Ultrarunning World

SRI CHIN

OAD, TRACK & TRAIL MULTIDAY & ULTRA DISTANCE NEWS ISSUE 18

RACE

SUMMER REBELLON

135 & 75 MILE ULTRA MARATHONS 16TH MAY 2019

The summer version of the popular winter Rebellion. The route is along half (for the 75 mile race) and the full length of Glyndŵr's Way National Trail. It takes you through some of the most beautiful and remote parts of Mid Wales and is one of the most picturesque and challenging in the UK.



Editorial



Welcome to another edition of Ultrarunning World magazine which brings together a range of reports and articles from trail, track and road events.

We start with an interview by our new correspondent Helen Hayes with Bennie Roux who has just won the 2019 400 km Munga Trail in South Africa. Several races have sprung up recently in South Africa and we will be bringing more news of these in the future.

Showcasing a mixture of urban landscapes, canals and Lake District trails, Etienne de Beer leads us through the beauty of the Cumbria Way and Vicky Carter runs the Oldham Way which is practically on her doorstep. Stewart Unsworth shares the Wychavon Way originally opened in 1977 for the Queen's Silver Jubilee and relaunched in 2012 with a revised route. We also continue with part two of James Campbell's epic story about his Hardwolds 80 journey and Tom Radley shares his first ultra which was Up Hill Down Dale's Rebellion 135.

Coach Wendy Whearity went to Barcelona for their classic 24 hour and our French sister Mireille Cormier went to South Africa for a road 6 day. Across the pond, Correspondent Tim Hardy shares his Beast of Burden 100 miler experience and we hope to hear about his attempt at the Barclay Marathon later in the year.

We finish with a little look at RacingThePlanet's Gobi Desert 250 km stage race that's coming up at the end of July.

We are delighted to announce that Amy Mower will be joining the team as a Correspondent and the next issue sees four reports from the US including Amy's Farmdaze 24 write up. There will also be articles on Jackpot, Lonestar and Arrowhead plus some great British events with Helen Pike's Green Man Ultra and Garth Reader's Spine write-up to name a few.

As always, this magazine only exists because of these kind contributors and we are deeply grateful for everyone's support.

The House:

- Editor
- Abichal Sherrington
- Staff
 - <u>Marcella Dragan</u> -Graphic Designer
- Helen Hayes Copy Editor

Correspondents

- Sarah Cameron
- Leila Majewska
- Wendy Whearity
- Berit Jessen
- Tim Hardy
- Helen Pike
- Helen Hayes

• Photos

Front cover: Sophie Mullins British and Scottish women's Champion at the Self-Transcendence 100km Race Perth 2019 Photo by <u>Alan Young</u> Back cover: Etienne de Beer at the Cumbria Way Ultra 2019 Photo by <u>Paul Mitchell</u> Ultrarunning World Magazine Address: 38 Shadwell Rd, Bristol BS7 8EP Phone Number: 07923833719

Website: Ultrarunningworld.co.uk



Send original and previously unpublished articles to the above email address. Last dates for submissions June 2nd, July 7th and August 4th. Please include a 40-50 word bio, some accompanying photos (if you have any) and a headshot for the contributors page. Thank you.

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Sri Chinmoy Ten and Six Day Race 2019 April 22-May 2 Flushing Meadows Corona Park New York

us.srichinmoyraces.org

News

Backyard Ultras



Photo: Bjørn Sørensen

The Backyard Ultras have become an ultrarunning phenomenon with 49 events now scheduled around the world for 2019 and 38 planned for 2020, the number is growing. Big's Backyard Ultra was first held in 2011 in Tennessee organised by Laz Lake of Vol State and Barclay fame. The format is simple, complete a 4.167 miles (6706 metres) loop in an hour and be ready to do the same in the next hour. The race ends for a runner when he or she either concedes or fails to finish the distance within the allotted time frame and thus the last person to complete a loop after the rest of the field has dropped is the Last Man Standing. In 2018 during an amazing event that made news all over the world three runners reached 270 miles with Gavin Woody stopping at 270.835m, Courtney Dauwalter stopping at 279.168m and Johan Steene covering 283.335m setting a new record. For more details about these events join Big Dog's Backyard Ultra Run Group on Facebook and checkout the BYU calendar for upcoming races.

William Sichel completed the first crewed run on the North Coast 500 route in northern Scotland on April 22nd finishing at Inverness Castle in 8 days 19 hours 7 minutes and 7 seconds. William's fastest known time (FKT) attempt started at the Castle on Saturday April 13th at 7am. After dealing with difficult weather conditions in the early stages of the run, William was delighted to finish within 9 days. The run was partly used to raise funds for CLAN, the cancer charity. William is currently pursuing a recordsetting project called "Journey to 750" in which he is attempting to set 750 running records at World, British and Scottish level, including age-group records. Currently he has set 687 records, including 45 world age-group records and two Guinness World Records. **Robbie Balenger** is currently running across the United States in 75 days as a plant based athlete (April 28th was day 44). Follow his posts on <u>Instagram</u>.

Ruslan Shakin has just begun his latest adventure, the <u>Run Across South America</u> starting in Valparaiso, Chile on April 23rd, 2019. Ruslan is on a mission to bring clean water access to 300 people by running across South America. He ran 2746 km from the northern-most point in Japan in just over 53 days. Less than two weeks later he began crossing Australia, Perth to Sydney on November 19 and finishing on February 13, he covered 4470 km. Then he ran from North to South New Zealand in a total time of 54 days, 3 hours, 14 minutes and a total distance of 2,318.8 km/1440.8 miles finishing at Stirling point, Bluff, NZ. Phew! Thats a lot of running.

Upcoming Races

The infamous Piece of String Race returns to the UK on November the 1st 2019 and the event is open for applications. The event starts at Streatley in Berkshire and as the name suggests, the runners have no idea how long the event will be. The inaugural edition took place in 2012 and this will be the 4th <u>Piece of String Fun Run</u>.

Run To Pegasus - D-Day 75 Run is following the path of the heroes who spearheaded the biggest military operation ever staged. The runners on this epic event will follow a route from Tarrant Rushton Airfield in Dorset, through the New Forest and on to Portsmouth and a ferry to France. The ferry will arrive at the eastern end of Sword Beach



Photo courtesy Wiliam Sichel

around the same time that men began landing on the beach 75 years ago. <u>More details on the website.</u>

THE LAP - Lake Windermere Ultra - will take place at 6am on Saturday 7th September. THE LAP is a new 45 mile ultra trail around Lake Windermere in the Lake District that's open to runners and walkers. Fully marked and with generous cut-offs, competitors have 24 hours to circumnavigate England's largest and most iconic lake. <u>THE LAP 2019</u> runs anticlockwise.

The next major multidays both take place on the 9/5/2019 with the <u>EMU 6 Day World Trophy</u> starting first in Balatonfured, Hungary and just a few hours later the <u>3</u> <u>Days At The Fair</u> begins with 240 (10 Day) /144 (6 Days) /72/48/24/12/6 hour races, 50K and 26.2M at Sussex County Fairgrounds, Augusta, NJ in the USA.



Breaking News

The **Sakura Michi 250** was won by Nobuyuki Takahashi in 24:09:00 and first woman was Shiho Hirosawa in 26:51:00. In the UK the **Fellsman** was won by Stuart Walker, no more details at this time. The **Highland Fling** in Scotland was won by John Hammond in 7:30:29 and first woman was Beth Pascall in 8:02:46. Francois Dhaene won the **Madeira Island Ultra Trail** 115 km race in 13:49:36 and first woman was Courtney Dauwalter in 15:17:05. The 50th **Old Mutual Two Oceans Ultra** held over the Easter weekend was won by Bongmusa Mthembu in 3:08:36 and South African Gerda Steyn was first woman in 03:31:25. In the **Sri Chinmoy 10 & 6 day** races in New York, Budjargal Byambaa (MNG) and Makula Samarina (GER) lead the 10 day while Joe Fejes (USA) and Susan Marshall (NZL) lead in the 6 day.

Yiannis Kouros, the greatest multiday runner of the modern era has been inducted into the Australian Ultra Runners Association's Hall of Fame. Born in Greece, Kouros moved to Australia in the 1980s and as an Australian

citizen became wellknown amongst the general Australian population for winning the 875kms Sydney to Melbourne Ultramarathon five times between 1985 and 1990. <u>Article on</u> <u>AURA website.</u>



Wendy Whearity (nee Shaw) BSc

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3100 Diaries

The 3100 Diaries



The Sri Chinmoy 10 and 6 day races are often used by the 3100 runners as a warm-up for the June start. Indeed the race organisers often suggest that runners take part in the spring races so that 3100 applicants can get a taste of what lies in store for them.

With the 3100 being such an investment its seems prudent to make good use of this opportunity to get to know the people they will be living with for two months.

Such is the case this year with a handful of runners keeping an eye on this or next year's race. Pranjal Milovnik and Pranab Vladovic, former 3100 runners are both taking part in the 6 day. Currently Pranab is in fourth place with 140 miles after two days.

First Name Surname	Gen.	Age	Ctry
Ashprihanal Aalto	М	48	FIN
Harita Davies	F	44	NZL
Todor Dimitriov	М	43	BGR
Vasu Duzhiy	М	52	RUS
Yolanda Holder	F	61	USA
Nirbasa Magee	М	37	IRE
Ushika Muckenhumer	М	51	AUT
Smarana Puntigam	М	48	AUT
6 others being considered			

With the full field yet to be confirmed and officially announced, some runners are rumoured to be planning on starting at this time including Finland's greatest Courier Ashprihanal Aalto. Ashprihanal has 14 finishes in this event, that's 43,400 race miles, 70,000 km accumulated in this event alone. In 2015 he set the record for the fastest completion of the race, 40:09:06:21.

America's pedestrienne extraordinaire, Yolanda Holder, will be back for her third race and messaged that her training is going well, along with Harita Davies, these two will probably be the female contingent this year.

The great Austrian, Smarana Puntigam returns for his 10th event, Vasu Duzhiy will be looking for his eighth finish and Ushika Muckenhumer is coming back after finishing on his debut last year.



Videographer Utpal Marshall who runs the Perfection-Journey website visits the races each day and interviews runners. He provides on the spot coverage about what's happening inwardly and outwardly during the event from the perspectives of the crews, visitors, the race organisers and volunteers as well as the runners themselves. With race coverage from 2009 it's remarkable how Utpal still manages to make things interesting every day. He is currently at the Sri Chinmoy 10 & 6 day races and you can check out his daily interviews and photos at <u>Perfection-Journey.org</u>



Australia/New Zealand

The <u>Australian Ultra</u> <u>Runners Association</u>, AURA is a well organised group providing a focal point for the sport. The website offers news and calendars and access to membership and the Ultramag.

With many new races emerging in Australia and New Zealand this is a quick look at what's been happening recently.

The 4th **SA Track 100 Championship** 2019 was won by Darren Linney in 7:44, retaining his title. First woman was Sonja Jansen in 9:31:13. The event took place at the Santos Stadium in Adelaide on 26th of January. There were 17 finishers.

The 50 km championships were won by Tim Green and Samantha Jeffery. <u>Full</u> results.

The inaugural **Delirious W.E.S.T. (Western Endurance Scenic Trail) 200 Miler** started on 20th February from Northcliffe to Albany in Western Australia. First woman was queen of the 200's Candice Burt in 72:55:00. First man was Dion Leonard in 61:24:00. 28 finishers and the date for the second edition has already been set as 19 Feb 2020. <u>Results on</u> the D.U.V.

The 4th **Canberra 48hr Race** along with the 24/12 hour events was hosted at the AIS (Australian Institute of Sport) on a certified 400 metre track in Bruce, ACT on the 15th of March. The 48 hour was won by Mick Thwaites with 389.041 km. First woman was Nikki Wynd, third overall with 317.894 km. In the 24 hour John Pearson was first with 237.113kms and the women's winner was Shibani Gharat with 142.243kms. <u>Ultra168</u> provides more details. <u>Full results</u>

The first ultra of the year in New Zealand was the **Great Southern Alps Miler** – 100 miles on the South Island on January 18th. Four finishers with Michael Stuart finishing first in 21:50 and first lady was Elena Ellis in 35:24:14. <u>Results page.</u>

The Tarawera

Ultramarathon took place on February 7th and featured a 100 miles/102 and 50 km events. Jeff Browning (USA) won the 100 miler in 16:18:54 and Camille

Herron (USA) was first woman in 17:20:52. The 100 km was won by Reece Edwards (AUS) in 8:22:51 and first woman was Courtney Dewaulter (USA) in 9:28:03. <u>Full</u> <u>results.</u>

The Old Ghost

Ultra (85km) took place 23rd february and is based out of Westport. This trail event had 2,700m of ascent that saw 275 finishers. First man was Vajin Armstrong (NZL) in 7:07:29 and first woman was Melanie Aitken in 8:31:26. <u>Results on DUV</u>

The Alps2Ocean Ultra is a 316 km seven day stage race starting at the base of New Zealand's highest mountain and finishing in the small harbour of Oamaru. The event had three options, supported, self-supported and a team event. First man (supported) was Keith Burrows (NZL) in 30:44. First woman was Katy Anderson (GBR) in 35:00. 98 finishers. A race report will feature in the next issue of the magazine, 19. Full results.

