I really enjoyed myself this time around and I think that was because I knew all the marshals at the checkpoints and most of the runners and their crew. There were no thoughts of DNF (did not finish), no nasty doubting gremlins to stop me this year and I was pretty cheerful and perky the whole way. There is a photo of me at 120 miles which reflects this. In the photo, I am smiling whilst I wait for my fry up, lounging on a chair with the shoes and socks off and my little toesies airing themselves.

As with all the canal races, you have a choice to run the race supported (rely on the race organisers to feed you and transport your bags from

checkpoint to checkpoint) or as an unsupported (you have your own crew of slaves who follow you up the course, feed you, clean your feet, tend to your blisters, dress and undress you, prepare you for the night sections and be general dogsbodies all weekend on no sleep. They can also run parts of the course with you). I think the harder option is to run unsupported so that's what I did.

The weather over the weekend was biblical. It started off with light showers on Saturday morning but was very humid and hot. The day then heated up so that it was very hot (in the late 20s I believe) and this had an impact on energy levels. I had to make sure that I was drinking lots of water and eating regularly. The saving grace was ice cold cokes from canal barges and cafes and ice lollies. You cannot beat an ice lolly on a very hot day whilst running down a canal.

As I passed a barge around 30 odd miles in with some other runners, a canal barge man asked what we were doing. When we told him, after the initial shock and language I will not repeat here, we were offered shots of tequila. I was also offered beer on the way to London. The canal folk were a delight and I had to excuse myself politely on Sunday to continue the race otherwise I would be there chatting to them all day.

The race carried on and it was lovely to see other runners' crew at various stages who were happy to fill up our water bottles, wet our buffs so we could keep cool, give us food and sweets and a kick up the backside when it was needed.

As night approached, the temperature dropped and a fog/mist set in. I have made the mistake before of not putting on layers of clothing at this stage which sent me into the early stages of hypothermia and ended my race. Not this time. I put on fresh clothes and lots of them to combat the cold. I was also aware that we were due to have storms overnight and was anticipating that I would get wet so

the waterproofs went on as well.

At mile 70.5, around 10.15pm, I picked up the first of two of my buddy runners, Sheila Rose, who were going to run between them about 20 miles of the night section with me. We also picked up a faster Scottish runner called David Allen at this checkpoint. He was suffering from some bad lows so I suggested he join us and promised him that we would have a good laugh. The thought of running with two Irish women down a canal in the dark was too tempting an offer so off we went – the three amigos. He left us a few miles later as he had perked up and was travelling faster than me.

The idea of a buddy runner is someone to keep you company, to keep you going and to talk you out of any strange ideas such as wanting to drop out of the race. It is important to think carefully about who you want to fulfil this role as after 70 miles the body and head are tired and you are not necessarily thinking rationally. For me, I just needed someone who would be there even if we did not talk much. I had run about 50 miles of the race on my own without talking to anyone so I was very glad of the human contact.

I had to have a 10 minute lie down somewhere between there and 79 miles and so we found a pub with an outside area, put some chairs together and lay down. Another runner I know was there waiting for his runner to come in so that he could buddy run with him. I pinched his dry robe as a blanket. Shortly afterwards his runner came up to us and he wanted a lie down as well. I chatted to him but he was a bit grumpy and told me to be quiet. This was his 4<sup>th</sup> attempt at this race and he really wanted a finish. (Later in the race, I saw his crew and asked how he was getting on. He was having some silly ideas about quitting so I sent messages of abuse, I mean encouragement, to him via his crew which was great and he finished)

I swapped buddy runners around 79 miles in and just as we swapped over, the heavens opened and the torrential

rain started. We had the most amazing thunder and lightning storm up to that point. Within 30 seconds, all of my three layers of clothes were soaked through so we had to keep moving so that we kept warm. This was difficult as there was a heavy mist/fog and the light from the head torch was reflecting off the ground making it difficult to see. I did not want to risk running and falling over so we walked a large section of this. The torrential rain lasted about 2-3 hours.

In the midst of all of this we came across a runner shivering and sheltering under a bridge and in some distress. He had fallen over in the rain and hit his knee rather badly. His race was over but he was so cold that he could not get his phone out of his back pack and he could not type the number of his crew into his phone. We called his crew and wrapped him up in some space blankets to keep him warm. My buddy runner was local to that area so he was able to direct the crew to their runner and go out to meet them. I ran on as I was getting cold.

Not long after that, I saw two men on the canal with a 40 pound carp they had just caught which was really impressive. I did wonder whether I hallucinated that but it was real.

My buddy runner, Russell Rose, left me at around mile 92 or so and I carried on by myself as the sun came up. The temperature began to rise again so by the time I hit the 100 mile checkpoint at 8.07am, I had to change clothes again and have another wee lie down for 10 minutes. I spent some time at this checkpoint as I had to eat, change clothes, re-tape my feet and re-apply sun cream. I am not blessed with easily tanned skin and being Irish a lot of exposure is needed before the legs look anything other than pasty white. I also needed Factor 50 otherwise I would look like a tomato for days after I finished. You can imagine the jokes at my expense!

I carried onto 120 miles where I had the best fry up and cup of tea ever and

# Race Reports

this re-fueled me nicely for the next 25 or so miles. By that point, I knew I was going to finish and I just had to hold on. I had a lovely chat there with one of the race directors catching up on how others were doing, who dropped, who had been taken to hospital, etc.

The last checkpoint was at 133 miles in a really doggy part of the outskirts of London. I had marshalled at this checkpoint for years before running the race. About ½ mile out of this checkpoint there was an uprooted tree blocking the canal. Normally, I would get over it without thinking but with 133 miles on the legs, I knew I could only lift them so far. I had to think about how to climb over this tree which made me smile. I am thankful that there were no photographers about as it would have been a very strange photo.

I had formed a huge blister on the sole of my left foot which I thought was bruised feet. This was the result of the running and walking in the rain and through waterlogged canal. I had really begun to feel it and so I had a look at it at the last checkpoint to see if I could burst it. It was underneath some hard skin and so I had no way of getting to it. It burst about 2 miles further on and the pain was something else. I then had a mission trying to find a footfall that was as painless as possible to get me to the end.

The last 6 miles were very difficult as I kept sitting down and started to hallucinate. I met another runner, Brian Finley, with his buddy runner, Mark Taylor-Weir, whom I knew from other races and it was lovely as every time Mark tried to encourage us onwards, the two of us started to moan at him and became grumpy. He thought this was hilarious.

It seemed like Little Venice was never going to appear but eventually it did and I crossed the finish line to be greeted by a whole host of people some of whom had just popped out to see me and some others finish. It was lovely.



Fiona McNelis Photo by Claire Turton

I remember sitting at the finish looking at my medal and saying to a friend, I cannot believe that I have now completed this race twice.

I then went off to the hotel for a well earned shower and sleep. The lovely staff saw my medal and bedraggled state, took pity on me and upgraded me to the poshest business suite ever. Such a lovely gesture.

I headed home the following day.

## **Kennet and Avon canal race, Friday 27<sup>th</sup> to Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> July 2018**

145 miles from Bristol train station to Paddington train station

This was the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of the race and for me the toughest of three canal runs. It started at 6am on Friday 27th July 2018 and the first hour of running was really pleasant. As the sun started to climb into the sky at 6.45am, the temperature started to rise and, as I understand it, got up to 39 degrees later in the day. It was a very hot race



and even with a torrential downpour from 4.30am on the Saturday morning for 35 minutes it didn't really feel as though it cooled me down. This was the hottest temperature I had ever run in.

As the KAC is only 87 miles long, we had to travel on part of the Thames Path and then come off through Slough to pick up the Slough arm of the GUC (Grand Union Canal). This led to the GUC and we then followed this for a few miles until we turned off left to head onto the Paddington arm of the GUC into London. This was the second time in a few weeks that I was to run the Paddington arm of the GUC and it was no easier second time around.

The run itself was a bit "bitty" and the navigation in parts was tricky especially around the Jubilee River section and the Slough section.

With the heat forecast for this run, I knew my finish would come if I could manage the heat and keep myself positive so that I could keep going to the finish. And boy did this race test me mentally in a way I had not expected or experienced before. It is the toughest race mentally that I have ever done and I am still trying to figure out how I got to the finish.

I started off with lots of energy on a very picturesque canal and entered Bath just before 8.30am. The first 30 miles of the canal are stunning. Around this point, I picked up two runners, Robert Whitehead and Andy Ives. It turned out that Robert and I would run the rest of the race together and be overtaken by Andy Ives about 128 miles in.

We were all struggling with the heat so I suggested we walk the open exposed bits of canal and run the shady covered sections and this seemed to work well. We did run parts of the open sections too and very much ran to feel. As spirits sagged from about 20 miles on, I decided that one way to lift the spirits for me to act the eijit and have a sing song. I therefore had

one headphone in my ear and sang whatever song was on my ipod to the boys. By having one headphone out, I could judge if I was in tune or not. At this point, there were a lot of U2 and Michael Jackson songs on the ipod. Smooth Criminal started to play and those of you in the know will remember part of the chorus as: "Annie are you ok, are you ok Annie... etc" So I replaced the Annie with Andy and serenaded him along the canal. I am sure he enjoyed it and recalls it fondly now! I could not think of a song with Robert in it as I did not want him to feel left out and all I could think of was Bob the Builder and there was no way I was singing that!

Not long after that we picked up another runner, John Poole, and carried on with our heat strategy. The next part of the run continued with me singing Michael Jackson songs and trying to bust a few of his moves on the canal which must have been hilarious for my companions. We fuelled this part of the run with ice cold water and coke from cafes along with Slush Puppies and sorbets any chance we got. We were probably the merriest party on the canal that morning.

As the miles passed by, we became tired and hungry and we tried to fuel as best we could at checkpoints but not to take too long at them as we didn't want to get too comfortable and miss cut offs. The heat also meant that I could not face eating what I would have normally eaten on a run, this was a concern as I was not very good at eating enough on my runs as it was. We were well under the cut offs at this stage but still kept an eye on them as with the increasing heat it was slowing us down. I therefore wanted us to build as big a cushion as we could time wise as I know that I would certainly need it in the latter stages of the race when I was walking. If the heat continued as it was, this would also take its toll.

I think we got the heat strategy right and kept our heads in a good head

space which was probably the reason why we made it to the finish.

As the race progressed, my left foot became very painful in the sole of the foot and I recall telling Robert that I was going to check my feet at the next checkpoint which was half way and we arrived there in the dark. I had done everything right by wearing Drymax socks and taping the blister hot spots and more on my feet. I may get the odd blister on a run but usually nothing to really trouble me. This time was different. My good friend, Gin Lawson, was helping out at the checkpoint and I asked her to check my feet for blisters. She could see a blister under the tape so we removed the tape and the sole of my left foot was basically one large blister. There may have been a blister on the top of a toe or two as well but I cannot remember. She was very kind and burst the blister and cleaned and re-taped my feet. Naively, I thought that once you burst a blister that the pain disappeared. How wrong I was but the pain was a lot more manageable and I could weight bear on the foot. The heat had caused the foot to sweat a lot more than normal which meant it would swell more and rub against the shoe and I think that this is why I suffered so badly with the blisters.

Robert and I carried on and not long after that hit the Thames Path. I recognised this from my recce runs on the Thames Path and from parts I had run on my previous attempts to complete the TP100. (I still have to go back and sort out that race once and for all) I am not a fan of running on the Thames Path so I was dreading this section as parts of it just seemed to go on and on.