RacingThePlanet: New

Zealand started on 3rd March 2019. Similar in format to most of their events it was a 250 km/155 mile, 6-stage, 7-day, selfsupported stage race. The location, Queenstown, is billed as probably one of the world's foremost adventure capitals. First man was Christophe Santini (FRA) with a time of 34:42:02 and first woman was Celine Pichette (USA) in 41:06:58. 106 finishers. <u>Results.</u>

The 9th Northburn Station 100 Miler Mountain Run took place 23rd March and features 10,000m of climb over the three loops. Taking place at Cromwell, Central Otago, (near Queenstown) the event also features 100/50 km races. Winning the 100 miler this year was Chris Bisley (NZL) in 23:50:41 and first woman was Tania Miller (NZL) in 28:02:47. 51 finishers. In the 100 km race Steve Pemberton (NZL) was first man in 14:11:34 and women's winner was Veronika Palockova (NZL) in 16:21:28.



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The Multidays



Pawel Zuk (right) 1000 mile winner and Costas Baxevanis at the Athens International Ultramarathon Festival 2019

7 ith May here already and the Spring races underway, it's time for a multiday recap as there's been a dozen or so longer events that have taken place.

We start way back in the middle of December 2018 in the southern hemisphere at the Wychwood Summer Running Festival. Hosted by Eric Wright of Wright Timing fame, the festival took place December 15th and featured a 6 day, 48/24 and 12 hour events. The 6 day was won by Reginald Crowster with 513 km. Amanda Economon was first lady with 406 km. The 100 miler was won by Perry Todd in 20:25:55.26 and women's winner was Cornel Metcalf in 22:09:55.32.

Race report by Mireille Cormier on page 42. 18 runners. Full results.

Across The Years has evolved into one of America's biggest multiday events and for 2019-20 even more events are planned. Taking place at Camelback Ranch in Phoenix Arizona, it features

a 24 hour race every day, 48 hour and 72 hour options within the 6 day time frame. The course has a variety of surfaces including crushed gravel. Being in the desert, the temperatures can drop to freezing at night and cold, wet weather is not unknown at that time of year. Nearly 500 runners made it this year to the races. Winning the 6 day was Budjaergal Byambaa (MGL) with 787.305 km and Amy Mower (USA) making her 6 day debut, was first woman second overall with 729.863 km. 87 finishers. The 72 hour race was won by Charlotte Vasarhelyi (CAN) with 403.470 km. First man was Pablo Espinosa (USA) with 363.242 km. 70 runners. Scott Jaime (USA) won the 48 hour with 280.457 km and first woman was Jess Mullen (USA), second overall, with 270.320 km. 103 finishers. The 24 hour was shared between Marisa Lizak (USA) and Mark Hammond (USA) with 209.498 km. 214 finishers. Full results

The Spine Race follows the Pennine Way National Trail and comes in

two sizes, the 108 mile Challenger and the 268 mile Spine. Starting at Edale in Derbyshire the race crosses several hill ranges before finishing in Kirk Yetholm in the Scottish Border region. The Challenger finishes at the Hardraw Bunkhouse and was won by Joe Farnell (GBR) in 32:25:18 and the only woman among the 10 finishers was Jane Hilton (GBR) finishing in 51:31:36. An amazing performance by Jasmin Paris (ENG) saw her beat Eoin Keith's (IRE) previous course record holder by 12 hours to reset the bar at 83:12:23. Full results on the Spine Race website.

The Athens International

Ultramarathon Festival 2019 began January 18th this year and featured a 1000 mile, 1000 km, a 6 day race, 72/48 and 24 hour races. Weather conditions were not great with wind and rain but two finishers in the 1000 mile race with Pavel Zuk (POL) finishing in 14:20:00:14. Second was Nikolae Buceanu (ROM) in 15:19:46:36. In the 1000 km race Petri

Yukon Arctic Ultra 2019 Day 3 Photo by Mark Kelly



Pertilla (FIN) finished in 9:21:10:29. There was a fairly close finish in the 6 day with Zdravko Baric (BIH) winning with 366.61 miles ahead of Sharon Gayter (GBR) on 360.40 miles (580 km) who set a new British FV55 record by over 34 miles. Third was Jacques Morel (FRA) who covered 356.05 miles. The 72 hour was won by Michail Maipas (GRE) with 347 km. The 48 hour saw Andrzej Radzikowski take the win with 362 km. Women's winner was Fionnuala O'Mara (IRL) third place overall with 323 km. In the 24 hour Vladimir Todorov Stavrev (BLG) took the title with 226 km and first woman was Teija Honkonen (FIN). 24 hour race report - Ian Thomas. Full results.

Perhaps the most novel start to any race in the world is the **Florida Skydive 200** (<u>Race report UW April</u> <u>2018</u>). The course is a single flat dirt and grass loop approximately 7.25 miles long through the local farming fields. There are 9 options from 200 miles to 10k in the event. This years 200 miler started 24th of January and saw two finishers, Philip Eberts in 54:45:04 and Sally Libonati finishing in 70:06:27. The 150 mile race saw Sue Edwards take the win in 39:43:51 which saw three men DNF. The 100 miler was won by William Gunn in 20:56:21. First and only woman was Lisa Graft in 29:58:48. 15 starters. <u>Full</u> <u>results</u>.

The 15th Annual Arrowhead 135 took off on January 28th from International Falls on the Canadian border in Northern Minnesota to the small town of Tower. 146 athletes on the start line saw temperatures of -15 degrees Fahrenheit with the wind chill reaching -55 during the polar vortex that froze extensive areas of the US. Arrowhead is a human-powered endurance event with skiers, runners and cyclists and the event hit the headlines as almost everyone else was being advised to stay inside. Jovica Spajic won the Run division finishing in 36:09:00. First woman was Faye Norby in 48:34:00. 64 starters, 13 finishers. Full results.

A few days after Arrowhead the **Montane Yukon Arctic Ultra** started on February 3rd. The YAU is another of the world's coldest and toughest ultras. 430 miles of snow, ice, temperatures as low as -40°C and relentless wilderness, the YUA is an incredible undertaking. **The Montane* Yukon Arctic Ultra** (**MYAU**) follows the Yukon Quest trail, the trail of the world's toughest Sled Dog Race. Where dog teams once slid and scrambled now human power chases up the trail. Choose to race the 430 mile, 300 mile, 100 mile or marathon distance either by snow mountain bike, cross country ski or by foot. The race begins in Whitehorse, Yukon, finishing (for those that make it) 13 nights later on the in Dawson.

In Finland starting the 23rd of February the 8th **Rovaniemi Arctic Winter 150 Race**, a human powered event with three categories of Foot, Bike and Ski. The event has three distance options, 300/150 and 66 km. The course is around the main Lapland city of Rovaniemi on a wide variety of surfaces including a frozen river. Rovaniemi 150 and Rovaniemi 300 are qualifying races for the Iditarod Trail Invitational. This year's 300km Foot division winner was Marta Poretti (ITA) in 78:15:00. First man, third overall, was Omar

Carro (ESP) crossing the finish line in 97:30:00. 6 finishers.

In the 150 km race Jarkko Aspegren (Fin) and Saara Päätalo (FIN) finished together in 23:15:00. <u>Full results</u>.

The Legends Trail is a 250km nonstop footrace starting in Achouffe, in the Ardennes, Southern Belgium on March 1st. Runners have 62 hours to complete the loop which has 4 checkpoints and runners have to be self-sufficient. 7000m of gain. First home was Ivo Steyaert in 47:07 and Ann Baert 63:22 was first lady. 82 starters, 34 finishers. <u>Results</u>.

The Franklins is a tough mountain race based in the Southernmost tip of the Rocky Mountains in El Paso, Texas. The 200 mile option has a 12 mile section which gets you to the start of the 38 mile loop. 5 of these for the 200 miler and 3 for the 200 km. This year the event took place at the same time as the Lone Star 100 (Race report in issue 19). The 200 miler was won by John Kelly in 60:53:13. The first woman was Jessica Pekari finishing in 71:21:04. 24 finishers. <u>Results</u>.

The 200km race was won by Daniel Hewett in 50:28:51 and first woman, second overall was Sharon Murillo in 52:03:02. 9 finishers. <u>Results</u>

Transgrancanaria first took place in the Canary Islands in 2003. It has grown and currently features 6 events up to marathon, ultra and multiday distance. Now part of the Ultra Trail World Tour, UTWT, the 64 km and the 125 km events draw hundreds of runners annually. The longest event, the 360° was 265 km this year and started on February 20th in Agaete. First man was Luca Papi (ITA) (pictured above) in 50:14:13 and first woman home was Esther Hernandez Pereira (ESP) in 69:11:47, 12th overall. <u>Full results</u>.

The 9th **Little Edo Oedo** features four road race distances and starts and finishes near the Renkei-ji Temple in Kawagoe, Saitama in Japan, this year on February 22nd.

Koedo 91 km, 79 starters, 62 finishers completion rate 78.4%.

Oedo Night Run 113 km 182 starters, 136 finishers completion rate 74.7%

Koedo Oedo 200 km 408 starters, 269 finishers completion rate 65.9%

Koedo Oedo 230 km 62 starters, 26 finishers complete rate 41.9%.

The 200 km was won by Nobuyuki Takahashi in 20:48:01. Shiho Hirosawa was first woman finishing in 24:39:54. In the 230 km event the first woman was Itsue Nakamoto in 30:22:42, 12th overall and first man was Kengo Takahashi in 24:53:32. Results.





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Persistent: Bennie Roux on the journey that made him

Helen Hayes

He is one of South Africa's great endurance runners. Bennie relives his KAEM and reveals who has influenced his success and his motivation for a life on the run.



The Kalahari Bushmen ran and walked for up to 5 hours to hunt the Kudu over distances of 35km or more. In the 40 degree heat of the day, this was endurance hunting. In the Kalahari desert Bennie Roux persistently ran during 7 days in the Kalahari Augrabies Extreme Marathon (KAEM) in October 2018. He finished first.

Today Bennie is at home in Pretoria, it's February 2019, the bright, clear morning sunshine streaming through his window. He's returned home from his regular 6am to 7am run. He looks a decade younger than his 40 years, with close cropped blonde hair, a permanent tan, even features and the ever present technical T shirt. The engaging smile and affable demeanor, he reminds me of a contented school boy.

Bennie concurred with his Driehoek school motto,

"Conquer through Perseverance" was sufficiently resonant to display on his Facebook page. Running was not positively encouraged at school, "It was rugby and cricket, running was used as a punishment, a few laps of the pitch."

Bennie's first endurance sport was cycling, he embraced running after his brother challenged him to take part in the Comrades Marathon. In Bennie's early twenties he was overweight and stuck in a sedentary office job. Comrades is the oldest marathon in the world at 89 km with the largest attendance of 20,000 participants. Since his first attempt Bennie has completed Comrades an impressive 11 times.

"I would encourage anyone to come to South Africa and take part in Comrades."

The atmosphere surrounding Comrades is electric and like

Interview

the Tour de France cycle race, the route is thronged with spectators from Durban to Pietermaritzburg, although Bennie did mention that it was also, "*the ugliest route in the world*". The spectators compensating for some of the drab urban infrastructure. After his first Comrades, Bennie was ready to begin what was to become an incredible journey of self transformation; "*I was the fat Bennie, drinking brandy, going to the pub*".

Homo Sapiens have followed an evolutionary track away from sheer body strength towards the lean endurance qualities of long distance runners. The ability to run for long distances is almost exclusively human. We sweat, we carry water and crucially we can replenish, Bennie exemplifies this evolution augmented with technology. Bennie has a finely tuned working relationship with his GPS device, his diet and fuelling, his clothing, his shoes. A perfect fusion of man and technology. This evolutionary combination was put to the test in the KAEM.

The KAEM takes place over 7 days in the Kalahari desert a completely self supporting race covering a distance of 250km. All supplies and food must be carried by the runners. Bennie's backpack weighed 8kg compared to 3kg in the Munga race. "I ate a lot of instant noodles" supplemented by Tailwind, more treats would have been pleasant.

The KAEM was divided into 6 set distance stages with one rest day. The first day was only 25k, the remainder of the day was spent under a tent awning sheltering from the intense sun and 40 degree heat. The surprise realisation for Bennie was the absence of smartphones and other devices which proved beneficial to his sense of well-being. Runners had to talk to each other as there was nothing else to do to pass the time. Long hours in the desert with little distraction fostered bonds between the runners in their shared endeavour. Reminiscent of the bushmen sitting in a group under an acacia tree, waiting out the long hours before a Kudu was glimpsed and the persistent chase





began again. With the absence of the kudu, where is the motivation? I asked Bennie, "What are you hunting?"

"It's the finish line, crossing the finish line." This is Bennie's hunt. He elucidates: "I was ecstatic when I crossed the finish line, not because I won the race, you've conquered the distance, finishing meant so much more than winning."

Bennie has the ability to receive positive energy from the people who follow his running, he inspired them and in return this is motivating for him.

Bennie has won The Munga Trail race twice in 2017 and 2018. It takes place over 5 days and is a challenging 400km.

"I have a love hate relationship with The Munga, I have a lot of pressure not to do it from my family, my wife threatened to divorce me, they fear I may incur an injury or lose my love for running."

This is a tough and iconic race with a few resilient participants.

"They worry when I continue to run through the nights, they sit at home and stress."

Bennie has a strategy for his third Munga, this was nurtured from his experiences gained in running the previous two and learning how to improve.

"I will not run away from everyone, I will stick with the pack, make use of them as they will with me."

At this juncture in Bennie's ultra career, running becomes a mind game, like chess, his legs will move relentlessly, he has learnt how to maintain his body and avoid unnecessary injuries during the run. Marginal gains are the key to

Interview



Bennie's finish line. The Munga route is self navigational requiring an essential GPS device, since memories persist of going off a route earlier in his career only to be rescued from a precarious cliff ledge. Plan A: run behind another runner for an hour then swap over, they are invited to run behind Bennie in a naturally occuring reciprocal arrangement mirroring the tactics of the bushmen on the trail. Running behind another runner enables Bennie to switch off as there is no need to navigate, just follow. Plan B: Persistence.

"The biggest reason for doing a second Munga was to apply my experience, use it again to do it better."

First Munga 101 hours

Second Munga 86 hours

Bennie didn't run any faster in the his second attempt at the Munga. The difference was his ability to apply better strategies, for instance, resting at key points, enhanced navigating skills and fuelling during the race. All these areas can offer marginal gains.

Bennie also has a sleep strategy in place. Running through the night is possible, even a second night is possible and a third.

"I didn't know I could do it until I did it through applying my experience and knowledge"

This specific application of sleep management is, for instance, to power nap between 12 and 20 minutes. Never over 20 minutes because of the decreasing loss of the benefit of the controlled nap and to forfeit the increasing ability to run through two nights. Bennie attributes some of his success to reading Dean Karnazes especially this book, 'Ultra marathon Man: Confessions of an All-Night Runner'.

"Train your mind through experience"

I inquired, When running on your own what do you do with your mind?

"Zero going on", could you tell us about that?

"The biggest reason I run is to escape my mind."

Dean suggests, "Rest your brain, your body doesn't need rest."

Within 2 hours of running Bennie asserts he can access a zone of limited thoughts, at one with the surroundings, in flow. An altered state of consciousness.

"I don't think, I completely switch off"

After hours of tracking the Kudu, the bushmen have disclosed they enter a trance like state. They can feel the presence of the animal, they are in tune with the environment, and run within a timeless space, at one with a god of their understanding. The persistence and effort in the heat eventually calms the mind in single pointed determination.

In the depths of the running night, when all is stillness Bennie has time to speak with God, "Not just prayer, I have a prolonged conversation, it can continue for hours. I ask for peace in the world, respect for the earth and I pray for others." Bennie finds this space to connect with God within the action of running through the night.

Like his forefathers, Bennie was born in the country of South Africa and has embraced the landscape. He escaped a stultifying office for the opportunity to move with regularity through the stunningly diverse terrain. He explains the experience in his mind to rebooting a computer programme, the endless thoughts and internal mind chat calm down. He runs and he runs, persistently blending into the topography towards the finish line, producing a calm mind in harmony with the rhythm of his legs.

The design of The Munga is unstructured, participants are free to run whenever they want to and how far they decide to run is entirely personal, this appeals to Bennie. The KAEM was organised at set distances, The Munga facilitates complete freedom to run your own distances. The packs are lighter, Bennie carried food for up to 3 or 4 hours, it's easier with a lighter pack.



Interview

"I would still do The Munga, even if afterwards I gave up running completely"

Such is the allure of this tough race.

With a taxing and challenging endurance race like The Munga, how does Bennie deal with the inevitable pain? The suffering that surely comes with the terrain. Once more Bennie refers to Dean Karnazes, a mentor, although he has never met Dean, it would be, said Bennie, "awesome to meet him." Immediately Bennie quoted this advice from Dean, "pain is your friend not your enemy"

Here is a man who actively seeks out and embraces the pain and suffering whilst maintaining a smile. Bennie appears to accept the pain to the point where he doesn't interpret it as pain, he accepts it as it is. People are predisposed to comfort, it's a default setting, we are surrounded by comfort. Bennie extrapolated on how we press buttons to open the garage door, do the washing, turn on the television, the lights, the heating and most other manual tasks. We have to seek out pain as it doesn't readily show up in our homes or working environment. Running is a way to seek and experience the pleasure of pain. Bennie identifies with Dean Karnazes's view;

"Struggling and suffering are the essence of a life worth living. If you're not pushing yourself beyond the comfort zone, if you're not demanding more from yourself expanding and learning as you go - you're choosing a mumb existence. You're denying yourself an extraordinary trip."

It is easy to remain comfortable.

"Somewhere along the line we seem to have confused comfort with happiness"

Bennie has trained himself through persistently running to accept some pain. It has become normal, his pain threshold is continually being challenged, he is contented with this process of learning and developing as an Ultra runner. He has the discipline to accept some suffering, this gives him an advantage over runners who have a lower threshold of acceptance. This attitude made the difference between eating or being hungry to the persistence hunter. It is a matter of survival, Bennie is in touch with this energy. He doesn't have to hunt for his supper but he does enact that ancient instinct to feel fully alive and present during a run.

How does Bennie incorporate running in his daily routine? This requires the discipline of repetition, it's not as glamorous as running through the Kalahari desert or in the beautiful landscape of the nature reserves such as Groenkloof. This daily work requires a 6am to 7am morning run, every morning from Bennie's doorstep onto the road in his neighbourhood. Bennie takes his three boys to school after his wife, lsabel, has supported his running by



sharing the childcare. Bennie travels to his shop to oversee the day followed by computer work and contact with his clients. He picks the boys up from school and takes them to their activities before his track work on Mondays and Wednesdays alternating with longer runs on the other days of 30km or 20 km. Rarely, if ever does Bennie take a day off from running. This is all about keeping his body moving. A conscious choice of movement in an increasingly sedentary society.

Apart from Dean Karnazes, who else has helped and inspired your progress over the last 20 years?

"Dion Saayman my track running coach really helps. He wants me to give up trails and do shorter distances so I can run faster. I am not sure....I listen to his advice."

Bennie says that Ultra trails are his number one addiction. Have you considered running in a tunnel or on a city circuit like the 31,000 in New York? Bennie replied, "I did a 12 hour lap race once, I almost died of boredom."

What are your plans for the future? "It's my ambition to be the oldest Comrades runner. The oldest at the moment is 80 years old, I aim to beat that and keep on running."

Bennie has his sights on participating in international Ultra trail runs. He is particularly interested in the Gobi 400, Western States, Hardrock, UTMB and The Spine. If Bennie decides to enter these races he will not only complete them but compete by focussing his persistent mind on the finish line.

How do you relax? "Cycling and MTB". Seriously? "When all the children are at home and they are playing outside, we put up a fire with a braai. I sit back, watch them and relax."

A beaming Bennie proceeded to tell me that he had decided he would run the 2019 Munga and his wife is not divorcing him.

Ed. Bennie won the Munga Trail in 3:17:58.

Cumbria Way Ultra

Etienne de Beer Photos courtesy Paul Mitchell



The Cumbria Way Ultra: A 73mile trail race cutting through the heart of the stunning Lake District in Cumbria, England. The route follows the iconic Cumbria Way long range hiking trail which was first devised in the 1970's by local members of the Ramblers Association. Although the Cumbria Way Ultra provides a relatively low-level crossing of the Lake District, it still provides 10,000 feet of ascent along the way.

I had the privilege to take part in this challenging and well organised ultra on the 15th of September 2018. This is my account of the Cumbria Way Ultra and all it required and taught me along this journey.

It took me weeks to decide to enter the Cumbria Way Ultra, mostly because I doubted my ability to compete or even complete this awesome challenge. My training consisted of sporadic runs in The Fells, sometimes 2 to 3 ascents up Scafell Pike in one go, at other times 30 mile recce runs but mostly just wandering in my surrounding fells of Ennerdale for hours at a time. I guess looking at the miles I've enjoyed preparing for this ultra one would think I was fit and ready, however, ultra running consists of so much more than just running.

Anyone who does well at running ultra distances would agree that there is a certain level of dedication and preparation that is demanded by these events and my haphazard training was not meeting these requirements and ultimately showed up on the day.

It was 5:30 am as we assembled in a car park ready to be briefed on the course, checkpoints and compulsory dibbing of our timing chips. Despite not knowing anybody I strangely felt at home among these athletes in the dark. After the brief, we made our way down to the start and prepared to launch ourselves at this 73-mile unknown journey.

At exactly 6:00 am we set off from

Ulverston in the South of the Lake District and after finding ourselves in a bottleneck up the first hill and stile, the run got underway as the field opened up and gave most runners their own space to do what they set out to do, enjoy the journey.

I was curious as to why my comrades decided to run the Cumbria Way Ultra and after meeting and chatting with many participants it was clear that 5 entry points into the coveted and beloved Ultra-Trail du Mont-Blanc were the number one driving force. I have to admit that the 5 points towards this prestigious event were also on my list for joining.

My intention or strategy was to keep running as long as possible at an 11:30 min/mile pace. I wanted to test my abilities and was curious to see where I stood on the field of ultra running. Where were my limitations? What was I capable of? Could I complete this ultra intact?

I reached the first checkpoint in Coniston, I checked in swiftly and left as quickly as I had entered. I had enough water to take me to the next checkpoint and wanted to take advantage of this brief transition. At this point, I had no idea of the field ahead of me, how many runners were ahead or how well they were running?

Not long after the Coniston checkpoint another runner and I found ourselves running together. I met Tony Holt, who I consider a very strong runner with a great philosophy on ultra running and enjoyment of this sport. We ran together for many miles, every mile was a blessing and a rewarding experience. I believe that his company engaged a deeper primal instinct to run and hunt as a collective and I believe that this shared journey allowed me to experience a higher level of participation.

At checkpoint two in the Langdales, I refuelled had some snacks and learned that I entered this aid station in 5th position which came as a real surprise to me. I left the aid station to transverse Stakes Pass and then over to Keswick and checkpoint three. At this point, I had been running close to five hours and I still felt great, but I wasn't eating as much as I planned and knew that sooner or later I was going to feel the result of the lack of calories.

Going up Stakes Pass was relatively easy considering the time spent running, then came the downhill, and that was great too, next was the journey alongside the river towards Keswick. This was a brutal section for me, boulders and rocks everywhere and soakingly wet. My feet were bruised and drenched to the bone and I could feel my sloppy socks rubbing in places I didn't want them to. As Tony and I got closer to Keswick we caught up with the first runner we had seen for hours. Jack Scott seemed to battle with a low point at this moment, we ALL have a low point at one time or another, words that Tony had uttered some hours earlier. I was



waiting for mine.

As we came into checkpoint three in Keswick, I was 4th overall and the 3rd male with some 8 hours of running behind me and roughly 30 miles to go to the finish. I refuelled, ate some bits, had a pee and went on my way. This time leaving the aid station my legs felt sore and tired.

I knew that soon I would feel the hardship of not consuming enough calories but at this moment I just had to keep up the pace.

In the next 15 miles Tony Holt showed his strength and experience and dropped me on one of the hills and I never saw him again until the end. Needless to say, I started to feel the strain and soon found myself at my low point but keeping on going was the aim of this game, so I pushed onwards to the next checkpoint and a special one for me, this is where I'll meet my wife Tricia and the first person I knew today.

As I rolled into checkpoint four after 11 hours and 27 minutes, I felt shattered and knew the next 15 miles to the finish would have to be based purely on mental power as I felt spent. After having some hot soup, refuelling my water container and saying goodbye to Tricia, I headed to the final checkpoint before the end. I got going and felt much better for

having something to eat and the moral support of someone you love as well as a fraction more rest than I had enjoyed from any other aid station.

With darkness looming and a renewed pace, I made good headway until about 7 miles later when another strong runner David Hanna caught me and went ahead. I felt somewhat disappointed with myself for not having the strength to run faster or harder but I reminded myself that I wanted to see where my abilities had reached within ultra running. Having this mental disappointment I resolved my attention to return to the journey at hand.

I love running, I'm honoured to be able to take part in this wonderful journey and I'm still running...

I reached the final checkpoint in Dalston about five miles from the finish after 13 hours 37 mins. I was ready to finish, I felt wasted but elated at the same time. When I left Dalston all I could think was, run as fast as your legs can move and don't let anyone take you on this section. I approached Carlisle and the lights got brighter and soon I was running on asphalt roads and pavements.

Just across the final bridge and the left turn into the heart of Carlisle Castle, relief and pure joy overtook my being as I finally saw Tricia and the end of my journey. I crossed the line in 14:45:37 which gave me the honour of completing the Cumbria Way Ultra in 6th place overall and 5th male solo.

So, the questions are, have I learned anything? Will I run an ultra again? If I have learned anything, could I pass it on to someone else? What would my advice be? The short answer I guess would be to know your body, train smart and have a mental plan to cope with the low times, and trust me, we ALL will go through a low point at some stage or another and it is very helpful to have a coping strategy for those times, and finally, you have to enjoy what you do.

To me, running is a form of moving meditation and to find myself in the Lake District enjoying my passion is touching on the fringes of Nirvana. Everyone has their own reason for running, I would encourage you to find that reason and go after it as if your life depends on it. Why? Because it does!

I am currently in training for the inaugural Hardwolds 80 ultra marathon taking place 24th/25th November 2018 in Yorkshire, and after that, I have been successful in the ballot to run the 145 mile Grand Union Canal Race in May 2019...



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Wychavon Way Ultra

Stewart Unsworth



y first ultra was in November 2017, Beyond Marathon's, 'Escape from Meriden' where a friend and I paired up to complete 60 miles as the crow flies (nearer 80 in total) en route to a fourth place finish. Fast forward two midfield efforts and a DNF at the Cotswold Way Century last year and the delusion of ultra-racer grandeur has long since evaporated, replaced by a more realistic 'anonymous mid-division trundler

who is glad to complete' moniker. The latest attempt at the distance was another Beyond Marathon event, the Wychavon Way Ultra.