Shortly after we left the 102 mile aid station we passed through a deer sanctuary and saw white and red deer and loads of sheep. I had never seen white deer before and so this was a special moment for me.

By 105 miles, my left foot had become very painful again. We stopped at a park bench and I asked Robert if he

## Race Reports

could look at my foot to see if a blister had formed on top of the previous blister. It seems a blister had formed under the earlier blister which had re-formed. He tried to burst it and we applied more tape and a change of socks. I carried on but didn't notice any real improvement. At 110, we went through a kissing gate and I experienced an excruciating pain in my left foot. It was as though a knife had been pushed hard through my foot. We sat on the ground and Robert looked at the foot again. Poor Robert. It seems as though the blister had burst and there was nothing else we could do with it. I got to my feet and weight bearing on it was agony – I could barely move and could not move at the pace I had set previously. I tried to run on it to see if that eased the pain but this didn't help. I was hobbling along as Robert advanced ahead of me at the speed we had maintained up to now. I remember thinking I have 35 miles to go and I am not going to make it if I don't figure something out. I had trained too hard for this to have it end because of a blasted blister. I tried a few things in terms of forward motion and managed to get some sort of rhythm going – not sure what I did. It was very painful but I tried to manage it as best I could as I didn't want to let myself or Robert down and I also did not want him to feel that he had to stay with me and sacrifice his own race.

We were walking by this stage and we muddled on. There was some tricky navigation between here and the next checkpoint but we managed really well and it was nice to have someone to discuss maps and where we were going. We got to the 116 mile checkpoint and I was looking forward to this as a fry up was waiting with my name on it. I had extra portions with a lovely cup of tea and was in my element. The painful foot was forgotten.

We picked up my buddy runner, John Cooper, aka my "canal husband" who was going to accompany us to the finish and get a 28 mile training run/



Fiona McNelis Photo by Keith Godden

walk done at the same time.

Not long afterwards, I needed a comfort break and asked the boys to look for a suitably dense bush. Of course, there is never a dense bush around when you need one but I found some very tall grass which offered a little coverage. I found a steep slope downwards, where if no one passing looked down, I could answer the call of nature in peace. No one was coming in either direction so I sent the boys on ahead. Of course, as soon as I get into position, the whole world and their dog decided to come past in both directions. There was one couple in particular whom I recall looking down at me and they may have seen more than they bargained for. By this stage, I was embarrassed but too tired to care.

My embarrassment did not end there as when I got back on the route, I had to walk past the same couple and it was obvious they knew who I was so I thought right missus, be a big girl

about this, I wished them good day and carried on. The man smiled at me and responded with a greeting but his female companion gave me such a dirty look I felt that I'd best increase my walking speed.

The boys had very kindly waited for me around the next corner so I filled them in and we had a giggle about it.

Going through Slough town centre, there was a cool breeze and we treated ourselves to a Calippo.

We found the Slough arm of the GUC and carried on down this for some miles. I was shocked by the level of fly tipping here that was disgusting and there was so much of it. I had quite a rant about this to the boys but I think I was preaching to the converted.

We then crossed a bridge onto the GUC and the last checkpoint followed soon after. A cup of tea and a lovely mug of chicken noodle soup as I was unceremoniously kicked out of the checkpoint. This was at mile 128. It took us 5 hours to do the last 17 and a

bit miles and I needed a 10 minute and 5 minute lie down during this section to help me proceed. This section was never ending and is not the nicest piece of canal but fortunately it was dark when we hit it.

The boys were worried about time a few miles out from the finish so I suggested we run a bit and walk a bit as best we could. They seemed to be full of energy and I struggled to keep up. We survived “Sainsbury’s Hill” which is a little speed bump type of thing about two miles out from the finish. It is famous amongst GUCR runners!

Eventually we got to the finish and a welcome cup of tea. I remember telling Dick Kearn, as he put a medal around my neck, that this had been a really, really difficult race. A lot of the more seasoned runners had dropped out earlier in the race and this surprised me because, as far as I was concerned, they were unstoppable. It was a testament to how difficult the race was in those conditions.

I sat down for about an hour or so and when I got up to travel to my hotel, I could barely walk. Somehow I got there and couldn’t face dealing with my feet so I had a shower and went to bed. In the middle of the night, I needed to use the bathroom but could not weight bear. I ended up on my backside like a baby and waddled to the bathroom. I returned to the bed which was quite high and had to do a swimmers belly flop type manoeuvre to get onto the bed and then swing myself around.

I couldn’t walk next morning and knew that I could not use the tube and train carrying my heavy bags to get home. I therefore ordered a taxi to take me door to door which was the best thing I could have done. I was unable to walk properly for about 1 ½ weeks afterwards. I was very worried as my next race was 4 weeks away and I needed to sort out my feet.

The next race arrived all too soon.....

In between the races, I had two weeks

off running and then tried to run short and easy. The third week after KACR, I struggled to run 6 miles and had to shorten some of the mileage on my training runs and found myself walking bits of the runs. The body was not recovering as quickly as it had for GUCR and it was evidently still knackered. The left foot still wasn’t right and I was worried... very worried... were my dreams of completing the Slam over?

## Liverpool to Leeds Canal race

130 miles from Liverpool to Leeds

Race day came all too soon and the weather forecast was for cold and rainy conditions, a far cry from the heat we experienced on the first two of the canal races.

I didn’t realise it then but only three women made the start line.

For the first 70 odd miles, I was surprised at how well I was running and walking, the body seemed to be holding up. I was really pleased, as I had struggled to run 6 miles two weeks earlier and was amazed how a strong race head could keep the body going. This was the most scenic of the canals and I noted quite a few romantic spots on my way along it. However, this for me was one of my loneliest races. I did not speak to anyone much and ran alone for the most part of it. I also started to lose my voice which was odd as I had not spoken much. Four weeks on and it is still not right but I realised on the run that this was my body’s way of telling me it was tired and run down so I expected to slow down. I did slow and a lot more than I had on the other two races but I trusted my training and knew as long as the head was strong and I stayed positive, the body would do as it was told. It’s hard enough to get to this head space never mind maintain it and this is something I had worked on very hard in training.

I had tried to complete the canal slam last year and failed miserably. However, I did some soul searching

afterwards and was honest with myself, so learnt a lot from it. Yes I had gone into it with a bursa on the heel of my right foot and I had dealt with pain management in training but if I was being really honest, I didn’t want the finish enough and I was suffering from “couldn’t be arsed syndrome” in a very big way. I did not deserve to finish any of the races last year but I wanted to come back this year better and stronger so I decided to invest in a running coach. With the help of Mimi Anderson, we got the old body in the shape of its life and I worked on my head space. All the hard work paid off.

But I digress....

Getting from 40 miles to the checkpoint at 55 was tough and I remember sitting at the checkpoint thinking I really don’t want to continue. I therefore made myself get out of my chair and out of the checkpoint before these thoughts could take hold. It was a real effort then to get to 70 miles as the distance between these checkpoints seemed to take forever. At 70 miles, I recall telling Keith Godden that if I wasn’t doing the slam and if I wasn’t the only woman who could do it this year, I would have bailed before now as I was fed up. He just smiled at me. I think I may just have had a case of the “I couldn’t be arsed syndrome”. I told myself then and there to put the big girl pants on, to stop moaning and just get on with it – the sooner I got on with it the sooner I would reach the finish. So onwards I went.

I had a low moment at some point after that when David Allen and Allan Rumbles overtook me. I had been ahead of them by about 15-20 minutes all race but I just couldn’t hold them off any longer. They looked great and were moving at a powerful pace that I could not match. They also seemed to have having a good old chin wag. I felt very lonely then.

There was a part of the route where we had to leave the canal at Foulridge tunnel and then join it later on. I made it to Foulridge without a hiccup

but got completely lost in Foulridge. I ended up at a main road which I knew wasn't right and wondered whether I could flag down a car to ask for directions to the canal. My phone battery had died so I could not check Google maps. I saw a couple canoodling at a bus stop up the road so I thought I would go up and ask them for directions. I got to the bus stop but there was no – one there. I had imagined the canoodling couple. I retraced my steps and saw a light on in a house. I saw a lady in a dressing gown in her kitchen making tea so I waved at her and pointed to her front door. She came to the door and I asked for directions to the canal. She gave these to me rather relieved that she wasn't going to be mugged and off I went. I must have looked a sight. This was around 2-3 am and wasted about 30-40 minutes. As I made my way down to the canal I thought well done, you didn't panic.

When I got to the canal, I thought "Which way?" I saw some red lights which I assumed denoted the end of the tunnel, then found an information map and ended up heading towards Skipton which was in the correct direction.

The checkpoint at 84 took a very long time and I got there around 4am. I had marshalled at this aid station overnight for the last few years.

I remember sitting there with my head in my hands thinking about my race. The temptation to drop was very strong especially as the other runners in the checkpoint had already handed in their numbers. Whereas before I would have just said sod it that's it I'm done, for some reason my head started questioning why I felt like this. I was not unwell. I had no blisters and was not in pain, there were no niggles or injuries bothering me. I was tired, cold and wanted my bed. I recognised that this was just tiredness and that there were more miles in the old girl yet so I took a few moments to steel myself and then off I went into the night.

The next section was very hard indeed

and I became cold and very tired. I also approached the Pennines, I had been looking forward to seeing them. I had also not had a 10 minute lie down and normally by this stage I would have done so. I recall ending up in bushes wondering how I ended up there but I must have fallen asleep on my feet and veered off the trail into the bushes. I knew that I would collect my buddy runner, Greg Ward, and see his wife Janet at the 100 mile aid station so I told myself that they were my treat but I had to continue to 100.

About 93 miles in, I texted Janet to tell her where I was and to give her an ETA. As soon as I had finished my text. I looked up to put my phone away and I saw someone walking towards me on the canal. I thought that person looks familiar. It was Janet and she was waving at me. I shouted at her that I had just texted her and she laughed. I then saw Greg sitting further down the canal. They had surprised me earlier than planned and it was such a welcome sight and just what I needed. We exchanged hugs and a few words then Greg carried on with me. Janet popped up at various points to say hello and at one point took our hot drinks order. As I was wearing a tracker, it made it easier for her to find where we were.

It started to rain and there was a bit of a breeze. I was absolutely frozen and was wearing all the layers I had and tried to run to generate some heat but couldn't run quick enough to generate enough heat. We next saw Janet at the Five Locks cafe and she had hot tea for me and hot coffee for Greg. We went inside the cafe to drink the tea and coffee and whilst there had some food – I had a big enough cushion time wise to allow us to do this.

My hands were shaking and I could not drink the tea without spilling it and I was very pale. In the end, Janet and I swapped clothes and added more layers to try to warm me up. This helped as did the food and hot drinks. Looking back, it was quite funny - Janet and I in the ladies loo

stripping off and exchanging clothes and then she helped me to put the layers on. We did have a good chuckle to ourselves whilst doing this but she was a life saver and I don't know what I would have done without her. I had been ready to strip off in the cafe but there were young families around and I didn't want to scare them.

Off we went again into the pouring rain and cold and eventually got to the 100 miles checkpoint where I knew an egg and bacon butty was waiting for me – it was the best thing ever. After I ate, I lay down for 20 minutes in one of the race director's cars. He came to tell me my 20 minutes were up and I got out of the car clutching a pillow. He asked me where I got the pillow as he did not have a pillow in his car. I told him that my friend Janet had brought it for me and it was my luxury item. We had a giggle and I returned the pillow.

The 20 minutes rest really helped and I had more energy when I left the checkpoint. As we left the checkpoint, the heavens opened. Here we go again!

We carried onto to mile 115 and then I swapped buddy runners. Greg left me and was replaced by Nick Thompson who was local to the area. The weather improved in that it stopped raining but was still very cold. Nick gave me a guided tour of the flora and fauna and places of interest en route. I think he was worried that I was too quiet (I am usually fairly chatty) but I explained to him that I had one focus and that was one foot in front of the other. I also had a few breaks to rest the aching feet over this section.

This part of the canal seemed to be very flat and there were lots of runnable sections.

The thing that struck me most about this part of the canal was the amount of rubbish that had been thrown into it and the low levels of water in the canal. Nick and I tried to guess what some of the items in the canal were as there were some odd looking things in there.

Nick and I trudged on eventually reaching the finish at 7.42pm. It was lovely to see friendly faces and one or two of the marshals had come to the finish to see me home – thanks to Sarah and Jon Ashton for that. My friend Samuel Bolton had also driven from home to see me finish and I was very touched by their gesture. It was great to also see the usual suspects at the end and as someone who has marshalled this race and the GUC for years, it made me feel very special.

First woman to complete the Canal Slam and I never have to run another canal if I don't want to!

Four weeks on and I haven't run a step.

These races are each very special and

the product of a lot of love and sweat behind the scenes. The organisation is faultless and the marshals are the best in the world. A lot of the marshals have done one or more of the canal runs so they know what you need and how to look after you. They know when to be concerned and when you need a kick up the arse out of the checkpoint. They give up their time freely and willingly to help runners achieve their dreams.

It is very hard to describe the attraction and allure of these races if you have not experienced it for yourself. By participating in these races, in whatever form, you are a part of a family of very special people. You experience highs and lows together and help each other through them.

You share each other's pain and want all to succeed.

The race organisers are some of the nicest, most modest, down to earth people you will meet. They truly love these races and want to provide all who participate with an experience they will cherish forever. It doesn't matter whether I am running them or marshalling them, the race weekends are reserved in my calendar and I look forward to them all year. I am only sorry I have to wait until the end of May next year to do it all again.

I cannot recommend these races highly enough and hope that many of you will consider giving them a go.

Happy trails!

## L'ÉTOILE VERTE D'ÉGUZON

*Val de Creuse - Berry - Limousin*

**300 km**  
**6 étapes**



**1-6**  
**SEPT.**  
**2019**

*Au pays de l'arbre et de l'eau...*

- ▶ Etape Val de Creuse Sud 45 km
- ▶ Etape Val de Creuse Nord 49 km
- ▶ Etape La Gauloise Verte 51 km
- ▶ Etape La Berrichonne 56 km
- ▶ Etape La Limousine 65 km
- ▶ Etape Le Tour du Lac 29 km (GR)



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# Listowel Endurance Festival

Vinny O'Leary  
Photos by Steve Kelly Photography  
Co.Kerry Ireland



Two years since I last ran a 24 hour race... But here I am on the eve of another journey into the dark side, knowing what may be in store for me but confident I can deal with anything that's thrown at me better this time round. I have little training done but honestly believe the fresh legs will serve me better as I have experience. Mentally I am tougher.

Luckily the event is only 3 miles from where I live

so immediately logistics are a doddle, so much so that I don't even take the night before off work. I put in my shift in on Friday night 7pm-4am. The race is starting at 12 midday.

Arrive home from work at 4:20am and eat a big breakfast before heading to bed for a few hours... Beep, beep, beep... Alarm goes off at 11:15am, 45 minutes before the race start... How relaxed is this !!!! I leap out of bed, fresh as a daisy,





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quick wash of the teeth and face followed by a long look in the mirror “You got this Vinny, go do your stuff” I repeat several times making macho faces at myself.

I arrive into Listowel town park at 11:35, the place is a hive of activity, marquees set up, music blaring and everywhere there were brightly coloured athletes bouncing around. I stroll up to the registration desk, number & T-shirt handed to me with no fuss and a table pointed out to me where I can put my stuff for the next 24+ hours. The staff were so helpful it was amazing, one volunteer came out to my car and brought in my suitcase etc. while I stripped off into my chosen attire to start in. At

about 11:50 we got a short briefing from Race Director Mike and soon after we were on our way.

The 24 Hour was to be run on a 1.119km loop all within the confines of Listowel town park. An ideal setting, beautiful trees, flowers, smooth Tarmac surface and the path was about 8 feet wide. It also had bollard lighting all way around so not needing a head torch was going to be a big bonus. In the centre of the park known locally as “The Cows Lawn” was a rugby and football pitch. The whole park was just a hive of activity. I started very slowly and gradually got into a comfortable pace chatting with everyone I met. The route was full of

tents alongside the path where each crew had set up camp for the duration of the event so the support out there was second to none.

The temperature was ideal, approx 10-12°C but a little cooler at night. We were blessed with no rain or wind which is rare enough in Ireland. But admittedly the weather was never going to be a major factor due to the nature of the course with its beautiful oak and ash trees providing the perfect barrier from the elements. At 6pm we were treated to hot pasta, I didn't eat too much of it as I had been eating little and often anyways, but then the Pizzas came out at 10pm... Now you're talking... I sat and enjoyed a large slice (or

2) with some cola. I didn't take too long as I still had about another 10k to go to get to the 100km mark. 100km is the minimum required distance at Listowel Endurance Festival 24 hour, so I was delighted with my progress. Apart from a blister that was starting to bother me I was doing good. Reached my 100km at approx 11:20pm and took a break to get my blister looked at. Kindly the Race Director offered to help me, so we popped it, stuck on a Compeed plaster, changed socks and off I went again, with 100 miles now looking very achievable.

Another fantastic feature to L.E.F. is the other events. So now about to start at



© 2018 Steve Kelly Photography

# Race Reports

midnight were the 12 hour athletes, who run the same loop, their minimum distance having to be 60km. Later on the 6 hour runners would start at 6 am and even 3 hour runners at 9am, it really does cater for all.

The lift it gives when other, obviously fresher legs join the course is second to none.

in 3rd place... Somehow, due to others taking more breaks than me during the night only two athletes were ahead of me, Juraj & James.

At this stage I was still well short of 100 miles, so I tried not to focus on position but only on getting to 100 miles as soon as I could. Unfortunately my ability to run was completely gone,



By about 2am, my left knee started bothering me. I was at about 75 miles, but I was being reduced to walking. I refused to panic having done some basic maths in my head, I was fine, I just needed to keep moving forward.

The 6 hour runners started at 6am and I still wasn't at my 100 miles but what I did know was that I was

so when I was moving I was only managing about 15-17 minute miles. Eventually I crossed the 100 miles mark at 9:30am ish. My oldest boy Barry and wonderful wife Maeve did that lap with me and it was awesome relief to have gotten there.

Now my competitive streak kicked in. As I passed the tent area, I looked at the big screen and checked. Ok



I'm 5 laps (3.5 miles) ahead of my nearest challenger with 2:30 still to go. I was walking, he was running... Squeaky bum time. Again, doing maths I was thinking all I've to do is not let him lap me 5 times, simple. He passed me, I tried power walking to keep him in sight as much as possible, 4 ahead, 4 ahead. With about an hour to go he passed me again, Now I was starting to panic. I don't know where I found it but I managed to jog/walk a little. Now I was averaging 12 min miles, that's better. I wasn't passed anymore and I'd held onto 3rd. managing 108 miles in the process.

Afterwards it was fantastic back at the tent area with everyone, 24hr, 12hr,

6hr and 3hr athletes receiving their medals and the podium placers also getting their prizes. A couple of short speeches and everyone was off to recover..... The nearby Ballybunion beach was my chosen destination where a gentle walk in the cold Atlantic sea could do no harm.

I would like to congratulate Listowel Endurance Festival on a fantastic event and will for sure be back for a crack at the 135 mile course record next September.

Kind regards,

Vinny O'Leary

<https://events.fitlive.ie/listowel-endurance-festival-2018>





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# Making The Jump To A 100 Miles

Rachel Fawcett



Photo: Stuart March Photography

Ultra running is ultra running, right? Once we've run over a marathon distance surely we earn the right to call ourselves ultra runners. Why is that not quite enough for some of us? My first ultra was 38 miles long, I had entered because I had recently become a stay at home mum and felt that I needed a goal which was 'all about me', it was only ever going to be about running that 38 miler. I stood at the start line absolutely terrified, with the words of one of the school mums ringing in my ears "38 miles Rachel, that's a really, really long way". Somehow I got through it and, although declaring that it was the hardest thing that I had ever done, I

found myself perusing ultra websites and muttering 'perhaps I should do a 50 miler'. That race was Apocalypse 50 by Beyond Marathon which also had Apocalypse 100 running alongside. As I watched the 100 mile runners leave, my finish line but their fourth checkpoint, I wondered how anyone could possibly take another step forward.

However, the seed was sown; maybe I need to do a 100 miler, maybe that would complete my ultra journey, perhaps I'll just have a little look to see what's out there. It was these irrational thoughts which led me to the start line of the Centurion South Downs Way 100, again terrified. Not only

was I up against some pretty serious ultra runners, I was facing 100 miles of undulating downs, hot weather and an almost overwhelming sense of self doubt.

There will be plenty of readers out there who have climbed this mountain but, flicking through the plethora of ultra FB pages out there, I realise that there are many others who are wondering whether they should take the plunge, make the commitment and sign up for a 100 miler. So now, in 2018 as I prepare for the last 100 miler of the Centurion Grandslam, my fifth 100, I would like to reflect on making this leap, accepting that it will make me realise just how much better I

could have approached this challenge.

**1. Plan which race you will do carefully.** Everyone will tell you that their favourite 100 miler is the best race out there. They might be 100 mile regulars (one guy who cruised past me on SDW100 had done another 100 the week before and talked about them like they were park runs). What makes a good race to these guys might not make them perfect as your first one. Consider terrain, flat does not mean easier as competitors of the Thames Path 100 will tell you; hills can break up a course whereas long stretches of monotonous flat can break a runner. Think about how well you run in the dark and how willing you are to be running on your own with only a head torch for company. If this idea scares you, then a course close to the summer solstice with lots of runners is the one for you.

**2. Logistics.** The philosopher Sun Tzu famously said 'The line between order and disorder lies in logistics'. Many races offer the opportunity for a crew and pacers, most are possible without either. Ensure you consider how your support will get to the right place at the right time, this will not only help you pick the right race, it will reduce your stress levels as you run. You need to feel confident that you will get everything you need when you need it, this comes from good planning and clear briefs to your crew. Considering your movements and accommodation before and after the event is also key to reducing anxiety and preventing you from driving before it's safe to do so.

**3. Kit.** We are runners, we love kit. Many people ask whether the kit list for a race is really necessary. Running 100 miles takes a massive toll on your body; when you get cold, you get really cold. Being able to look after yourself in the middle of the wilderness when you are tired and alone is critical to your safety. Buy the right kit early and train with it whenever you can so that when you put that pack on, it feels like just another run. On the reverse side, you

don't need to be able to feed all the runners in the race, there will be check points. I continue to be amazed at the massive packs I see on the start line; kit lists are well thought through, pack that and a few extra calories and you will be fine.