The organiser's idea is that you park at one corner of Worcestershire, take a coach to the other end and run back to your car. The route, as the name implies, is the Wychavon Way, a 40 mile footpath that begins in Droitwich Spa and ends in Broadway, a village that also lies on the Cotswold Way. Due to risk of flooding, road sections were employed, cutting the actual race distance down to around 38 miles.

My aim was simple, complete the race before it got dark. Richard Weremiuk, the race director, had stated it would be an 8:15 - 8:30am start depending on how long the coaches took. Unfortunately the excellent but detailed race brief ensured we were sent on our way at exactly 8:30am, leaving me eight and a half hours to get round without having to resort to a headtorch.

The first few miles followed the River Salwarpe mainly by canal path and I got into a nice 10 or 11 minute mile rhythm. A road section that travelled through the village of Earls Common followed and by the time I reached the first checkpoint in Flyford Flavell I had covered nearly 10 miles in less than 2 hours.

A mile further on, the fun and games began. Richard had warned us (possibly or possibly not tongue-incheek) that upon receiving his letter, the local farmer took great delight in filling a gap between two kissing gates with cow slurry. There were other long-winded alternatives but if Richard saw any finisher that was not ankle deep in cow manure he would ensure that the medal was dipped in it to compensate. I had learnt from other races that sometimes the best option is just to plough through and accept the consequences. This gungho approach initially gained me about five places as others dithered but those places were gradually given back as I spent the next half mile running as if in deep sea diving boots.

Many fields were crossed as the Wychavon Way meandered through the villages of Rous Lench, Church Lench and Sheriff's Lench. I battled through the dreaded 19 mile mark (for some reason this is always a bad spot for me in ultra running) to reach the second checkpoint in Wyre Piddle. It was there I realised I had made a rookie error: not testing my new rucksack when full prior to the race. I was all over the gaff opening zips and the drink bladder with cold hands and wasting minutes. The checkpoint, as with all of them, was expertly manned with all the food one could realistically wish for. This allowed me to adopt the strategy of stuffing myself at the checkpoints and hardly

having any need for my own food.

A couple of miles past Wyre Piddle we had the pleasure of running through Pershore, a town I had not hitherto visited; my knowledge extended to the understanding that it is renowned for growing plums as indicated by my favourite named running club, the Pershore Plum Plodders. Thereafter, we ran down lanes that served as a filler to the highlight of the event, Bredon Hill.

The prospect of facing a steep incline at marathon distance was not especially palatable (although I do love hills by nature) particularly as it was accompanied by sweeping rain, blustery winds and at the summit descending mist. The latter was a pity because it thwarted what would have been a wonderful view. As it transpired Bredon Hill came at a good time for me. Everyone was reduced to walking pace so it allowed me to stop, get organised and take in some fuel without losing much impetus. The ascent proved to be winding rather than straight up so it did not prove to be absurdly taxing.

The marvellous descent enabled me to relax and enjoy the experience that culminated in coming out at Ashton under Hill's church. This was a welcome sight for two reasons: a) it was around 2:45pm with only about eight miles to go and b) I had recced the remainder of the route and knew that barring calamities (that can strike



at any time in an ultra) I was going to finish in daylight. I took on another picnic's worth of food at the final checkpoint and pushed on.

Brain and legs determined that 13 minute miles was to be the pace of choice and in truth, the closing stages were pleasingly uneventful. Birthday Boy Superman zoomed past on the track to Childswickham (the effect of the kryptonite I had slipped into his water bottle must have worn off) but other than that my sedate pace was still sufficient to pick up three places in the final mile as aching limbs took hold of my competitors. I arrived in Broadway football club in a smidgen over 8 hours, just about in the top half of the field but more importantly at 4:35pm, a

good thirty minutes before darkness set in.

Richard congratulated me and awarded the medal while pointing me in the direction of a pasty and other welcome food. Beyond Marathon adopt a no frills approach to their races, you pay a basic cost (£34 in this case including coach travel) and can add a medal (£5 extra) plus a T-Shirt if desired. Given this was my fifth ultra and third with Beyond Marathon despite their Midlands base (i.e. a bit of driving home after the finish!) this hopefully says enough about how highly I rate them. The Wychavon Way Ultra is a super race, ideal for a beginner, it has a bit of everything; quaint villages, boggy fields, a steep hill and even cow slurry!

A fter completing the Hardmoors 55 in 2016 I vowed to stick to distances of 30 miles or less until the kids were a bit older. My children were 4 and 5 at the time, I was about to return to work following adoption leave. Surely there was no way I could commit the time required to continue training for these long ultras.

It was possibly 3 months later that I heard of the Oldham Way Ultra. It starts and finishes about 5 miles from my front door; passes through the small town I live in; well, 40 miles isn't that much more than 30...and, anyway, these time limits are very generous indeed. I could walk the first 33 miles within the 12 hour limit and probably still have time to spare.

Sold! I'm in.

12 months to the day since my vow of shortish distances, I was toeing the line of the 2017 OWU. I felt undertrained; time constraints for working parents are hard. I was learning to stop berating myself for the training I hadn't done and start congratulating myself for the training I had done. Knowing I was never going to win but could complete the race, I was here to enjoy myself.

Being local enabled me to get out with some friends and recce part of the course. If you are planning to run this race, I strongly recommend exploring the route in advance if possible. There are no way markers other than the little Oldham Way signs, the course does deviate from the Oldham way on a couple of minor parts. It's quite an uncomplicated route, so when you've seen it once you'll probably be able to remember it. A map is provided, you can download GPX files if you like.



Oldham Way Ultra

Victoria Carter

I confess to not expecting much from the route. I thought it would be quite urban for the most part. How wrong I was. Most of the route is beautiful, passing through farmland, parks and open countryside, though there is a short section along the Failsworth Canal that is unimpressive save for its marshal point and food station, which provided a welcome morale boost.



Tandle hill is a gem to run through with its tall bare trees that are eerily beautiful. Do not follow the Oldham Way signs at this point or you add an unnecessary hill.

Daisy Nook country park is a lovely undulating woodland that is crisscrossed with many little streams. This marks the halfway point of the race, it is the site of another checkpoint with motivating marshals and a well stocked food station.

The Saddleworth hills and the area around Dovestone reservoir are picturesque and a welcome sight towards the end of the race. The hills are tough, especially going up from



Binn Green to the war memorial on top of Alderman, the views over Saddleworth, with its villages and moorland, are ample compensation for the aches and pains.

Approaching the finish, the route deviates once more from the Oldham way. Be sure to not follow the OW signs at this point or you add some very technical terrain and significant additional miles. Once you've climbed out of Diggle it's roads all the way back to the Castleshaw centre and a very welcome hot meal.

To say the 2017 event was wet would be something of an understatement. I wore my OMM Kamleika Waterproof top for the duration. I love this jacket, not the cheapest on the market by a long shot, not the most expensive either. The stretchy fabric means it is comfortable and remains so over long distances. I needed my kit on this run. The rain was heavy and set in. I don't wear waterproof shoes and my Salomon Fell Runners were just the ticket. They let everything in but also let it all out again. The mud was deep through the fields near the start, deep through Tandle Hill, deep through Daisy Nook Country Park, deep through Park Bridge, deep on the way into Mossley, deep



up towards Hartshead Pike and the descent from Alderman was a river of mud. Even my Fell Runners were not sufficient to keep me on my feet for this decent, which was spent mostly on my backside. I dragged a saturated, muddy and exhausted carcass the remaining distance to the finish line, spurred on by the late emergence of sunshine. The gleam from the wet ground round Delph was enough to make me smile again.

I described the 2017 race as, "40 miles of hell...I loved every step" and signed up straight away for the following year, which was sadly cancelled on the day of the race due to deep snow. This was bad news for me as I'd already got up and eaten my big bowl of porridge. It was worse news for the runner stuck on the motorway, and even worse for the handful of runners who had set out at 10 o'clock the previous evening



to first complete the route in reverse. Disappointment was evident by the Facebook posts, although we all knew it was the right decision. I took my dog for a low-level run along the Pennine bridleway to burn off my porridge and saw no fewer than 4 other frustrated runners trying to do the same with their OWU breakfasts.

Fear not though, the race went ahead! A month later than originally planned and with the same crazy runners setting out at 10pm on the Friday night to attempt the double. The race started on the Saturday morning with a much smaller start line than had been originally planned. Some of the double runners toed the start line, and two of them managed to finish.

The race for me was like a different event. It was dry and there was far less mud. There is always some mud in greater Manchester and the South Pennines, on that day, it was not flowing and there was no need for the waterproof to leave my bag.

I understand that the OWU has now been permanently moved from March to April. There is talk of the double being run, all competitors will start at the same time, hopefully the double runners will see some of the competitors as they head out for their second lap.

I have, of course, signed up for the 2019 event and cannot wait to run it.



Victoria Jayne Carter 21 April · Ashton-under-Lyne · 🚉 👻

Packed and repacked my bag, now eating pasta for supper before heading to bed. It can only mean one thing ... Oldham way ultra in the morning. Good luck to all of you doing the double. I'll see you for the second lap tomorrow.

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Race Report

Hardwolds 80

James Campbell

Part 2

On Saturday 24th November 2018, I took part in and completed the inaugural Hardwolds 80 Ultramarathon. A race of 80 miles starting in Hessle and finishing in Filey, travelling mostly along the Wolds Way National Trail. It was the furthest I've ever run.

Nunburnholme - Millington (5km)



As I travelled through Nunburnholme, I passed Lauryn stretching her calves in the village, I asked if everything was OK and she told me she was fine, just moving her calves in a different direction to how they'd moved for the previous 6 hours.

I jogged into the field and noted that I was almost amongst the next group. I knew there was a steep climb at the other end of the field, followed by some rough ground, so halfway around the field I stopped to walk and get my poles out ready for the climb ahead. As I climbed the hill through Bratt Wood, I noticed that every time my left foot clipped a rock or bit of rough surface, my blister was giving me a jolt of pain. I took a couple of paracetamol to try and stave off any future worsening.

The track upwards degenerated from a gravel path into a muddy sheep trod, which I knew from the summer was very rutted and uneven, I took care to be careful where I stepped.

I was overtaken near the top of the climb by Hezel Magwili

and Jonathan again. We all got a run on along towards some farm buildings, after which the trail became a road again.

We approached a small farm building with a garage which had burned down beside it. I'd seen this damage in the summer and wondered what could have started such a catastrophic fire so close to the other buildings without damaging them. The owner was busy clearing them out and he told us that it had been struck by lightning in July.

Once past these buildings, I finished off my last packet of baby food, knowing that Millington was not too far away. I crossed the road into another chewy bit of ground before climbing up to the path above Kilnwick Percy, running along and enjoying the views that stretched westwards for what must have been at least 50 miles. I also remember seeing a pair of gliders dancing and wheeling overhead and marvelled at the view they must have. These distractions passed the next km or so to a group of farm buildings before the track joined the road to Millington nicely.

As we joined the road, Hezel and I caught up with Darren Wilson and we chatted as we jogged down the hill and overtook the next group of runners. I looked at my watch and noted that I'd passed the 30 mile mark and had probably done so in a personal best time. I felt very pleased with myself as we walked up the hill to Millington together, arriving at the CP in 7h:19m.

Upon arrival, we were asked to show our waterproof jackets as a random kit check then I made my way in to pick up my drop bags. The marshalls filled my water bottles while I dumped the rubbish from my pockets into the bin, added more crumbly High5 to my water and loaded my pockets with fresh supplies from my drop bag.

After putting on my night kit, I was simultaneously eating rice pudding, drinking hot soup and chatting to Dave, Dee, Mick Cottam and Matthew Swan. This was an act of multitasking too far and I knocked my soup all over the table. After clumsy attempts to clear it up myself, I was ushered away from the disaster zone by marshalls and I took that as my cue to leave the CP, my record of causing chaos at CP's continues.....

Millington – Fridaythorpe (12.85km)

I left the CP along with Brian Cutmore and Stephen Gibson. We jogged through the village to the foot of the steep, muddy climb back up to the Wolds Way after the brief



diversion into Millington. Halfway up the climb, the cloud cover increased rapidly and by the top of the climb, it was drizzling. Brian and Stephen had pulled well away from me.

The view back down towards Millington – Photo by Jon Steele



I jogged along, trying to recall details of the route description from memory as this was the second of the three sections I hadn't recce'd. I had been told there was a fearsome climb just after Millington with a switchback in it. As I descended a field, I spotted the climb and it certainly looked like it would live up to its reputation.



As I ran down the grass bank to the foot of the climb, cursing the now painful blister, I got my poles out for the climb. As I climbed, the drizzle turned to a slightly heavier shower and I was thinking of stopping to put my rain jacket on at the top when it eased off again. As I reached the top of the climb, I thought I could see Andy Pickering at the bottom stopping to either put on a waterproof or a head torch. There was also a group coming down the other side of the valley and I thought I could pick out Dave and Dee among them.

I got a run on the grassy path along the top of Cow Moor. I had that little game of chicken I always have in the fading light, trying to leave turning my head torch on as late as possible but before I trip over anything and hurt myself. As I reached the descent into Nettle Dale, I saw the runner in front had lit up and the surface was sufficiently slippy for me to decide to do the same.