**4. There will be ups and downs.** Anyone who has run an ultra knows that one minute the race is going perfectly and the next it can feel as though the world is about to end; getting lost, suddenly needing calories, a rapid change of weather or just plain crashing. In a 100 miler, these things are exacerbated and many people convince themselves that they can't go on. Accept that every down is followed by an up; you've done the training, you've got the right kit on, you are inside of the cut off, there is no reason not to continue. Break the course down into manageable chunks, this may be the distance until the next check point or may be the distance to the next tree line but this basic psychological approach will make the course more manageable.

**5. Watch the pace.** If you feel as though you are running the first 50 harder than you should be then you probably are. Most people will crash in the last 20 miles if they have worked too hard in the first 50, I know because I have done it and it really hurts. When I finally learnt my lesson I found myself overtaking people in the last 50 miles as opposed to witnessing people flood past me; it makes for a far happier race.

**6. Consider more than just food.** As ultra runners we obsess about what and when to eat, we train with what we plan to race with but sometimes it simply goes wrong. Accept that now and you won't be disappointed. At some point in a 100 miler you are likely to feel nausea like you have never felt it before, many people are sick but if you recognise that this is a possibility, then you can prepare. Eat little and often but if all else fails, make sure that you are getting enough water down you, your kidneys are

already under enough pressure and long term damage is a real risk. Ideally we need calories but we can survive without them, the same cannot be said for fluids (tea is my saviour).

**7. Run your own race.** I feel like I can race a 50 miler, but I can't race a 100 miler, many people can, just not me. Comparing yourself to others or trying to keep up with people you think you could beat will only lead to you crashing later in the race. Chat and enjoy the banter of the ultra running community but be prepared to wave to someone and tell them that you need to stick to your own pace. Don't feel disheartened when they disappear over the next hill, reward yourself with a pat on the back, you have done the right thing. You never know, you may see them again and the next time it will be you disappearing.

**8. Plan your training.** Whether you opt for a coach or just train yourself, make sure that you have some form of training plan and are accountable by filling in what you actually did each day. Shelley Gooch-Smith (shelleygoochsmith@gmail.com), ultra runner and running coach advises putting in a 100km race as an interim training step. She also suggests a super long run over night at the end of a busy week to get used to running on tired legs. Yes, a back to back run is beneficial, but a long night run will put more into the tank. Her final top tip is to run the last 25 miles of the race so that you know the route when you are tired, reducing the chances of getting lost.

Crossing the finishing line on that first 100 made me realise that I can do whatever I want to do. It's not about the distance; the preparation and the training will get me to the start line, a positive mindset will get me to the finish. As I suffer and struggle through a long race, I now know that it's worth every footstep, every stumble and every swear word. Go for it, stop thinking about it and get that race booked. Of course you will be fine, you're an Ultra Runner.

# Badwater Cape Fear 50k

Heather Strowd



Running the road section of the race  
photo by Jay Strowd and Jeff Carter

In March 2016 I ran Badwater Cape Fear 50k. By that time, I had been running for 5 years. In the beginning I was resistant to running. It was a love hate relationship that first year. January 2011 I signed up for my first running program - couch to 5K. I was probably about 25 pounds overweight at the time, drinking and smoking a pack of cigarettes a day. I was not happy with myself and wanted to make healthy changes in my life, quitting smoking and losing weight were my goals.

I still remember the very first day - run a minute, walk a minute for one mile. I was naive to think that it was going to be easy. As tough as running was in the beginning I did quit

smoking.

During my first year I had completed my first 5k, 10k and even my first ½ marathon. At the beginning I had always said I would never run farther than a 5K. And I could not imagine the distances that I would eventually run. Running helped me form healthier habits. You can't smoke a pack a day and train for races, my lungs hated it. I stopped smoking and the more I ran the pounds started coming off.

After my first half marathon I was really hooked on that distance. A marathon was daunting and seemed impossible to me. I knew how tough 13.1 miles felt, I couldn't imagine doubling the distance, but I was better at longer



Me in Carolina Coastal Reserve Trail  
photo by Brandi Carter

distances. Endurance over speed is where I perform best. The next year or two I was running at least half a dozen half marathons a year.

Then in 2013 I discovered marathons and ultramarathons. By this time, I had been following Badwater 135 each July and which starts in Death Valley, CA. I was fascinated by each athlete and the journey each would face over the 48-hour time period. Deep down I hoped that one day I would be able to run that race. Excitedly I was now looking toward my first Ultra experience which would be Hinson Lake 24 Hour Ultra Classic held in Rockingham, NC each September. The first year Hinson Lake was a training run in preparation for my first marathon two months

later in Savannah, GA. I ran 34 miles and finished my first 50K in about 8 hours and went home after that since running 24 hours was something I didn't think I was ready for. But after that day I couldn't wait for the next one.

Over the next few years I added more ultras into my racing schedule and more miles to my training plan. By the time 2015 rolled around I was in what I consider my best shape and training. By this time, I had learned that there were other Badwater race options besides Badwater 135 that I would be ready and capable of participating in. I had several big races planned for late 2015 through Spring 2016 including Badwater Cape Fear. I managed to convince my friend and running partner Brandi to



Crossing the finish line  
photo by Jay Strowd and Jeff Carter



Just starting out on the beach- we didn't know what we were in for yet  
photo by Chris Kostman

sign up. This was our BIG goal race for the year. The next six months would be full of many race challenges, but I was not ready for the life altering event that was right around the corner.

September arrived and it was time for Hinson Lake once again. This year I ran 66 miles in the 24-hour time limit and finished my first 100K. Then just two weeks later life took a devastating turn when my father unexpectedly died from severe head trauma after a fall. Life that day came to a screeching halt.

As I was dealing with the loss of my dad and all the grief, I took solace in my training time. I could just be outside, clearing my head and running. Instead of therapy, I ran. During those next few months I had no idea of what I was

going to be able to achieve in the upcoming races. First up was One Epic Run a 24-hour trail race at Croft State Park in Spartanburg, SC. Little did I know when I first registered for the race that this was a 3.1 mile loop on technical trails. I had NO trail experience at this point and figured I'd run a few miles and call it a day. I finished 27.9 miles before stopping for the day. I did regret not running one more lap to complete my first 50k on trails.

Two months later I was headed to Florida for the Tallahassee Marathon. It was bittersweet since I had registered for this race almost a year earlier when my dad was still alive. At the time I thought I would be crossing the finish line with both my mom and dad watching. After the race I

# Race Reports



Finishers  
photo by Chris Kostman

knew dad was there that day. I was having a great race, it would be a PR but had no idea until I crossed the finish line that I had shaved 9 minutes off my

previous PR. To make the day extra special I placed 3<sup>rd</sup> in my age group. I was ecstatic to place in a marathon.

A month later I was traveling to Bald Head Island in North Carolina with Brandi for Badwater Cape Fear. Bald Head Island is unique, it is a car free island and golf carts are your source of transportation. Before you get to drive the golf carts you first take the ferry from Southport over to the island. Once we arrived we were shuttled to our beach front house for the long weekend.

The next day we were off to packet pick up and to get our mugshots taken which is customary for all participants of a Badwater race. Excitement was building as we saw many athletes that had finished Badwater 135. In a way it was like being amongst celebrities. The weekend is filled with lots of events which give racers a chance to reconnect with other friends or make new ones. Chris Kostman the race

director puts on a well-organized and fun event.

Saturday morning, we made our way to the Old Baldy Lighthouse which is the race start for both the 50k and 51.4 mile races. It was about 57 degrees at the start. The race is run on a variety of different surfaces. At 7:45 am all the runners take off for roughly 10.5 miles on the streets of the island. Since most of the races and training we do was on the road we maintained a solid pace through the road section. From there it was a mile and a half through the thick trails of the North Carolina Coastal Reserve Trail. At times we found ourselves ducking under large trees or climbing over them to continue along the path. Once we emerged from the woods we made our way to the longest and what would end up being the toughest section of the race - 19 miles of beach. We took off



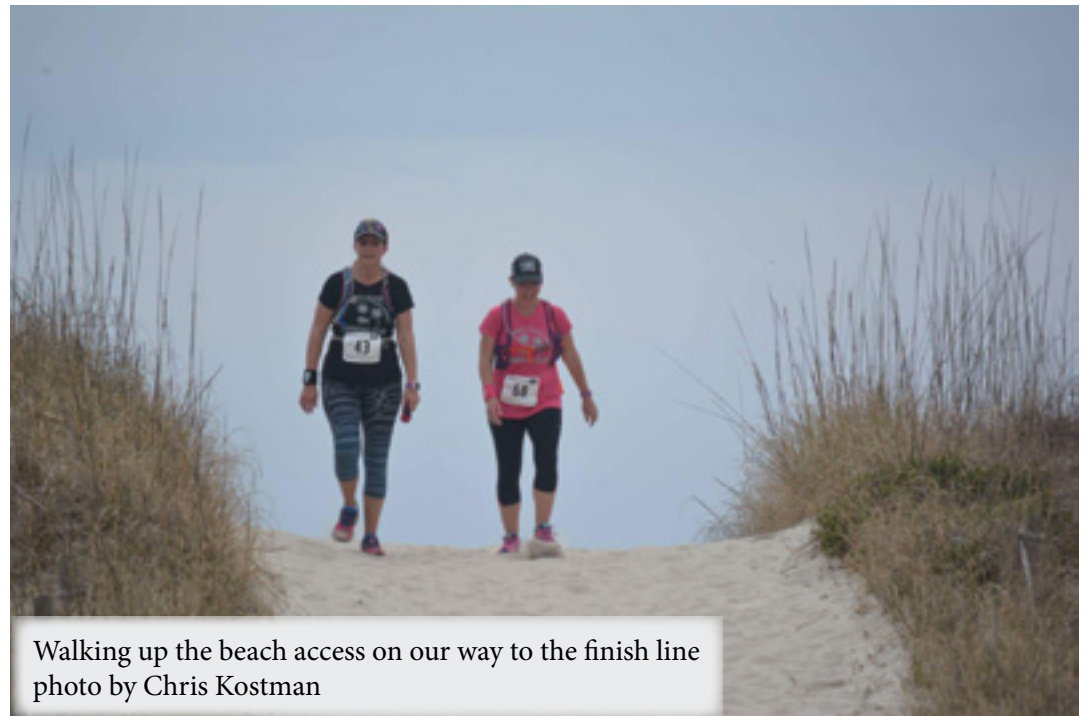
Getting my finishers medal from race director Chris Kostman  
photo by Jay Strowd and Jeff Carter

east on South Beach and about  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile later we were making another left and now heading north on East Beach towards Fort Fisher which was just shy of 10 miles away. The tide can play a big factor in the race. When the tide is high you can find yourself having to run through the ocean instead of running on the packed sand. Fortunately for us we were lucky not to have to contend with that variable and were able to keep our feet dry.

There are 2 aid stations, one about half way to Fort Fisher and the other at Fort Fisher. For the 50k we hit the aid stations at mile 17, 22 and 26 before the last 5 mile push to the finish. For those running the 51.4 mile race they would have to run the beach section twice, about 38 miles. The aid stations were very well stocked, and the volunteers always seemed to know exactly what we needed when we came in. Getting to the aid stations was tough. We had to leave the comfort of the packed sand and climb up through the loose sand to get to the aid stations. Sneakers and socks were filled with sand and weighed you down.