Upon reaching the bottom of Nettle Dale, it was fully dark and another heavier rain shower was starting. I decided to make the call at the top of the hill putting my rain jacket on again. The rain stopped as I hit the top of the steep section.

As the path turned right and the grade slackened off I got some more interval running done, just running until the legs told me to stop. I passed back and forth with Anthony Stevens a few times before he pulled ahead.

I was caught halfway up the climb by Emily Beaumont, who I was surprised to see without Michelle, who'd sadly pulled out earlier. At the top of the climb I heard Dave and Dee behind me, they caught me as I tried to get a run on along the Huggate Sheepwalk but I found it way too slippy to run.

I decided to walk a while and as the path became a better track I was caught by the group comprising of Andy Pickering, Joanne Abbott and Jude Dayne. I walked with them for a while before finding another runnable section to stretch the legs out. We hit a section of road together and I ran the short section of tarmac before we dropped left into another muddy field crossing. The group pulled ahead of me going across the field, after taking on more food, I had a burst of energy and caught them at the next road crossing. At this point I thought I could see a lighthouse in the distance. Despite the distance from the coast, I guessed that it might have been Flamborough that we could see (subsequent map consultation seems to back that up).

We were soon running on a tarmac lane that eventually became a footpath, mostly downhill, I was getting more running done. My blister was making it painful and I dropped behind the group. The footpath came out onto another road section, moving away from Huggate, which ideally, I would have run, but my legs were unwilling and I think this section was a bit of a false flat, I had the poles out again to help. I was caught again by Darren Wilson and we chatted along the road section before we disappeared through a hedge into a field. I stowed my poles and moved

as quickly down the slippery downhill section that my left foot would allow.

At the bottom of the descent, we turned left into Holm Dale and our little group became more strung out, with Anthony Stephens about 50m ahead of me. I was following his head torch when I kicked something with my left foot and felt a jolt of pain in my blistered toe, followed by that feeling of released pressure, the blister had burst. For the first minute or so, it was very painful and I was worried about being able to continue. Once it had fully drained and settled, all the pain was gone and I could again run on it properly. At this point I was running and counting to 60, then walking for a count of 30 to ensure that I was running for at least twice as long as I was walking.

As we approached the end of Holm Dale, the valley formed into two separate paths and the runner in front followed the left track up a steep hill. I started to follow, but realised the path was turning West and Fridaythorpe was to the North. I stopped and activated the navigation on my Suunto and confirmed that this spur was the wrong path, just as Darren caught me up. We both shouted and caught the attention of the stray runner, we headed up the correct hill which opened out onto a side street in Fridaythorpe. We jogged a minute on, a minute off until we hit the centre of the village and found a pop up CP where we could resupply with water, arriving at 10h:01m.

We sheltered from another rain shower as our bottles were refilled and I added two more crumbly High5 to my main drinking bottle, before we headed off out of the village just behind the Abbott, Dayne and Pickering trio.

Fridaythorpe – Thixendale (7km)

Not long after we left Fridaythorpe, we were caught and overtaken by Peter Kidd, who was now only 40 miles from achieving his 1,000th Hardmoors mile. We congratulated him on his achievement before he left us for dust.

After dropping down the steep descent into Brubberdale, I used the slow progress up the muddy climb at the other side of the valley to get a good gulp of baby food down. As I reached the top of the climb, Darren held the gate open for me and told me he was stopping to attend to some business, so I pushed on.

Within a few minutes, I could feel the energy from eating and managed a good stretch of running from the beginning of the copse of trees by Gill's Farm, all the way down the descent into the steep walled valley of Thixendale. The grass path at the bottom was very wet and I was now thankful for the waterproof socks. I jogged on behind the head torch in front, doing intervals, counting to 120 while running and 60 while walking to continue getting in twice as much running as walking with longer spells of running.

It wasn't long before I could make out the road ahead that this path joined, marked by a crew car parked where the path came out of the field and joined the road. I'd run more effectively so far on this section compared to the previous one. I put this down to the benefits of running on a route I'd previously recce'd in contrast to running on unknown ground.

Once on the road, I tried to maintain constant running but I had to stop for at least one walk break. As I turned left into the village, I checked my watch and was pleased to note that the overall time was now 11h:10m. I decided that this was a good point to take some caffeine on board in the form of two Pro-Plus tablets and a couple of paracetamol to quieten some of the niggly pains in my legs.

Thixendale – Wharram Percy (7km)

This next section was one I'd targeted to try and run a large



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portion of. Before I could get any running done, I had to climb a long, steep double track road out of the village. Halfway up, I looked back and could see only one head torch behind me in the village, I could make out another about 200m in front. Once at the top of the climb I decided to run until I overtook that head torch. I managed to do this just before a left turn at a fence line.

At this point I could see the single head torch still not far behind me and a group of three or four turning right at the end of the field. I knew this field was pretty flat, followed by a steep descent, then a long steep climb. I noticed that the full moon had come out from behind the clouds and was giving some natural light. To try and save battery power, I switched my head torch onto it's lower light setting and set off at a harder running pace. A quick glance down at my watch told me that I was churning out a quite respectable 6m:45s/km here so I kept it going all the way to the top of the steep descent.

I could see a head torch halfway down the descent and a group just starting up the other side. I flicked mine back onto full beam and started to bounce down it, as I'd done on my summer recce for all of about 10m when I realised that the surface was wickedly greasy and running was liable to lead to a fall.

I descended carefully through the halfway gate and then as the path became less steep, pushed hard to the bottom. Up ahead, I could see two head torches on the climb, moving well. I dug my poles out, flicked my torch onto half beam and climbed at a steady pace, allowing them to fade off into the distance again.

About halfway up the climb, I looked down to see the head torch behind was only about 20m away now and we came together at the top, it was Darren again. We chatted briefly, before I realised I was now on the long flat/slightly downhill runnable section I'd identified on my recce and started moving again.

I ran for a count of 120, which took me through some trees and around a right turn onto a double track path lined with chunks of chalky stone. I walked for a count of 30, before running for 180. This brought me to within a few metres of a pair, who pulled away slightly during my next walk break to a count of 60. I then ran for a count of 360, catching the pair as they climbed a stile. After the stile, I walked for 30 then ran for 360 again, making more distance on the lights behind me. I had a rest for a count of 60, looking over my shoulder and counting 8 sets of lights as far back as the turn through the trees.

The count of 60 took me to the top of the descent into the deserted village of Wharram Percy, I decided to run all the way down. Closing all the time on a head torch in front. As I approached the deserted village, I noticed some lights strung around a bush, then another set around a finger post, these looked pretty, the lights decorating the deserted village (complete with atmospheric music being played somewhere) were amazing.

As I ran around the church and past the cottage, I spotted another head torch ahead and ran faster to catch up. I caught Peter Kidd again as he was going through the gates before the climb up to the CP. I walked up to the CP with him to arrive at the best CP of the day on 12h:33m.

At the CP, I dumped the rubbish from my pockets and topped up my water, including using the last of my High5 tablets and any remaining dust. I had several cups of Dandelion & Burdock, which tasted amazing and grabbed some food. While I was eating, it started raining heavily, so I moved on quickly to keep warm.

Wharram Percy – Wintringham (13km)

This next section was one I'd recce'd out and back. I had identified sections along which, running, even on tired



legs was possible. The first 2.5km away from the CP were downhill and apart from a short field crossing, were all on road, so despite the rain, I pushed on. It was now coming in sheets blown on the wind from the East and my jacket was taking a soaking. I resolved to get to the protection of the hedgerow on the field crossing ASAP before making a decision about putting my waterproofs on.

10 minutes after leaving the CP, I arrived at the field. The hedge was no protection, to stop my gloves from getting wet, I unbagged my waterproof gloves from my back pocket and put them on. As I got them out, I think I may have dropped my half eaten packet of baby food because when I next went to eat from it, I was surprised that it wasn't there and had to start a new one. The alternative was that I'd binned it by accident at the CP. This occupied my mind briefly as I ran the final tarmac section through the village of Wharram le Street.

Ahead of me, I saw a group had stopped and were donning waterproof bottoms. I remembered from my recce that there was a bench where the Wolds Way path left the road and became a stony lane over a hill. I stopped at the bench, quickly stripped off the waterproof gloves, being careful to point the cuffs away from the wind and unpacked my waterproof jacket. While in my pack, I took out my hand torch, which I thought might come in useful for a field crossing that was coming up. While I put my jacket and waterproof gloves back on, I was overtaken by a large group.

As I got going again, I recognised Mick Cottam at it's rear. This was one of the only uphill sections I'd planned to run, as running it 30 seconds on, 30 seconds off worked well in my recce. It took me two cycles of running for a count of 30, walking for a count of 30 to catch Mick. As I caught him, I had a moment of paranoia about how quickly I'd zipped my pack back up and asked him to check my zips. After he checked me, I chatted for a short while then I got going on the 30/30 plan again.

On the way to the top, I caught Joanne Abbott, Jude Dayne, Andy Pickering, Brian Cutmore, Stephen Gibson, Emily Beaumont and a couple of others. We crossed the next road together and descended towards some farm buildings, as we turned left, I recognised that we were approaching the part where I thought I'd need my hand torch (it's beam can be zoomed up to 500m, so it's good for picking out landmarks over a distance). The part I had in mind was marked on the map as 'The Peak' and it was a muddy descent across a field, in a gap between two small hills with a gate/bridge over a beck at the bottom. The bridge marked the official 50 mile point of the Wolds Way, but in the dark, it was easy to miss the correct line to this crossing point.

As we turned right to begin the descent, I took off my right waterproof glove to get my torch out of my back pocket and clipped it to the front of my pack. The torch beam was brilliant and picked out the line needed perfectly, in fact it looked like two runners ahead were able to use it to find the gate after taking the wrong line.

The descent was muddy, slippy and treacherous, the pouring rain wasn't helping matters. The group skidded and slid down through a thick muddy section then thankfully onto some grass before crossing the bridge and making the small climb back up to the road section that leads to Wood House Farm.

I let the group move ahead while I stowed my torch and put my waterproof glove back on, I started running in 30/30 intervals again. I caught the back of the group as we passed through the farm buildings, I dropped back as they power walked faster than me along the next little hill up from the farm.

At this point, I noticed that the fingers on my right hand felt a bit squelchy and realised that while clipped to my pack, the waterproof glove had partially filled with rain water. I took it off and shook it out, but the inner remained damp. I kept it on over my damp skin layer glove in the hope that the outer shell, would stop the wind from cooling my fingers too much. At least the heavy rain had subsided and the clouds had blown over to allow the full moon to light the path again.

The next section of road had power lines running parallel, again I adopted a tactic of running to a pylon, walking to a pylon, remaining a short distance behind the group until we dropped back onto a muddy path inside the treeline that climbed upwards. I knew that this path eventually came back out onto a gravel track. I continued climbing to Settrington Beacon before the trail descended all the way to Wintringham.

I decided to have a long walk break and let the group go as they were moving at a pace that was simply too fast for me. I also decided to have a good eat and drink, finishing off my baby food, Chia Charge and protein gel supply for this leg of the race. I had a couple of Snickers bars left but I didn't fancy them. I was looking forward to re-stocking from my drop bag now.

Toward the top of the climb, I started back with running intervals to a count of 60 running and 30 walking. I could see the lights of the huge group of maybe 10-12 runners cross the road and into the woods beyond Settrington Beacon, there were a couple of crew cars waiting by the crossing. I arrived about a minute behind the big group and entered the woods alone.

The first thing that struck me was how cold it was in the woods, despite being sheltered from the wind. It's as if the still air was somehow a lot colder. I was glad of my buffs and gloves for sure.

I could hear a couple of owls hooting at each other and to entertain myself I joined in hooting back at them. This

probably sounds nuts, but it kept me happy as I jogged down the hill, especially since I'd started to feel a hotspot on my right little toe.

As the path turned right and descended further, I was getting the impression that my head torch was fading. I counted back to when I'd turned it on at around 4pm, it was now just after 10pm, which meant it had been on for 6 hours, so it was not unreasonable for the batteries to have started to go. I had a spare set and would change them at Wintringham. As I exited the woods, and began the steep descent down Keld Lane, I pulled out my hand torch, which illuminated the path brilliantly.

I jogged down the lane noting that a pair of runners were between me and the big group off in the distance. I decided to try and catch them before the right turn along the field edge that led to Wintringham. I caught them just before the right turn and jogged along the field edge and across into Wintringham with them, arriving at the CP at 14h:40m. Upon arrival we were spot checked for kit again (head torch, whistle and waterproofs), handed our drop bags then pointed in the direction of warm food and drink.

I grabbed myself a couple of slices of pizza and found a table to sort my stuff out. First of all, I put my watch on charge to try and ensure I had enough battery to cover the full 24 hours should I need to use the Navigation mode. I then took off my wet buffs and gloves and got out some dry buffs and a dry pair of gloves. My second spare pair of gloves had got wet as I hadn't sealed their bag properly, so I left them in my pocket and decided to take them off, bag them and put my waterproof gloves back on if it rained again.

I changed the batteries in my head torch, stocked my pockets up with all my drop bag food. I left my remaining Snickers bars and the ones from my drop bag on the table for someone else.

I drank a few mouthfuls of my Red Bull, before deciding I didn't want it and binned it and instead obtained a cup of tea from Dave Johnson who was marshalling.