We reached Fort Fisher and were feeling good. At the time I didn't realize that Fort Fisher was the only place that you could bail out of the race if things weren't going well for you. Once you left Fort Fisher you were on your own to get back to the finish line.

Brandi and I had set a goal of 6 hours and 30 minutes to complete the 50k. We



Walking up the beach access on our way to the finish line  
photo by Chris Kostman

based this on our current race times and factoring in the long section on sand which we did absolutely no training on. As we took off from Fort Fisher for our last 9.8 miles the temperatures were increasing, and the heat was starting to take its toll. I was struggling to keep up and had to walk more than I wanted. The thought of jumping into the ocean had crossed my mind. At times it felt like we weren't making any progress, the beach seemed to stretch on forever. Finally, we made it to the right turn back on to South Beach. We were so close to the end, just over the thick sand of the beach access and through the finish line. Brandi and I surprised ourselves that day with a finish time of 6:26:35. We tied for 11<sup>th</sup> place over all and I was thrilled with my 4<sup>th</sup> place age group finish. Badwater Cape Fear is one of the most fun and exciting races I have run with plenty to challenge you. I'll be heading back there next year or by 2020

with the goal of earning my first Badwater buckle.

Since Badwater Cape Fear I have completed my first multiday race and finally broke 100+ miles. In a few weeks I will be back at Hinson Lake for my 6<sup>th</sup>

year straight. The last 10 months have been plagued with burn out, sickness and injury but I am looking forward to new races, goals and friendships as I finish out 2018 and look toward 2019.



Outside racer check in  
photo by Jay Strowd and Jeff Carter

# Wasatch Front 100-Mile Endurance Run

Gabrielle Harris



Photo credit Joshua Holer

“100 miles of Heaven and Hell,” that is how the Wasatch Front website refers to the race and it proved to be true. As I type this, over a month after the race took place, I am still trying to figure out the Heaven part. This point-to-point race takes place in Utah, starting in Kaysville and ending in Soldier Hollow with approximately 24,000 feet of elevation gain and 23,000 feet of loss in between. Runners have 36 hours to complete it. Throw in yellow jackets, (wasps), exposure, heat, heat, and more heat and you have an idea of hell. What was I thinking?? Why did I sign up for another 100-mile race and up to 36 hours of suffering?? How did I end up in the middle of Utah, standing in the dirt at 05:00 with 300 other ultra crazy people wondering if I'd be able to finish this race?

I swore after my first 100-mile race that I would not run one again unless my name was drawn to enter the Hardrock 100 or Western States. My name was not drawn for either race, and instead of relieved I was sad. I had heard of the Wasatch 100, and contemplated entering the lottery. Finally, on the last day you could enter, I did. I won, if you call it winning. I didn't think it would happen. I was in over my head. I didn't realize how much elevation gain the race called for, I didn't factor in that it

would be a destination race for me. Finding family and friends to crew and pace presented another challenge. I feared I'd be running it unsupported and frankly along with the elevation profile the course directions scared me. I have chronic calf issues making me prone to injuries and climbing is the biggest trigger of pain for me. I am also notorious for not training; this is in part because I am always managing myself so I don't get injured. I also suffered a high sprain on my left ankle at the end of December and I kept spraining that same ankle. My intentions to train properly were once again thwarted. After another high sprain in June I managed to stay pretty healthy the rest of the summer, but that was by managing my mileage and doing a lot of cross training. I probably ran around 550 miles (including other races) before starting the Wasatch race. At this point I had no pacers lined up and I still had to meet the trail work requirements for race entry. Finally, I put a post up on Facebook and on the Wasatch “Pacers Wanted” page and I got a hit! I was very excited but also a little fearful, I'd be running with a complete stranger through the night, but I wouldn't be alone. My pacer turned out to be amazing, as the summer progressed, he actually went and scoped out the course and reported back to



me. He helped me prepare. I got my trail work done in August, just before the deadline. My parents, an aunt and uncle decided to come crew for me. Things were starting to align.

September rolls along and race week arrives. I got to meet my pacer Ryan for the first time at the pre-race briefing (possibly the shortest briefing ever). I also saw my new friend Mike and his wife Tina. Mike and I met during trail work, we both were completing for entry to the race and became friends. Our paces sounded similar so we decided we'd start the race together.

Friday September 7<sup>th</sup> 2018, the race finally began. Mike and I start together. The first 17 miles of the course scares me, as it ascends 5,000 feet over the first 8 miles, most of the gain occurs from mile 3.49 to mile 6.66, a devil of a climb on technical terrain in the dark. We are marching along in the conga line going up the first incline, and suddenly from up ahead I heard a startled cry followed by "yellow jackets"! I was lucky enough to get by the spot without a single sting but heard several people exclaim. I didn't know much about yellow jacket wasps, but I learned they do not die after one sting like a bee does, they continue to sting you.

After three hours we reach the top of the first major climb, making it to Francis Peak Radar Towers. The views are beautiful. You can see Salt Lake City

below in the gentle light of the sunrise. Miraculously my calves were feeling decent. The race then takes you along a jeep road and it starts to descend. I had been warned not to fly down this hill as most runners are tempted to and many drop at the Alexander Ridge Aid Station (AS) at approximately mile 40. Downhill is my favorite, but I keep myself in check. Arriving at the first AS, Bountiful B at mile 17, I am feeling pretty good but I spent too much time chatting and eating. It has already been hot and it's only around 10:30am. I put ice in a bandana and wear this around my neck to help keep cool. The AS had otter pops and I probably had four of these! I finally get moving and continue along the beautiful exposed terrain, you can see Francis Peak in the distance, slowly getting smaller. I continue the trend of putting ice in my bandana at AS's and make my way along. My friend Mike is still with me, but his stomach is bothering him, so we separate around mile 23. It has been hot and exposed and more heat and exposure to come.

At Big Mountain AS, mile 32, my family waits. My family was anxious to help. They want me to rest. I know this is a bad idea and I need to keep my time here to a minimum. I spend too much time at Big Mountain but eventually I am on my way. For the most part feeling good but I had to make more stops in the woods than I'd like already but with the stops I felt

a little better. Alexander Ridge was probably the hottest and most exposed part of the course. Off to the right is a beautiful lake, so inviting yet so far away. I am already having thoughts of abandoning the race and I am about 37 miles in. I continue, blisters had formed earlier on both of my big toes, probably around 20 miles in. I come to the downhill leading into the next AS at mile 40. I want to make myself run fast but my blistered toes and the large rocks on the trail are not helping matters so I proceed cautiously running as fast I can trying to cause as little pain as possible. I arrive, I'm hot, hungry and my stomach doesn't feel great, but I know I need some real food. I must have really gotten behind somewhere, as there wasn't much food to choose from. It's getting late, there are so many runners sitting under the canopy, I wonder if they are dropping. I don't think about dropping here as I am almost to my family and pacer. I eat as much as I can and head out. After I am down a hill I realize I left my water bottle... so I ran back up joking that this must be the Hotel California (song by the Eagles) "You can check out any time you like, but you can never leave,"

I left the AS after getting my water bottle; this next section of the course is on a jeep road with rolling hills. I'm feeling low and know I need to get my spirits up, but I clearly need more food, so I continue on to Lambs. I run by a

man who seems to be even less positive than I am. So I remind myself that one of the things I enjoy most is helping others. I try to cheer him up and see if he needs anything, but he was recently stung nine times by wasps. The AS was close and he made it in. I get to Lambs AS after 14.5 hours of running. This is mile 45, I have been out since 05:00 and I am still not even halfway! I know letting the negativity set in is bad, but I just can't pull out of this mood. They make me eat a cheeseburger and it stays down. I pick up my pacer Ryan, cold weather gear, and headlamp. I am starting to get concerned about the cut-offs but I am still ahead of the 10:30pm cut-off 2.5 hours at this point. My poor pacer having only met me the day before was probably a bit worried about my state of mind to say the least! I was completely grouchy and exhausted, and Ryan was taking me all the way to the finish, over half the course still ahead and the darkness was closing in with the setting sun.

The race continues on paved road. I miss the trail; pavement hurts more. Before getting back on the trail we saw a bobcat peering out at us from behind some brush. We finally leave the road and enter the section called Lambs Canyon; Aspens surround us. I hear this is one of the prettiest sections of the course but unfortunately it's dark at this point for me. I should be running more of this section but I am tired. I

Photo: Dana Miller



think the entire day of the hot sun bearing down with little cover left me exhausted. As we continue through the canyon and the hours tick by we run by folks who've passed us and we pass again. As we run along, the trail loops around like a candy cane and the runner ahead hollers out, "moose, just off the side of the trail!!" So we slow to a walk and carefully walk by. The moose was huge and only three feet from the trail! If the moose had tried to charge we would have fallen off the other side of the trail and been goners! We continued on and safely looked back to warn other runners. The moose was quite content to just watch and munch on grass.

At 11:24pm we arrive at

the Upper Big Water AS, finally over half way at mile 53. I am beyond tired and cold. Next stop is Desolation Lake at mile 58. I am excited, my boyfriend and I had come out over the summer to scope it out. It was simply beautiful during the day, I wouldn't see much at night but at least I had an idea of the terrain, a steady incline but not too technical, still surrounded by Aspens. We get to the next AS and I decide I am going to take a nap. My energy drinks were not cutting it, I was so tired. I've never napped during a race before, but I figured it was worth a shot. I gulped down more energy drink and a nice man shared a caffeine pill with me. I decided to take it. There was still a lot of night ahead. We power hike up

to a spot I know of on the ridge and I lay down for 5 minutes. Then we were on our way. The ridge was beautiful, one side you can see the lights of Park City and on the other Salt Lake. The night was stunning, the sky was clear and the stars were bright and numerous.

The caffeine pill helped and I was moving faster. As we descend from Scott's Peak you can see headlamps of the runners behind you, high above on the ridge, it was pretty cool. As we continue toward Brighton AS at mile 67, we realize I somehow got close to cut-offs. At Upper Big Mountain I was about 3 hours ahead and now I am close to an hour ahead. I stroll into Brighton hungry, very excited to go to an actual bathroom and

brush my teeth! I arrived there at 5:13am; the cutoff is 6:30am. A 10-time Wasatch finisher I had met at race check-in saw me and made me hustle out as fast as I could. Mike got into Brighton just after I did and we all left together.

We were officially chasing cutoffs; the highest point ahead, Point Supreme. There is approximately 1,702 feet of gain to the top. The climbing never really stopped. The way out of Brighton was somewhat technical with large boulders and smaller rocks. We made it to the top and finally had some downhill again, but my feet were in so much pain I had to run slow. We made it to the next check in point with about 45 minutes to spare. The plan had been to run

Photo: Dana Miller



as much as possible while it was still cooler out. We continue running wherever it's runnable. They say the last 20 miles is all downhill... not true! There was still a ton of uphill and the downhill sections were technical and rocky. I sprained my ankle several times and by 80 miles I felt like I was running on a broken ankle. I was not quitting after 80 miles. The heat was back early and the terrain exposed. We had a short reprieve with light rain; it was marvelous! At mile 84 just before the next AS I feel a sharp pain in my left calf, I reach down and there is a wasp stuck in my compression sock! That hurt, but luckily I only got stung once.

Still chasing cutoffs but we continue on. Some of the friends I had made along the way were running

with us as well. It was a nice group and cool to see people I'd met still pushing to make it to the next stop in time. There was still some minor climbing to do but for the most part the race was now on a jeep road and much of it level or downhill. My feet and my ankle at this point are just killing me with every step and the uneven jeep road is so rutted you constantly have to move from the left to the right side, to the middle and back to wherever you can find the smoothest terrain. It's quite possibly the worst jeep road ever. Not to mention it's HOT and exposed.

We made it into the Staton AS at mile 89 about an hour before the cutoff. We realize that we really can finish this race. We take a little time at the AS to eat and hydrate and visit with some

of the others we've met along the way. We finally head out and there is one last gradual climb up the road. Eventually we leave the road and we are back on single track. We make to the last AS at 2:30pm, 6.5 miles to go! It is still hot and the course is still exposed. The last several miles run along the Deer Creek Reservoir, it looks cold and refreshing, we had been running for 33.5 hours. It was torture and the trail just kept going and going and going. It seemed like we would never get to the finish. We finally made it. Mike and I finished together. We finished in 162<sup>nd</sup> position after 35 hours and 16 minutes. That race was brutal. Our friends we had made along the way also finished the race.

So where was the Heaven in this? It was beautiful, no

question. Even the night was stunning with the sky brightly lit by starlight, but there is also the beauty within when you know you can finish and you will. The moments where you only have 20 miles and you are chasing cut-offs with friends you've made who are in the same boat. You realize this and hold back the tears of joy because you need the water, but that feeling, if you haven't felt that way, get out there and challenge yourself, it's good for the soul. One of these years I am going to actually be healthy and train properly and maybe I'll suffer less, maybe I won't but the reward is the beauty of the landscape, the stars on a clear night, the new friendships and the support of loved ones, and finally the ability to overcome and persevere. That's the Heaven of the Wasatch 100.

# Bear 100

Joe Heywood  
Photos courtesy Jim Heywood



I was a 45 year old middle of the pack ultra runner in my first ever 100 mile event lying on my back at the Mile 62 aid station at Franklin Basin, looking up at the tent walls and enjoying the warmth provided by the wood burning stove being stoked by volunteers on a cold mountain night. I was done. My race was over. My left ankle had decided it didn't like running this far, so it swelled up and tendons, tissue, and muscle were painfully inflamed. I had hobbled down the mountain valley in the dark 2 hours behind schedule after a perfectly executed "hike up the mountain, run easily down the mountain" strategy for the first half of the race. Just hours before, rolling out of the Mile 52 aid station, I was in high spirits, knowing that the second half of the race had less elevation gain and more runnable terrain. I was going to make my goal of 27-30 hours in a tough mountain 100 that included 22,000 feet of vertical gain – until my ankle said, "Not today."

I had prepared for 12 months for this race. I had carefully built up for other races (a 50 miler in March and a 50K in August), thrown in a few shorter trail races, and spent long hours in the high mountain country where I live in western Wyoming. My favorite workout of the summer was hiking and running up Haystack Peak via an old horse trail – the route is 5 miles from my doorstep to the summit and includes 4,000 feet of vertical gain. Views of the Wind River Range and the Grand Tetons are my reward before running back down 5 miles on scree slopes and single track down through pine forest into the farm country around my house. I had backed off of running when injuries popped up or pains said, "Take it easy this week." I was fit and prepared. My last mental test about a month prior to the Bear 100, was to night solo, with my dog, the high alpine race route of the El Vaquero Loco 50K which includes over 8,000 feet of vertical gain over the 30 miles

climbing up over 10,000 foot mountain passes. I spent the night alone running the route after a week of tough mountain running on tired legs to prepare myself mentally and physically to push through the night of my first 100 miler. My good friend, Ty Draney, an accomplished ultra runner who has won the Bear 100, ran miles 52-100 the past summer of the Bear route, so I would know what to expect in the second half. He gave me tips and advice as we explored the route. I was as prepared as I could be for the race and my planned mid-pack finish.

The Bear 100 started at 6:00 AM on a Friday morning in September. No snow or rain and moderate temperatures made for a perfect weekend of racing. There is an immediate climb of 10 miles and several thousand feet followed by a long descent of 10 miles and thousands of feet. This is the pattern of the entire Bear 100 route as it climbs and descends over and over again through stunning valleys and ridges of pines and aspens, rich with fall colors of gold and greens and reds. Most of the race is single track trail, ATV routes and forest roads. The aid stations are approximately every 7-10 miles, and they are staffed with the most amazing volunteers. I rolled through the first 45 miles hiking up and running down at a moderate pace to keep me on track for a 28 hour finish, saving energy for a second half with more running. I ate well, hydrated well, and stayed positive even when the typical aches and pains and fatigue crept in from about Mile 25 onward.

I met my crew (wife, dad, brother, and friend) for the first time at Mile 45. From there on, one of them paced me for various segments. The sun set around Mile 50, and life was good (though a little painful and tiring). I thought about all of this as I lay in that tent at Mile 62, thinking my race was over. My time goal was out, and I thought about quitting and trying another 100 miler that year after my ankle healed. But my crew decided otherwise. They suggested I take some pain meds, tape up my ankle, and at least push to the next aid station. I finally snapped out of my mental funk and listened to them. I sat up and said, "Okay, let's go."

So after an hour of lying there feeling sorry for myself, they pushed me out into the cold night air at 3:00 AM. For the next 15 hours, I climbed up mountain ridges and ran down mountain ridges as best I could from aid station to aid station with the new goal in mind of just finishing the race under the 36 hour cut-off. For 38 miles, my left ankle and leg tightened more and more, painfully telling me it was injured and that I should stop. The undying encouragement of my crew and pacers kept me going. I was tired and in serious pain, but I wanted to finish this race more than I wanted to lie down and quit. With each mile, my discouragement would rise as I felt it was mathematically impossible for me to cover the distance in the time remaining at my pace. But my pacers and crew just said, "Keep going to the next aid station. You're going



to make it." We rolled on and on through pine forests and aspen groves and high mountain meadows. The Bear 100 course is among one of the most beautiful courses in the world as it puts on a full mountain display of fall before welcoming in winter. We raced under stars and moon and crested a high mountain saddle in an aspen grove just as the sun was rising over a distant pine ridge. I loved spending time with my dad and brother on the trail, and I was carried by my friend Wes, who had taken me through the roughest miles from 62-93, willing me on with his encouragement.



## Race Reports

When I reached Mile 93, the final aid station, we had 3 hours and 40 minutes before the cut-off to climb the last mountain and descend to the shores of Bear Lake. My wife joined me for that painfully beautiful stretch descending down through the forest with expansive views of Bear Lake below us. At one point on the steep six mile descent, she got up on her toes and said, "If you kind of dance down through the rocks on this steep trail, it might be easier than hiking down." I looked at her probably with the same look I would have given if she had suggested I flap my arms and "just fly down." But I tried to run when I could. We finally made it to the tiny lakeside hamlet of Fish Haven. We ran the final mile into the small town and crossed the finish line 195<sup>th</sup> out of 222 finishers (350 started the race) in 34 hours and 50 minutes. I hugged my crew and pacers, who had willed me to the finish, and slumped down in the grass having finished my first 100. It was painful, it was difficult, and my leg would take weeks to heal, but it was all worth it to cross that finish line. For us middle of the pack, and for me on this day, back of the pack runners, the finish line is our podium and reaching it with family and friends in the midst of great trial is as satisfying to me as any podium I have ever stood on. The Bear 100 is one of the most pleasantly gruelling races in America.





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# NorthCoast 24 Hour 2018

Text by Pdraig Mullins Photos by Stuart Siegfried



NorthCoast 24 is the home of the US 24 hour National Championships in Cleveland, Ohio. The course is a 0.882 mile loop in Edgewater Park on the shores of Lake Erie. I went into the race with two goals, my A goal being 140 miles, the B goal being the Irish national team qualifying mark of 220k/ 136.2 miles.

For once I felt pretty good leading up to it. Training all year has gone well and I had no real injuries or aches and pains of note. Couple that with a pretty strong showing at Dawn2Dusk2Dawn in May, where I managed to snatch a win and a PR of 132.7 miles, left me quietly optimistic that after a fair few disappointments that I could finally pull it off. During the week I had a peek at the entrants list and being the National Championships, most of the big boys were there. I usually run my own race but I broke down

the entrants list and figured that the top placing would be decided between Dave Johnston, the 4 time Iditarod champion, US team members Adrian Stanciu, Harvey Lewis, Joe Fejes, Olivier Leblond, Welshman Steve Speirs, and one or two “wildcard” picks that always seem to show up. Plus on the ladies side you had Megan Alvarado, Emily Collins, Charlotte Vasarhelyi, and Jasmine Chiaramonte to contend with. Out of that list I had put Olivier as the one guy who I knew I wouldn't get near. Harvey would be the same ordinarily but I was banking on him being tired after his Appalachian Trail speed record attempt and subsequent Badwater double. Despite being left out of Joe Fejes' famous/infamous race preview, which lit the fire under my ass a bit more, I wasn't losing faith. (We had a bit of a laugh over that during the race)



So the race started out in the 50's with a gale force wind blowing in off the lake but the forecast called for no rain and the wind to die down. For once it was right and it settled down after 5 hours or so. The first loop started off with Harvey and Olivier leading the way with myself and my good buddy Steve Speirs tucked in behind them. It should be noted that we're probably only friends because nobody can understand us! Steve and I were chatting away, when the topic of race strategies came up. I won't mention who said it but the words "Fuck it, let's go out hard was mentioned" and something along the lines of "whatever Harvey and Olivier do, we'll do". Suicide straight off the bat! But we agreed to go for it but if we blew up we'd stay on the course for the entire 24 hours. So that's what we did and we took off. Some would call it stupidity but sometimes you can pull it off.

We found ourselves in the lead shortly after but Steve was having a bit of a rough patch so dropped back a little. I felt pretty good so kept it going, clipping off the laps in the 6:30-7 min range. My plan was to follow "The Bob Hearn pacing plan", which is to try and maintain 20 miles every 3 hours. I've never been able to hit 12 hrs and still be on pace but that was my aim. To have a chance of this you've got to have a crew who knows you and I'm lucky enough to have the best in the business in my girlfriend, Wendy, who's sat in every kind of condition to cater to my needs. She has things running like clockwork. It's vital. As far as nutrition, I'm pretty simple. A bottle of water or Skratch for the electrolytes, a sup of Lucozade every so often, salt tabs on the hour and a gel on the half, a yogurt smoothie or a tapioca pudding when I'm feeling the hunger, everything was on hand and always taken on the move.

I think I probably led for 9 or 10 hours until Olivier cruised past me looking as if he just started running. I honestly didn't panic or try to catch him as I knew his goals and my goals were very different. He just looked so effortless for the whole day and really is a class act, a different level. I got to the 12 hour mark with 81.1 miles on the watch and felt very in control. I remember saying to Wendy that I could break 15 hours for a 100 miles if I wanted to but I'm going to pull it back a little. I learned a valuable lesson at a race in Ottawa a few years ago where I had the chance to break 16 hours for a 100 miles, went for it and succeeded but my race after it was ruined. It wasn't going to happen again. I eventually hit 100 miles at 15:14 and still feeling great. Until the 18th hour or so when my stomach decided it had enough of this silliness. Every second loop I ran I tried to get some food or calories into me but by the time I rounded the corner I was bent over a bench, throwing it all back up. The decision was made to go with just water from here on. In my mind I had the hard miles put in, it was just about managing the situation now.