I went over and grabbed more pizza and cookies and spotted Dave Cook while I was eating. As I approached, I realised Dave didn't look at all well, he was shaking and really cold. I was about to grab a marshall, when somebody moved him near to a radiator, wrapped him up and started looking after him.

I was still slightly shocked when Mick Cottam came over to me and asked if I was about to go back out, I said I was and asked him if he knew this section as I hadn't recce'd Wintringham to Potter Brompton. He laughed and said, "I'd thought you'd have recce'd it, that's why I was asking if you were going." At that, we both decided to get a move on, as we were cooling down. We left the CP at 14h:57m.

The final instalment of Hardwolds 80 will be in issue 19.



Rebellion Ultra Marathon

Tom Radley



In 2018 I embarked on a running based charity challenge in order to raise money for Myeloma UK (myeloma is a blood cancer arising from plasma cells), which culminated in my taking part in the Rebellion Ultra in Mid-Wales. I called this fundraiser 'Tom's Marathon Madness', little did I know then how apt that name would be, as I mentally dissolved in the dark hills of Wales.

My Running Background

I hadn't done any 'proper' running to speak of before last year, with my longest distance being a 10.3 mile cross country race I did at school. Nevertheless, I decided that I would complete a half-marathon, marathon and ultra marathon before the year was out. As well as a seemingly respectable challenge to attempt for my charity, I wanted to prove to myself that I had enough grit to both commit to training for, and to complete, something genuinely difficult. I used to have a horrible habit of never finishing anything I started which leaves one feeling terribly unfulfilled, and these races were to be my tonic. I chose the Rebellion largely because I liked the name. I'm also a bit of a history buff and the fact that it follows the length of a 'cool' historical figure, Glyndwr's, trail appealed to me too. I had no concept of quite how far 135 miles was, but it seemed impressively long so I bit the bullet and signed up.

At the end of June, I completed the Wilmslow Half Marathon in 1hr 29mins which I was very happy with, now my training began in earnest for the Chester Marathon and the Rebellion. I focused on the Rebellion for obvious reasons, although I really struggled to fit many long runs in around my day job as a dairy farmer. I justified to myself that farming is quite hard work in itself, so I must be getting fitter. I managed three 25 mile trail runs plus some smaller runs before the Chester Marathon at the start of October which I finished in 3hrs 35mins. In all three long practices, and then in the marathon itself my left knee was giving me a lot of jip, which was my main concern for the ultra. A week later I snuck down to the Glyndwr Trail to run the first leg as a path finding mission. For my final training run I ran the Gritstone Trail (40 miles + bad navigation) with my friend George. Not wanting to let the side down I ran through my knee pain and it went away after a few miles which filled me with confidence that injury wouldn't let me down during the actual race.

Pre-race

It will become increasingly obvious I had absolutely no idea what I was doing or what I was letting myself in for. I had over the previous 3 months managed to get all the required kit on eBay, and then had to decide what I was going to eat, and how much I would be able to carry. A lot of my research had been reading running forums, the one overriding piece of



advice when it came to food seemed to be: stick to what you know, and don't eat anything you can't keep down. On the Gritstone Trail run I had learnt that chocolate was my friend (and motivator) and pasta was my fuel of choice. So the day before the race I hit Tesco, bought an ungodly number of chocolate oranges, marshmallows and beef jerky and cooked some pasta with pesto for each of my drop bags. My mum took me down to the start and gave me some motivational secret envelopes to put in each of my drop bags.

The race started on the evening of Friday 2nd November at 7pm, I tried and failed to sleep during the day and arrived at the race briefing full of nervous energy. I hadn't really given much thought as to what to expect but was instantly met by the sight of a roomful of people who looked as though they knew exactly what they were doing which perturbed me a little. There were also a lot of support vehicles parked outside and I suddenly felt very underprepared.

The race briefing was taken by Dave who hit us with the additional bad news that it looked like the Saturday afternoon would be plagued by heavy rain coming off the Irish Sea. The race photographer, Kenny, also grabbed me for a quick interview which oddly settled my nerves a bit, and returned me from my panicky reverie to my normal jokey self. So it was with excitement that I joined the quick trip up to the start line.

The race

The race starts on a very sharp incline and there was something distinctly amusing about everyone psyching themselves up for the race only to all walk the first 50m, with that hill behind us it was off into the night. Two things were immediately apparent to me. It was far harder running and navigating in the dark than I had thought it would be, and that my complete failure to train for this skill was a huge oversight. Fortunately, I had run this section of the race already so knew where I was going, but alarm bells had started to ring. I settled into a comfortable pace alongside a lovely chap named Tristan and the first few miles flew by. There was an odd artistry in seeing all the bobbing head torches becoming slowly strung further apart and by midnight I couldn't see anyone save the group of 5 that I had latched onto. At around 00:30 we reached the first checkpoint (23 miles) at Llanbadarn Fynydd, and I was surprised to find myself feeling



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in fine feckle. Not really knowing the etiquette I settled into a corner and wolfed down a plate of pasta. My motivational letter from the parents included a few quotations and a story mum had written about the run which I had to read piece by piece as I got to each checkpoint. Videographer, and all round great guy, Kenny grabbed me for a quick update interview in which I'm still smiling and then I set off on the second leg.

I quickly fell into a running pair with Gary, who was a thoroughly nice bloke and we slowly plodded through the miles as night deepened. The first strange experience was waiting for me on this leg. I started to feel incredibly tired all of a sudden. One minute I was fine and the next I felt my eyelids drooping. A very uncomfortable half hour followed where I was seemingly jolting myself awake every time my feet hit the floor. The only thing I can liken it to is driving when very tired and the moment where you might nod for split second and then startle yourself awake. The difference was this was happening between every step. Now in a car you could pull over and have a nap, but I felt like that would be a bad idea in my current situation, and Gary was fantastic at dragging me along with encouragement. He assured me that I'd feel awake when dawn arrived, I assured him that I didn't believe him. In a triumph for

his experience over my youthful arrogance he was thankfully proved right. The moment the sun came up the tiredness disappeared as quickly as it had come and we powered on to the second checkpoint at Llanidloes (47 miles). I had missed it in my fatigue as I was now running into the unknown having never previously gone further than 43 miles. Oddly, I was thoroughly enjoying myself. It's very rare that I go more than 12 hours without worrying about cows escaping or milking and the like, it was a great change to be so immersed in something. I was high on single-minded determination. Running through the sunrise had been awesome and the beauty of the course was beginning to reveal itself. Again, I found myself joking and grinning, I was very much up for the third leg.

I set off alone for this leg, and took the opportunity to plug into my iPod. I'd prepared a mix of inspiring movie soundtracks for when I was thinking of giving up, comedy podcasts to keep the spirits up, and The Lord of the Rings and Harry Potter audiobooks to help the miles fly by. Before the race, I had identified this third leg as the key challenge to overcome as it was the longest, steepest and I'd already run 50 odd miles since my last sleep. Nevertheless, I was in soaring spirits as I set off, and even treated some sheep and an empty valley to my best rendition of Tom Jones' Delilah. Deciding that on balance my lungs would be better used supporting my running than scaring the local sheep, I packed in the singing and plodded on. It was slow going, with a lot of steep slopes all of which I had decided to walk, not wanting to jigger my dodgy knee through an over exuberant descent. As the afternoon wore on, the promised storm blew in off the sea, I wrapped up and staggered on. By now I was travelling at around 1mph and getting slower, I could feel the weight starting to set in my limbs. To compound matters darkness fell, and I discovered my head torch had run out of battery, for which I had to waste 10 minutes fiddling around trying to

find and connect the charger. I was now knackered, I found myself sitting down for increasingly longer breaks every 500m or so. I was just going nowhere. Part of me wanted to curl up and sleep where I was despite the cold and rain. I'm struggling to put into words quite how negative I felt. I knew I was going to fail. I knew I was letting everyone down. I was trying to think how I was going to justify to the person I was raising money for why I had failed her, what excuses I could give to all my friends who had given money to the cause. I was 11 miles from the checkpoint and couldn't face taking another step. I also knew that I wouldn't be able to face anyone I knew if I didn't finish (in hindsight

this was a stupid thought of course). Underneath it all, I knew that I hadn't done enough training and it was my fault I was powerless in this position. A large part of the motivation for me was proving to myself I had the grit to finish something I started; to train hard and to have the bottle to finish. I was emphatically proving to myself that I didn't have this grit and I felt utterly worthless.

So here, at my lowest ebb, chance prevailed. I was overtaken by a group of four runners and from my well of despair, hope leapt free. I recognised that sticking with these people was my lifeline because my motivation had deserted me. I fear I wasn't the most



charismatic addition to the group, barely saying a word and wearing what I imagine was a fairly grim expression, but stick with the group I did. One of the group, Anuschka, was wearing bright pink trainers and all I remember of the next ten miles is staring unblinkingly at the backs of those shoes, moving my own feet whenever they moved. I'd lost all sense of time and distance when we eventually arrived at Machynlleth (75 miles) sometime well after dark. My eternal gratitude must go to the other members of the "5 alive crew" (as we dubbed ourselves) for dragging me from the precipice of despair.

At Machynlleth, my mum was waiting and for the first time in years I yielded to being mothered, so spent was I. Kenny also grabbed me for my first non-smiley interview. I must confess, I don't remember it at all, but the camera doesn't lie as they say, and there are a few excellent quotations from it that I've seen since: I start by saying, "that was the worst two hours of my life. It was just s**t". A bit later Kenny asks if I would have regrets if I don't finish and I reply: "only every day for the rest of my life", not putting much pressure on myself then! I would like to say thank you to everyone who helped and supported me at Machynlleth. I might not have been injured but I was not in a good way, even though I was happy to have got there, I couldn't shake the feeling that there was no way I was finishing the race. I popped my phone and iPod on charge and headed into my sleeping bag for a few hours.

When I awoke I was right up for it again, which was a pleasant surprise, I also felt as though I'd broken the back of the race if I could just continue. Unfortunately, my shoes and socks were still soaking wet through. This oversight in not dealing with them the night before underlined my inexperience and seemed appallingly typical of my generation to sort my electronics out and not do what was actually important. Like a good farmer, I reaped what I had sown



and just had to suck it up and get on with it. One benefit of having charged my phone was I had about twenty messages waiting for me from friends and family wishing me luck and sending messages of support. These really lifted my spirits and I set off at about 08:00 feeling rather upbeat.

I'd run a lot of the race in darkness and would run the last day in fog, this leg from Machynlleth to Lake Vyrnwy (107 miles) was in lovely conditions and absolutely stunning. Up and down rolling hills and along lush valleys, if it wasn't in Wales, I would say this was the epitome of Blake's 'England's green and pleasant land'. The day passed with very little drama, at a decent pace and with Tolkien to keep me company I headed on. I started navigating with my map, rather than GPS which was a great move. Being able to split the course into tiny manageable chunks such as 'cross this field', 'get to the next crossroads' etc. really helped me keep up the positive sense of achievement. The one slight issue occurred half a mile from the checkpoint, and stemmed from another rookie error. I had printed off the race information and popped it in my bag but in the previous day's rain the paper had got sodden and fell apart when I tried to get at it. I couldn't see the grid reference of the checkpoint itself and had to choose between going to the actual village

of Lake Vyrnwy, or following the course and hoping I hadn't missed any directional arrows. Predictably I had no phone signal and was not keen to travel any further than I had to. To try and unravel the mystery I sat down on a bench on a bridge and racked my brains as to what to do. As it turns out, this did nothing for the nerves of my poor parents watching on the GPS tracker website, to them it looked like I had fallen in the river. Sorry rents! Eventually I peeled the paper apart layer by layer until I could see just enough of the grid reference to know that the checkpoint wasn't in the village itself so I carried on and it was literally 500m further down the path. A lot of drama over nothing and a foolishly wasted hour, but at least I got there. I'd also learnt my lesson from the previous day and stuffed my shoes and socks full of paper towels and put them on a radiator.

After 2 hours sleep I was up and at it again, setting off on the last leg. My feet were in reasonable condition and nothing but Armageddon was going to stop me finishing from there. Again, it was another relatively uneventful run, just winding down the miles to the finish in Welshpool. Eventually I did get there, finishing the 135 mile course in 66hrs 28mins and coming 12th. I was welcomed in by friends, family, the charming Belinda and the Up Hill Down Dale team, who were fantastic throughout. The smile was firmly back on my face (and still is), to cap it off, while I had been running we had smashed through my fundraising target for Myeloma UK. All in all, one of the best days of my life. Apologies for the shameless plug, if anyone would like to add to the fundraising you can visit my Justgiving page at: https://www.justgiving.com/ fundraising/tom-radley

Some reflections

So, some reflections on my first ultra: First off, I couldn't recommend this race enough; the course is beautiful, it's very well organised and the team
are as kind, compassionate and helpful as one could hope for. Secondly, you can't do enough training, but equally there's nothing you can't achieve if you put your mind to it. Thirdly, I wasn't sure what to expect, this was intended as a tick off my bucket list, but I've been blown away by what a lovely community of individuals ultrarunning appears to contain and by the fulfilment and 'type 2 enjoyment' I have taken from the experience. I'm not sure I'll be doing another soon, although I have a feeling the Rebellion won't be my last. My next challenge is canoeing the Great Glen Canoe Trail with my friend John, although as I write, I can't swim and failure to train this time may be a bit more fatal!