With a 139 miles on the clock, I stopped for the first time all day and decided to switch out of my Topo's, which

served me so well again, for something with a bit more cushion, the Altra Paradigms, or clown shoes as Wendy calls them. I took in the moment and walked the last few laps and eventually finished with 142.42 miles and second to Olivier Leblond who finished with 161+miles. I always thought that the day I broke 220k that it would be exhilarating but it was more a feeling of relief more than anything else.

After many years of disappointment it was very satisfying to finally put myself in with a shout to pull on a green singlet.



# Race Reports

Greg Bergeron

## THE PEAK K

50K • MOUNTAIN MARATHON • HALF MARATHON

This view never gets old... From atop Cuyamaca Peak, the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest peak in San Diego county (at 6515 ft.), you can see for 50+ miles on clear days. And today was a warm and clear day to run the Peak. I've been coming up here for

several years now, mostly on training runs with some of the local running groups. In spring when the flowers are blooming, the hills are alive with color. The peak even gets snow in the winter time. Imagine that! Snow in San Diego – it really does happen!

But no snow today... Instead, about 200 adventurous souls faced the heat and the hills in their attempt to conquer the Peak. Run the Peak is put on by Pinnacle Endurance, where they have a half-marathon, mountain marathon, and 50K options.



For the marathon, you start at the base of Cuyamaca Peak, run to the top, run down the other side, then turn around and do it all over again. The half-marathon just goes to the top and back down. The 50K is similar to the marathon, but does a 5-mile loop around the far aid station before heading back up to the Peak. It's about 5,400 ft. of elevation gain for the marathon distance – which really puts the MOUNTAIN in mountain marathon. Sheesh! ☺

It was already in the low 70s at the start as us marathoners and 50K runners grinded our way up Middle Peak, the first climb of the day. The long shadows and silhouettes made excellent opportunities for this photographing runner.

After climbing for about 2.5 miles, we were rewarded with about a mile of welcome downhill running.



Then the fun began (*he says with tongue firmly planted in cheek*): heading up the Conejos trail. It's a several mile section of gnarly and rocky single track heading to the Peak. I usually run down this section of trail and it's always slow going because the rocks are large and loose. For some reason though, going up today it was much easier. Yeah!

And even though the climbs are relentless, the views are amazing as seen here looking back at the perfectly triangular-shaped Middle Peak (*above*). Here, I ran with

Patrick Armstrong for a ways as he sported his Boston Red Sox hat. We chatted some about how the Sox were leading the AL East and I asked how he became a fan. He used to live in Worcester, Massachusetts. Of course, he pronounced it properly as, “Wuh-stah”. 😊 You gotta love that Boston accent!



After a 6+ mile climb and 1400+ ft. of net gain we finally reached the Peak and the view to die for. Looking east you can see Stonewall Peak, Lake Cuyamaca, North Peak, and many more in the distance.

Here we're greeted by the friendly and helpful Sean and Bonny (*at right*), the seasoned aid station captains. The experienced crew of Lin, Chad, Jamie, Jonathan, and Tom were ready to help us with anything we needed. Like most aid stations around these parts, the first words out of the volunteers are, “What do you need?” Typical aid station fare was in abundance: fruit, sweet stuff, salty stuff, water, Tailwind, and ice. Lots of it. Jamie was even spraying people down with a mister – which was very refreshing! I put some ice in my hat as it was definitely warming up now. It was probably in the mid to high 70s by now.



# Race Reports

After soaking in the views, chatting with my friends, and snapping a few pictures, it was time to get plugging away down the hill to the Sweetwater aid station, 7 miles away. I got this great quote at a different ultra many years ago, "This ain't no coffee klatch, get moving!" ☺ I try to keep that in mind at aid stations: have a plan, execute the plan, and move on.

I ran most of the way down with Kevin Hopp (*at right*). There are many turns on this section but it was easy to stay on course when you follow the ribbons. Most wrong way turns were marked with chalk to indicate: go the other way.



At the bottom of the hill, the road crossing (*pictured above*) led to the Sweetwater aid station and the turnaround for the marathon distance. The 50K runners would do a 5-mile loop and come back to Sweetwater, then return up the Peak.

I was met with a warm welcome from my friends Erica, Mary, Kristin (*at left*), and Victor (*the one taking the picture*) representing the San Diego Dirt Devils. *And don't pay any attention to Mike photo-bombing in the background.* ☺

They took great care of me by filling my hydration bladder, dousing me with cold water, and wetting my neck towel. Any effort to cool off was welcome as it was clearly warming up and only getting

hotter as the day went along. I even bumped into a woman from Vermont. It's a small world... I grabbed some Nilla wafers, pretzels, and bacon. YES BACON!! I don't know who brought it, but thank you, thank you, thank you. There's never a bad time for bacon. ☺

After saying my goodbyes, it was time to head back up. I'm not gonna lie, it was a tough slog. My stomach was not cooperating, it was hot, and I had to climb up 2300 ft. in the 7 mile trek back to the Peak. While it was great to see some friends still coming down, while I was heading up, I knew for them they had a long day ahead as they still had to do the extra 5-mile loop before heading back up. Yikes.

I walked plenty on the way up, but I ran when I could. After a few miles, I came to my 2<sup>nd</sup> favorite spot on the course: this stretch of the West Mesa Loop trail (*below*). It's as though a Kansas wheat field, with its golden crop, was dropped on top of this mountain and someone created a trail through it. Not to mention, the amazing view to the east looking down from 5,000 ft. It... is... breathtaking! It's a less than half a mile section but it still gives me goose bumps.



After making a turn onto the Burnt Pine trail, you begin a series of switchbacks that bring you back to the Peak. There's a spectacular section here that brought welcome relief from the sun. The bushes are so tall, you almost feel like you're in a tunnel (*at right*).

Here, I tried to employ a plan of: run in the sun and walk in the shade. Fortunately there was shade, but far too little. And I couldn't always run in the sun. But I kept up with RFP: Relentless Forward Progress.



# Race Reports

The heat and hills were taking their toll but I slogged my way back to the Peak and to my friends, who were ready to assist in any way possible. In fact, my friend Jaime, who was running her first 50K trail race, arrived at the aid station but none of the drinks looked good to her: the ginger ale, Tailwind, water... Nope. She asked if anyone had a beer. Of course the crew had a beer! She took a couple of slugs and it brought the bounce back in her step. Awesome! That's the way to run an aid station!! ☺

OK, so it's net downhill from here to the finish but I knew there was still some climbing to come on the way back up around the back side of Middle Peak. After, refilling and refueling, I headed out to finish the last 7 miles.

As before, I made my way carefully down the rocky and treacherous Conejos trail. I bumped into my friend Sarah on this section of trail. She just happened to be out here doing her own training run. Excellent! It's always great to see friendly faces out on the trails.

Conejos dumps you out onto the Azalea Springs fire road and to a pleasantly surprising extra aid station! They setup a water and ice-only aid station with about 5 miles to go. Nice! Of course, the ice in my hat had already melted so it was outstanding to get a new batch and some more ice cold water. I trudged up the almost 2-mile section around the backside of Middle Peak. As always, even though the climbs are tough, you are rewarded with excellent vistas of far off mountains.

After reaching the high point on this section of trail, it's only about 3 miles to the finish and it's all downhill. Honestly: all downhill. ☺ So, I picked up the pace and proceeded to run the last 3 miles – as best as I could. I got passed by the first two 50K runners. It's a little humbling but I always try to keep it in perspective: they run their race and I run mine. Also, I'm not competing against them, I'm competing against myself.

I made my way down to the road and the final push to the finish where they draped the flashy finisher's medal around my neck! It's a great piece of hardware for an awesome event.



Vito La Bella (*left*) and John Martinez (*right*), the race directors for the Peak, put on one hell of an event. The course was marked well, the aid stations were stocked with excellent food and friendly volunteers. Although, next year maybe you could turn the heat and humidity down just a tad, that'd be great. ☺

Visit [Pinnacle Endurance](#) for more events and info.

# 6633 Arctic Ultra Race

## The Environment and Mental Health Awareness

Hayley White



I am currently training for a Race known as the 6633 Arctic Ultra in March 2019, (380 miles in conditions averaging around -45°). There are only 16 athletes from around the globe currently registered for the event (of which two are female. Myself and a Lady called Florentina Iofcea who is representing Romania). This is an international race and I am proud to be representing the Country.

The race name is derived from the coordinates - The Arctic is the polar region north of the Arctic Circle, or

north of the latitude 66° 33'

I have been an ultra distance runner for some years. I have competed in races such as the Marathon Des Sables (run across the Sahara 2016 finishing 11th GB Female), Deadwater (new Ultra race last year running from Scotland to Wales finishing 2nd female). More recently the Pennine Barrier Ultra (June 2018 finishing 5th female) and The Bullock Smithy (Sept 2018 finishing 3rd Female) and 17<sup>th</sup> overall out of 250 runners. My training is going exceptionally well.

I am also a PT and Medical Exercise Specialist. To find out more about me click onto Puregym – Northwich Gym – [Hayley White](#).

As an established, experienced trainer I have raised considerable funds over the last 20 plus years of running. Competing in the 6633 I have decided to raise funds for two charities, Heads Together (The umbrella charity for other charities such as Mind and founded by their Royal Highnesses William, Kate and Harry). The second for “OK” (a local charity in Northwich founded by Coaches of a local rugby club – Winnington). I have worked and still work with many who suffer with depression/mental health. It the 17 years of my work it has become apparent that more people (especially men) are struggling with different levels of mental stress, their health and depression. I have lost 2 clients recently, they both took their own lives. The “OK” charity was founded after my son’s rugby coach unexpectedly also took his life.

I shall endeavour to raise as much money as I can for the charities who continue to increase awareness of mental health issues. I am sincerely hoping that due to the extreme and unique challenge of the race, it will attract much attention and hence sponsorship.

Donate @ [www.justgiving.com/fundraising/hayley-white26](http://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/hayley-white26)

6633 Arctic Ultra website: [www.6633ultra.com/](http://www.6633ultra.com/)

Follow [Hayley on Facebook](#)

# We Are The Road Crew

Photos and text Mick Farrar



*When Krar's wife, Christina Bauer, and I arrived at a crewing clinic the day before that first ultra race, we were told that "crew" actually stood for "cranky runner, endless waiting."*

**Erin Strout**

Maria at the start of the Downslink Ultra in October 2017



I've run a few ultra races now, in the earlier races I would watch in utter jealousy as runners met up with their crew to be offered the food they had chosen, have drinks pre-mixed and, more importantly, see a face they recognise, that can offer more encouragement than a marching band and cheerleaders.

During 2017 I had the opportunity to share crews with FAC OFF runners on both The Butcombe Ultra 48 mile race and the Salisbury 54321 50K. The difference was night and day. The Salisbury race was extremely warm and the aid stations tend to stock mostly water, but having the extra fruit, jaffa cakes and jelly beans to hand was a massive boost for us all. Butcombe, in the September, was also extremely hot and, although not planned, I ran the race with fellow FAC OFF runner Richard Corp and was allowed to dip into the endless goodies Emma Flexon supplied at various points around the course, even supplying us with ice-pops as the temperature soared and hills started to take their toll.

In the October of 2017, a good running friend and ultrarunner from my club, Maria Harryman, agreed to crew me on the Downslink Ultra from Guildford to Shoreham, we discussed my requirements and planned out the race accordingly. Maria, who is a dab hand with the map and compass met me at a few pre-arranged points and the checkpoints on the route. As I hit each checkpoint she would ask me what I wanted to eat, topped up my bottles and, very importantly, gave me advice. Making decisions with a tired body and mind can lead to simple mistakes, including taking or using the wrong kit or simply heading the wrong way out of a checkpoint. At



TP100 Henley Checkpoint - changed, fed and ready to go

the end of the race, having someone to drive is also worth its weight in after race pizza. Maria again crewed for me in February 2018 at the Brecon to Cardiff ultra, reminding me at the last checkpoint that I had slowed down over the past few miles, cheers! I ran the last 6 miles at a faster pace, overtaking at least half a dozen runners before having enough energy for a paced finish. Once again, a pizza was on the menu.

The next major race was the Thames Path 100 and I managed to recruit two very good friends, Ian Harryman, UMTB and MDS finisher, and Phil Zaloum, ultra running buddy and LC24 teammate, to both crew and pace for me during the race. It can be hard to find someone to take time out of their own busy life to not only crew for you but also travel through the night and pace you, while your mind and body are wanting to switch off and go to sleep. I asked them both as they had real experience running



distance, Phil had run a few distance races and Race to the Stones with me in 2017 and Ian has always been happy to run silly distances and share his mountain of knowledge. I could trust them both and they would know what I was experiencing if only to tell me to shut up, stop whining and get on with it - gotta love ultra runners.

I've paced as well. I met Victoria Louise Thompson on the Thames Path 100 and we clicked. A few months on and I was driving down to Brighton on a Saturday evening to meet up with her at a deserted location on the South Downs Way to take over pacing at 3am in the morning. It's not just a case



Pacing Victoria on the SDW 100

of running with the competitor but keeping them focused, ensuring they are fuelling and double check each twist and turn on the course. At times I would run slightly ahead, giving Victoria a target to keep up with, without verbal encouragement, other times I would just chat and keep her focused on the task. Dawn broke early and the morning sun quickly warmed the air, making the job easier. As we entered the sports track at the end of the 100 miles I stopped in the car park, allowing her to complete the lap and soak up the achievement, it was her race.

So what makes a good support crew and/or pacer? The best crew are normally runners, someone who knows what you are going through and can think ahead. It's useful if they know the difference between "I'm not hungry right now" and "I can't eat anything", can spot when the runner is drinking too much or too little and can understand that garbled slur at 70+ miles means I need jelly babies or get me a burger. Planning the race with the crew makes a massive difference, for the Thames Path 100 I set up messenger or WhatsApp conference calls to talk over every aspect of the race. This was especially helpful as one of the crew, Phil, lives 100-miles away in East London and would only be meeting us on the day.

During my packing for the race, I ensured everything was labelled and in bags before placing in two plastic containers, enabling Ian and Phil



The best crew have run the distance and know the pain. Caroline crewing me in October 2018

to find what I was asking for very quickly. On race day I went through the containers with Ian so he knew where everything was. It was my first 100-mile race and I planned for everything, except a tree root. During the race, we communicated

by using the voice recorder function in a WhatsApp group to save me from stopping to type, this allowed me to ask (nicely) for certain items at the next checkpoint. On the way into Windsor we ran along a path with nettles both sides, I called ahead for antihistamines and Phil had a tablet ready with water to wash it down. I had also printed sheets with information on each checkpoint, including address, miles to the next checkpoint and crew checkpoint, likely time of arrival and cut off times and things to check/remind me at each point. Much of this would seem over the top to experienced/seasoned 100-mile runners, but I was trying to ensure I covered all the bases.

The Thames Path 100, like most Centurion 100-mile races, allows pacers from 50-miles, in this case, the Henley checkpoint, which I arrived at just after dark. We had discussed the pacing and already decided I didn't need a pacer until at least the Reading checkpoint at 60-miles. Did I need a pacer? Probably not, but a friendly voice with fresh legs and bags of enthusiasm can never hurt. It is also useful if they know at least a little of the background to the "shit" you'll offload on them at 3am, by that time you'll have thought through your life a few times, worked out world hunger, cured cancer, but still be only really thinking about the meal at the end of the race.

The crew have to be dedicated to the task, there is a lot of waiting around and so should be armed with lots of reading material, food, drink and a pillow. Flexibility is also an extremely important trait for a potential crew member, sudden requests for ice creams and slushy drinks are not unheard of, finding them at 2 in the morning may prove a little more taxing. They also need to be your friend, a true friend as they will see you at your lowest ebb and should know ways to keep you focused. Crewing is not for the selfish, it is an act of giving, an act of love.

# Contributors



Stacey Holloway was sponsored by Body-Balance Sports Massage followed on the WHW race podcasts and has her own running blog [wayrunning.wordpress.com](http://wayrunning.wordpress.com). Follow her on twitter @staceholloway and instagram: @wayrunuk.



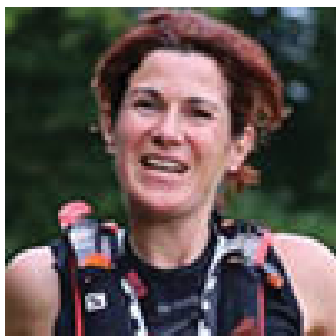
Greg Bergeron has been running ultras since 2010, completing 45 ultras (and 42 marathons). He's an avid photographer and jokester. You'll find him out on the spectacular trails in and around San Diego, California.



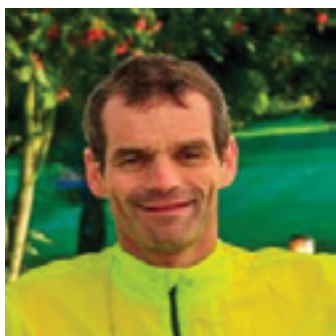
Leila Majewska only started running in 2018 running her first ultra 5 months after her first mile. She has run Durham Dales and Rosedale Ultra and will soon be launching her own blog.



Rachel Fawcett is a Sports Massage Therapist, Personal Trainer and mum of two. She combines her love of the trails with her sports massage and soft tissue therapy business in North London. [Rachelfawcett.co.uk](http://Rachelfawcett.co.uk)



Sarah Cameron is an ultra-running vegan who lives on a vineyard in the south of France with her husband, two children and far too many pets. She juggles family life with looking after said pets, making wine and indulging in her many hobbies, most of which involve either consuming things or attempting to burn them off. <http://cakewinerunning.blogspot.fr>



Vinny O'Leary is a father to three wonderful kids, Barry, 11, Lucy, 7 & Nial, 14 and husband to Maeve. He drives taxis for a livelihood, is 39 years old and took up running on his 30<sup>th</sup> birthday when he gave up a 15 year smoking habit. He is a sub3 marathoner but has a love for slowing down and going further and pushing his body to its limits.



Joe Heywood lives in Star Valley, Wyoming with his wife and four children. He is an educator by profession. He has completed 13 marathons, many shorter trail races, and 10 ultra marathons. He has never made the podium in a trail race unless you count the finish line.



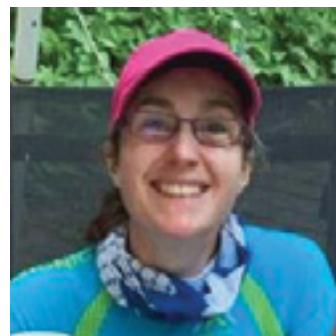
Heather Strowd lives in Charlotte, North Carolina and is a Realtor in both North and South Carolina. She only started running back in 2011 and has run everything from 5K's to multi day races. She has placed 3<sup>rd</sup> in her age group at the Tallahassee Marathon and continues to participate in more ultras and build her racing resume.



Gabrielle Harris lives in Denver, Colorado. She is 37 years old and has always been a runner. She took part in her first marathon in 2012 and has a new found passion for pushing her limits running her first ultra four years ago. Despite running for many years she has never properly trained for any race, due in part to injuries, but also just loving life and not having or wanting the discipline to. In 2019 she hopes to be healthy and strive to train better, but not at the cost of fun!



Padraig Mullins is an Irishman currently residing in Cambridge MA who has won several 24 hour races including the Ottawa Self-Transcendence 24 hour in 2016. In 2017 Padraig finished Spartathlon in under 30 hours and this year he won the Dawn to Dusk to Dawn 24 hour Ultra at Sharon Hill, PA.



Fiona McNelis is an Irish woman currently living in Hampshire who likes "to have a go at the long stuff". She started ultra running in 2010 and this year was the first woman to complete the canal slam. (GUCR, KACR and LLC) She has run over 100 marathons and shows no sign of slowing down.



Mick Farrar is an ultra runner and blogger based in the southwest of UK. After 12 years in the forces and many more putting on weight he started running again in 2014 and finished his first ultra in 2016. He normally runs an ultra a month and actively encourages runners to push their boundaries



Sharon Gayter is a member of North York Moors AC and in 1994 completed her first 100km and 24 hour race, winning gold in the National Championships at both events. Between 1994 and 2011, Sharon represented her country on 27 occasions. In 2011 she took part in the world's highest race, La Ultra-The High and later set the 7 day treadmill record. Sharon wrote a book, The Clock Keeps ticking. Visit her website <http://www.sharongayter.com/>

# The Photographers



Ultrarunning World is very fortunate to have been supported by the generosity of many photographers since its inception. In this month's issue we offer our gratitude to David Bradshaw at SportSunday Event Photography who offered the great photo of Abigail Woolaston at the 2018 Hardmoors 60 race chosen as this month's front cover. SportSunday contributed to the Hardmoors Special Edition of the magazine in March earlier this year with photo's from the race that was ultimately abandoned after "the Beast" arrived, the storm of the year. Spending hours out on the cold mountains standing around waiting for runners shows the tremendous dedication to their art. Check out the galleries on [SportSunday Event Photography](#) to see their great work.



Stuart March Photography to provided an excellent photo of Rachel Fawcett to supplement her article for which we are very grateful. Stuart is based in Hungerford, Berkshire and can usually be seen at Centurion Running events. You can see Stuarts work on his website: [www.stuarmarchphotography.co.uk](http://www.stuarmarchphotography.co.uk)

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We would like to thank Stuart Siegfried for his images of Padraig Mullins at the NorthCoast 24 hour 2018. Dana Miller very kindly gave us permission to use a couple of his images from Wasatch 100.

Another photographer who has made a huge contribution to the magazine is Prabhakar Street based in Ottawa, Canada. He has provided several covers and many photos from the Sri Chinmoy Marathon Team 24 hour race in Ottawa, the 6 & 10 day and the 3100 mile races in New York. Widely travelled, Prabhakar was the photographer/runner on the 2008 Australian Oneness-Home Peace Run

relay team which covered more than 15,000 kms in over 100 days as well as many visits to Asia and the Orient.



[pitstreet photography](#) showcases some of the best multiday runners in the world.

The Sri Chinmoy Marathon Team are all extremely generous with their images including Utpal Marshall at [Perfection-Journey](#) who keeps a daily video diary throughout the 3100 mile race.



Pranjal Milovnik is very supportive and [Srichinmoyultraphoto.com](#) has also made significant contributions including the cover of issue 14. Without this selfless work the magazine would be a shadow of its current presence.



[Kincses Ferenc](#) and [Szilvia Ószi](#), part of the team at the EMU 6 Day race at Balatonfüred in Hungary have been very helpful and we are very grateful for their support.

Many runners have taken photos and selfies and these add so much life to the magazine that as the input grows we find ourselves saying less and less except for thank you. Thank you.



Padraig Mullins Northcoast 24 Hour 2018 Photo by Stuart Siegfried