Ciao x





Barcelona 24 Hour Track Race 2018

Photos & text by Wendy Whearity



The Barcelona 24 Hour Race is held the weekend before Christmas, this year falling on the 15th and 16th December. Since my first participation in the race in 2016 it has become a favourite event to end the year. A friendly atmosphere, slightly warmer weather and the opportunity to earn a few extra calories for Christmas. After a long year of racing and an irritated tummy since the Autumn 100 in October, I wasn't sure I should really be racing, but my place was free due to my distance the year before and the flights/hotels had been paid for. It was also a good, no pressure, opportunity to

qualify for the GB 24 hour squad whilst still having a qualifying distance in the bank.

In previous years, my now husband, Alex has joined me for the event but work and family commitments this year meant I had to travel alone, with my brother-in-law Rusty flying out for the start of the race to crew me. This year I took the opportunity of a free Friday to fly out early and get a good night's rest before the race. In 2016 we arrived late the night before and last year we took the risk of flying on the morning of the race, thankfully arriving in time.

If I had done the same this year, flight delays would have meant I missed the start.

'Hola', 'Gracias' and 'Adios' complete my limited Spanish vocabulary. Hopping in a taxi straight from the airport has always been a much more attractive prospect than trying to navigate the metro, however at €50 each way, a taxi on my own was pretty steep. I decided as I was arriving early Friday afternoon to manage the metro at a significantly cheaper €4.20. Thanks to Roz Glover for a comprehensive guide indicating which train to catch, where it stops and how much it costs. I arrived at Sant Andreu Comtal station without a hitch where Roz and Brian met me and we walked the ten minutes through the town to the Ibis hotel which is situated just a few hundred metres from the track.

For anyone considering travelling to Barcelona for

this event, the Ibis is the easiest way to go. A couple of hundred metres from the track with a supermarket underneath for last minute race supplies and a variety of dining out options in the adjoining shopping precinct. They also offer a late checkout until 5pm for about €15. Money well spent if you fancy a hot shower and a comfy power nap before flying home. They don't supply a kettle, tea, coffee etc in your room so if you're like me and love a pot of instant porridge, it's worth bringing your own or using your best Spanish to sweet talk the breakfast staff.

On arrival at the hotel I unpacked my bags and checked my Lucozade (not available in Spain), RedBull, Percy pigs and if the gluten free snacks had arrived intact. I nipped down to the supermarket for fruit, coke and water to take to the track, (these things are also supplied by the race organisers but I'm a bit



OCD so I always take my own). A very relaxed half hour mixing and labelling drink bottles, packing and repacking my bag for the track then off out for a bite to eat with a few other Brits and an early night.

Race morning was far less rushed and stressful than I'm used to. No Alex, kids or dogs, no travel time, I just got out of bed and wandered across the road to register and found a tent/ table to crew from. Roz and Brian had beaten me down there and already reserved a table. Whilst trying to locate them a gentleman wearing an Alaska jacket offered me space in their team tent, this is the kind of person this event attracts. I found Roz and we officially claimed our table with a GB flag.

Registration is straight forward even with zero Spanish, the only note to make here is you MUST bring your passport. No passport – no race number. I headed back to the hotel to prep my feet, have my porridge and enjoy a bit of chill out time. Rusty had been delayed on his flight so I sent him a few photos from the track and a pin drop in google maps to make sure he had no issues finding us. Thankfully he turned up shortly after the start and took up his crewing position next to Grant McDonald's family on our GB table.

The race start was 12pm, the 24 hour runners' race in lanes 6-8 with a relay and 12hr race taking place in the inside lanes. The track itself is a lovely surface to





run on, a couple of toilet block options (recently renovated) plus portaloos and a refreshments table trackside on one bend and the crew tables trackside on the opposite bend. Headphones are allowed but only really necessary overnight as they play some pretty funky music until 10pm and back on again at 9am in the morning, (Bon Jovi, Abba, Spanish pop etc).

With over 120 24 hour starters the track is quite congested for the first few hours. Some runners will inevitably go out fast, weaving in and out of the congestion. I tend to conserve my energy for later and stick as close to the inside line as possible. Regardless of what your Garmin tells you, only the number of laps count, weaving and running wide is just wasting time and energy. Lane 6 was measured as 437m, in my race plan I had foolishly only factored in 400m for each lap and was pushing to hit my planned number of laps each hour. It was only when Rusty advised I was a couple of kilometres ahead of my plan I realised my error and backed my pace right off to accommodate the extra 10% distance in each lap. Instead of 10k per hour, I'd been hitting more than 11k per hour.

Once settled into this pace I relaxed into the race. Runners, organisers and crew alike, everyone is very supportive and over 400m laps you regularly pass or are passed by fellow Brits. This year there were 7 of us



on the track so there was always someone around to pick up morale in passing. I also spent a few laps chatting with German runner Antje Krause with whom I'd run earlier in the year at the European championships in Romania. Ultra-racing is different compared to many sports as even rival teams will cheer and support each other, before, during and after the race. I have made many international friends already in this sport.

Brian Robb was leading the field for the first 10 hours, he would fly past quite regularly. Grant MacDonald looked consistent and strong throughout and took the lead at 21 hours. Nathan Montague got off to a solid start and made his way through the field over the first 7 hours.





Thereafter he had a tough race and battled on through the 24 hours just to stay on the track when many would have given up and headed back to the hotel. Roz Glover had a great race despite not feeling the best in the days prior, finishing just short of 100 miles on 159km. Paul Radford and Ry Webb both had solid and consistent races, a nice even pace throughout to top 10 finishes.

Passing through 50 miles in about 7hr 45mins, 76 miles in 12 hours and 100 miles under 17 hours I was on track for a good run, there was just one thing missing, I had no fire to push hard, I was tired and the final hours of darkness were bringing out the sleep demons. I had Red Bull, coke, sweets, and a teary phone call with Alex, all I wanted was a nap. I came up with an ingenious plan to convince Rusty we could go back for a sleep at the hotel and return in a few hours to nail another 50k or so, after all he looked tired too after his 3am start to get to the airport. During every lap I tried a new approach, but he was relentless, I was not going back to the hotel until the race finished at noon! THIS is the type of crew you need for a 24 hour race. I made a deal that I was going to sit for 5 minutes and have a little rest and some coke, I tried some further negotiations at this point, no one was interested. Getting fed up of my own complaining something clicked inside me, (maybe due to the coke) I decided if I wasn't going to get back to the

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hotel I might as well make the most of the next 6 hours or so. I clarified with Robbie Britton, who was crewing for Ry and Paul, that the new Women's GB 24 hour team qualification was 212km. I decided I'd just run to there and then I'd done enough for the day.

Next thing I knew I was back running at a decent pace, my 3rd female position was looking pretty solid (there was no way I was catching 1st and 2nd), I was still looking good for a top 10 finish. It felt like I flew to 212km (it took 6 ½ hours) but my adrenalin ran out at this point and I wasn't mentally prepared for another tough finish this year. I had been on liquids for several hours and was starting to lack any kind of energy, my usual failsafe pots of porridge were not going down at all, so I'd had to stick to liquid sugar. Retrospectively I still feel I was so lazy, I'm sure I could have pushed on, but I backed my pace right down until I ended up walking. I enjoyed the sun starting to warm us up and soaked in the atmosphere





of spectators starting to gather around the track ready for the finish. Rusty had urged me several times to run a few laps but I was convinced walking was enough.

Due to my lack of Spanish, I wasn't sure which ladies were in front of me, Julia and Victoria were both looking strong which indicated either could be in the lead. I knew it was a German in 2nd and I assumed it was Antje as she was moving really well. Once again Rusty urged me to run, he said I REALLY needed to. I felt like a total fraud as I picked up my feet and ran a few more laps at a decent pace, the finish numbers were handed out and the 24 hour buzzer sounded. We dropped our number cards and I

turned to Nathan beside me and gave him a hug, he was my hero that day. We walked through the finish procession where I met Antje and her crew, she congratulated me on my 3rd place and told me she had finished just behind me on the same lap. I couldn't believe it, I thought she was in front all along and in fact she was chasing me down, and nearly caught me! Thank you Rusty for insisting I run.

After partial laps were measured, I finished on 216km, 3rd female and 10th overall. It was a great result for the British team, 4 in the top 10 with Grant MacDonald taking the win with an epic 251km, Paul Radford in 5th with 224km and Ry Webb in 9th with 216.9km.



Awards were presented, and we headed back to the hotel, sadly I only had time for a quick shower and didn't get the sleep I so desperately wanted at 7am. A slight hobble down to the metro, a mix-up on getting the wrong train, a ticket wouldn't work and an airport shuttle bus took forever (I think we drove through the whole of Spain not between terminals). Two x Burger King meals (a lack of Spanish meant I ordered two) and onto the delayed plane, train from Gatwick, and finally a taxi

to home ready for work the next day.

Maybe it was knowing this journey home and the requirement to be back on Mum duty in the morning to get kids to school and me to work that I couldn't or wouldn't push so hard this time? I was fit enough to walk the dogs and cycle to work on Monday morning, sadly I hit ice and came off my bike landing on my elbow. Those injuries have lasted much longer than the aches and pains of 24 hour running.

Barcelona 24 hour will most likely be back on my calendar for 2019. I will fly the day before if possible and maybe this time I will take the Monday off work after the event. Anyone considering trying their hand at a 24 hour race this is a nice one. The slightly warmer weather is lovely and the organisers are really friendly. It does fill up quickly though so don't think about it too long.





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Running Festival Circuits Wychwood 6 Day Race 2018

Mireille Cormier translated by Sarah Cameron Photos courtesy: Eric Frank Wright



${f F}^{ m riday\,14th\,December\,2300}$

I left for Johannesburg on Air France. I had travelled there before, several years ago, on a flight that had a stopover so I arrived completely exhausted and decided never again. This time it was a direct night flight, the least uncomfortable possible, despite having very little legroom. I arrived on Saturday, towards the end of the morning. The time difference from France was plus one hour. A woman kindly came to pick me up from the airport. The 6 days was held this year inside a primary school at Wychwood, 12 kilometres from Johannesburg. There wasn't the option of having a package deal with accommodation and extras included in the race information, so I asked Eric Frank Wright if he could help me and he provided me with a tent and a camp bed. Perfect! He also arranged ways for me to charge my watch and my phone. The event is 'rustic'. The only inconvenience I could see so far was that we were enclosed in the grounds of the primary school and the gates were locked. No shops nearby.

Sunday 16th December 0700 (0600 French time)

It's warm and sunny. It's summer here. For the moment, there aren't very many of us. I'm amazed. When I got here last time everyone had already arrived and set up camp. It felt like being in a huge, friendly campsite with deluxe facilities; a spit roast, microwaves... The contrast is extreme. For now, there are only four individual tents visible, put up by the race organisers, and only three are occupied. I feel like an amateur and I don't even know what time the race starts. Because my English is so bad I don't come out of the hostel.

1100

A few people arrive. Still not a crowd. I find out some information, including that the start is at midday. Après renseignements le départ est à midi. We are hardly going to be jostling each other. I thought I saw on the facebook page that about 15 people had signed up.

1130

Pre race briefing, with a prayer. Indeed, I am one of only about 15 participants.

1200

Start! Only two women, Esther and Pumla set off running. We'll find out later if this strategy pays off in light of the hot temperatures. According to my watch it looks as if the circuit is between 400 and 500 metres. The 100 mile race starts at the same time.

I have no objective for the 6 days. My morale is low and I'm not on form at the moment to achieve what I'm capable of. I have to keep going just to stop myself from giving up.



Monday 17th December

Like Saturday evening, last night we also had very heavy rain. Everyone had to take shelter. But this morning the nice weather returned. During the 6 days there are several other races being held: 6h, 12h, 24h, 100 miles. There are regular race starts. Breakfast is at 0700, lunch at 1400 and dinner at 1900. For lunch today we had ice cream for pudding. It had melted a bit in the heat but it was refreshing all the same.

Tuesday 18th December

Stormy weather. Return of the rain. The loop is definitely 500 metres. For lunch, hot dogs chips and ice cream.

Wednesday 19th December

Today it is an oven! We are cooking. Impossible to run between midday and 4pm. Hope the rain comes back to refresh us

Thursday 20th, Friday 21st and Saturday 22nd December

I am yo-yoing with Pumla, the woman behind me, as we take our respective rest breaks. Strangely, on Wednesday she slept through the entire night allowing me to gain a narrow advantage which disappeared on Friday when she didn't sleep at all during the day or night. I really thought it was over, but curiously, she used this same funny strategy on the last night. Unusual idea. So on this last morning I was 22 kilometres ahead of her. She set off like a madwoman running to try to catch me, but 7 hours wasn't long enough.

In the end I finished sixth out of seventeen in the general classification, second female and first walker. It was interesting because it was really close and we had to fight to keep our places.

It was a great race despite it being relatively unknown. It's a shame because it deserves to be recognised. Don't hesitate to go if you have the chance. If you can run just half of what Christian Maudit achieved then you will be on the podium; this legend won by completing 1000 laps, which is 500 kilometres. The first female finished about 25 or 30 kilometres ahead of me.



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The 2019 Beast of Burden 100



The tenth annual edition of the Beast of Burden 100 and 50 mile Winter Ultramarathons took place again on the Erie Canal between Lockport and Middleport way out in western New York State, under workable winter conditions on the 16th and 17th of February. Beast of Burden is one of only a few northern Winter 100 mile ultramarathons and comes replete with its own unique set of challenges for hearty participants, including those running in either the 50 or the 25 mile race.



Tim Hardy

Forty-three racers started the 100 mile race and twentyfive crossed the finish line. Pete Kostelnick dominated the field to snatch the win in 16:28:39, this was favourable for the third best time ever completed on this course and a full 6:18 ahead of second place. Kimberly Wrate won the women's division in the 100 miler and came fifth overall in 25:33:58, three hours ahead of second place in the female division. Michael Condella (22:46:36) finished in second place and Sony Sawad (23:14:57) finished third. Raina Kao (28:26:56) earned second place in the Female division and 18th overall. Of the twenty-five 100 mile finishers, twentythree were males. Kimberly Wrate was also the youngest finisher at twenty-two years of age while the oldest finishers were two males, fifty-seven years young.

Best of Burden 100 Course

Print Export GPE Export TCX Edit Duplicate



This was my first time running in either the Winter or Summer Beast of Burden series, even though I reside in upstate New York. I have yet to meet an ultra that I failed to enjoy and the streak is still intact after the Beast of Burden. I cannot recommend it highly enough to anyone considering the challenge, as I became more familiar with the race after signing up for it. I know people who have run this event several times and it always speaks well for any race and the team that runs it. Here are my top five reasons to run the Winter Beast of Burden 100.

We are looking for real challenges, and this is one of the main reasons why anyone runs any ultramarathon, particularly a 100 mile race. Every 100 mile race is challenging and the fact that Beast of Burden is one of the truly rare, northern Winter 100s, means that it comes with weather related challenges and issues most other 100s do not include. The weather and the conditions this year were as good as could be hoped for. While there was little to no snow on the course, and winter can be much colder here in upstate New York, the temperature never climbed over the mid-20s during the day and got down into the high teens at night. There was no snow on the course but there was plenty of ice that you had to pay attention to, especially at night.

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I like loop, out and back courses so I found myself really enjoying the Beast of Burden's course layout. The course starts at the Widewaters Marina on Market Street in Lockport, travels west for a mile, crosses over and then follows the Erie Canal Towpath east until Middleport, NY. There the race crosses back over the Canal, into downtown Middleport, and inside into a hard building through to the aid station between and behind the laundromat and the Towpath Café. At the turnaround point, racers are 12.5 miles from the starting line, where they check-in, hit the aid station, then turn around and head back to the starting line aid station at the Marina. This is a 25 mile out and back, lap-loop format.

The Beast course is the flattest ultramarathon course I've ever been on, including the Ghost Train 100 earlier last fall. If one were to rate a race course based on its steepness on a scale from 1 to 5 with 5 being "flat" and 1 being the steepest of courses, Beast rates somewhere around a 6.5 to a 7. It is flat. I was excited about that throughout the first fifty miles of the race. The flatness of the course also provides racers with long views and vistas stretching well ahead, out to as far as a mile and a half to two miles at different points along the Canal on the course.

The race is very well supported, with the two aforementioned aid stations on either end of the 12.5 mile course and an aid station located in Gasport, NY, seven miles from the starting point and five and a half miles from the turnaround. While the race seemed to be manned by a small group of people and could certainly use more volunteers, as most ultras can, the support was excellent day and night throughout the race.

Finally, this mid-February race is early in the calendar year giving ultrarunners the chance to schedule either a 100 or 50 mile race and get onto the scoreboard early in the year.



The three races of a 100, 50, and 25 miles, had a combined 123 racers in total toeing the 10:00 AM starting line, and with such a untypical, late morning start, there was plenty of time to catch up with old friends and make some new ones before the race started. I ended up spending more time on the course with Jim Lampman than anyone else. Jim's a serial 100 mile race finisher, also from upstate New York, and I've seen him at several races over the past twelve months. He's one of those ultrarunners it's great to spend time with during a race because he's nothing but positive, and completely unfazed by anything or any weather during the event.



Here are a few of the things that also make this race challenging. The fact that it is flat makes you think at first it's a tremendous advantage and to a certain extent, it is. There are no hills to climb but on the flip side there are no downhills and no gravity to put to work in your favor either. You earn every foot of the course through your own power. It was also interesting as to how remote the course often felt between the aid stations, especially out on the eastern section of the course. There was very little non-race related activity on the course and by the second day, while peaceful and almost tranquil at times, those long, panoramic views along the canal had their own sense of reality as far as the real estate waiting to be covered ahead of the runners. Even though the weather was mild compared to how winter can be in western New York, you still have to deal with the consequences the entire race. Dehydration, potentially being overdressed, sweating followed by freezing up and whether you needed extra calories or not. Winter affected the course significantly in other ways too, 11 of the 12.5 miles were on the towpath cinder covered surface which was completely frozen the entire race and it was like moving on asphalt for a 100 miles. Lastly, the fact that this race is in deep winter and starts at 10 in the morning meant average ultrarunners like me spent 50 percent of their race time moving through hours of darkness.

My primary goal, as always, was to cross the 100 mile finish



line under the 30 hour time limit. My primary 1B goal was to complete it as fast as possible by rolling through as many miles as I could between a 10 to 14 minutes per mile pace. The weather was cooperative through the first 24 hours of the race. The temperature stayed in the mid-20s during the first day with a light, edgy breeze blowing in from Lake Ontario. After the first few miles, the running body of the race thinned and spread out. The out and back format of the race lent itself to monitoring how strong and steady Pete, Kimberly and the other race leaders stayed throughout the race, and the progress of each of our fellow racers. I completed the first 25 mile loop in 5:15 and 50 miles right at 12:20.



It never seemed really cold at any point during the race and I felt like I had the right winter weight gear and layers on for the race. Most of my fellow racers had a lot more gear on than I did including hoods, face masks, really heavyduty mittens, and some were in full body, winter outdoor gear. I run outside every day, even through the winter months in upstate New York, so this helped prepare me for the Beast.

I wore lined windbreaker sweat pants, three top layers including a long sleeve shirt, hooded sweatshirt and a light,



polypro jacket, two pairs of lightweight gloves and instead of a full hat, a thick, polypro headband that used to be a full hat. My one real winter concession was wearing full, over the calf OD green wool socks that ended up causing some foot blisters I don't normally get, they did keep that edgy breeze off my ankles which I would have had to deal with had I worn my typical Injinji crew-length socks. I was wearing a lot more gear than my friend and fellow member of the upstate New York ultra community, Tom Butler. Tom started the 50 miler in shorts, long socks a heavy hooded sweatshirt, gloves, and a headband. Apparently Tom went to long sweat pants after dark.

When I started the third 25 mile lap around 11pm I added another lightweight jacket and a very thick neck-up to my top layer gear but regretted it as the breeze we had during the day dropped off. While the air temperature dropped to the high teens, it really did not seem to cold, until a steady 8-12 knot breeze coming directly from the east kicked up after daybreak.

What was already a highly interesting undertaking became an even more interesting race out beyond 50 miles. The race thinned out of course, with the 45 runners that started the 50 milers leaving the course along with the 35 racers in the 25 miler who were long gone. There was so much



ambient moonlight I hardly turned my headlamp on at all, and traveled with only a flashing red LED on my back in accordance with the race rules. I slipped and almost went down on patches of ice a few times in the dark during Lap 3, but I left my headlamp off anyways. I know it's my army background but I like moving through the dark night mostly invisible.



I never caught, or learned his name, but a guy wearing Race Bib #135 carried an American Flag properly displayed for the entire 100 mile race. When I first saw him starting the race I assumed he had to be running the 25, or maybe the 50 miler but there he was still out on the course well beyond 75 miles. I also met Michael Ortiz very late in the race. The Beast 100 was Michael's twelfth week in a row completing a 100 mile race. Mike just completed his fifteenth 100 mile race in fifteen straight weeks as I write this.



Distances based on faraway lights along the Canal Towpath, and other things you thought you were seeing, were sometimes tricky to figure out. At one point, about 3 miles west of Middleport, while I was on the way back from the Turnaround on Lap 2, I was moving towards a headlamp but I was having a hard time figuring out why it was taking me so long to reach it and whoever it was. This turned out to be a 50 mile racer walking backwards on the course. He was still walking backwards about 4 miles from the 50 mile finish line when I passed him as I headed out on my third lap.



Overall, the Beast was not one of my personal bests as far as 100 milers go. It became apparent early in Lap 3 that I was not going to have any time to take the 20 minute, 04:00 am nap that always tends to reset me during a long race. Nor was I going to have time to even stop and sit down for a few minutes without completely risking the 30 hour finishing time. So I never stopped moving or sat down during the race except for table grazing at the aid stations and the two minutes I took after the second loop to change my shoes. I hit Mile 65 at the 17 hour mark on the race clock and that last 10 mile section of the third 25 mile loop seemed to stretch into infinity during those early Sunday morning hours from 3 to 5:30 am. I lit a cigar leaving the Turnaround at 62.5 miles and smoked it to stay awake for the entire 12.5 miles back to the starting line. My third lap was my longest and took me right up until daybreak, but I never once considered dropping out because, ultimately, the person I wanted to be was the guy on the far side of that finish line.

The 'out' section of my last lap was into that aforementioned, face withering, 8 to 12 knot winter wind. It did not let up for those 12.5 miles. At one point Jim Lampman mentioned that while he'd done this race several times, he'd never been on the course before with the wind coming out of the east. That really did not bother me much as I was moving under the optimism of the new daylight and I was actually looking forward to having a tailwind for the last section of the race.

Ultimately, I knew that I had not trained well for this race since completing the Devil Dog 100 in the first week of December. I had no running gears left at all for the last eight miles of the race and people were passing me in the tail end of the race too. Mike Ortiz and Jim Lampman were

flat out and caught me from behind at 300 yards from the finish line. They asked me to run with them but I explained I had nothing left and they opted to walk in with me, even though I begged them to keep running. We all finished at 28:53:41.



39 out of the 45 racers finished the 50 mile race. 25 out of the 43 starters finished the 100 mile race. I and one other gentlemen ended up being the oldest finishers to cross the finish line. I had an awesome experience at the 2019 Beast of Burden 100, I was glad to finally run it and I cannot recommend it highly enough to anyone considering the challenge.









July 6th 2019 Start: 9am 100 mile course 2247 m of elevation. 30 hour time limit. 75% trail/25% road

Website: www.1066.run

Conquering the Battleground of Genghis Khan 1 Steppe at a Time!

"If you're afraid - don't do it, - if you're doing it - don't be afraid!" Genghis Khan

On 28th July this year, competitors from all walks of life and from all 4 corners of the globe will begin a gruelling yet unforgettable trek across 250 kilometres of some of the world's most historic wasteland. Battling extreme temperatures, strong winds, driving rain, beautiful sunshine, and unforgiving terrain, RacingThePlanet's Gobi March (Mongolia) is designed to test even the most experienced of runners and hikers. Part of the 4 Deserts Ultramarathon Series, it features ancient history and culture, all this on the green grasslands of nomads. Featuring more than 6 marathons in 7 days, the race begins from the ancient ruins of Khar Bukh Balgas, and finishes at the Erdene Zuu Monastery, located in Karakorum, the former capital of Genghis Khan's empire.



The Start of the Gobi March (Mongolia) 2018, part of the 4 Deserts Ultramarathon Series, organised by RacingThePlanet.

The course is located in the Karakorum region of Central Mongolia winding its way through vast green grasslands, stupas and temples, sand dunes, great rock valleys and old forests. 'The Long March', the much anticipated 80 km will take you through the wide Mongolian steppes as you make your way towards the UNESCO World Heritage Centre of the Orkhon Valley Cultural Landscape.

While the marathon – 42 kilometers - may once have been considered the pinnacle of human endurance, the ultramarathon has fast become a more worthy challenge and even though the distance may make some of us weak at the knees, it's fair to say that most runners are capable of completing one.

STUNNING SCENERY AND NEW FRIENDS

For many, signing up for an ultramarathon is not simply to conquer a crazy distance, but to meet like-minded people, and travel to a place you wouldn't necessarily have thought to go. RacingThePlanet Ultras are typically held on vast trails, and unlike many road races, the monotony can be quickly forgotten at the sight of towering sand dunes or great rocky valleys.



"There are people here from over 50 countries, and speaking with all of them and hearing their stories is such a humbling, inspiring experience and it makes you feel like you are a part of something greater than yourself." Ryan Bennett, United States, the Gobi March (Mongolia) was his third RacingThePlanet / 4 Deserts Ultramarathon.

IT'S YOUR RACE AND YOUR PACE

Only a very small percentage of those competing in an ultra race will run the entire course. Many runners will jog, and for most there's no running at all. Walking up hills gives your body recovery time which may lead to a faster finish... or simply enables you to get to the end.



1) Women's winner Angela Zaeh Germany, 2) Overall winner: Wong Ho Chung, Hong Kong

"Today's race was very tough like trail run course, many up and down hills and some mountains crossed over...I experienced loss of appetite for the first time. But this is the 4 Desert Race, so I must manage myself and I hope I can finish the final goal." Masafumi Morimoto, Japan (Masafumi did finish. Amazing job.)



Upcoming Races



MORE MENTAL THAN PHYSICAL

The ultramarathon really is a test of mental strength as much as it is physical fitness. RacingThePlanet's 'The Long March' which generally takes place on Stage 5, will test even the most seasoned of athletes. It's approximately 80km, depending on location, terrain, and weather conditions and only a small percentage of competitors are able to run this entire section.



Team "Free to run" - Afghanistan

"Yesterday was 'The Long March' - 70 kms of rolling hills, mountains, and dust tracks. Afghanistan makes for great hill training, so we had no problems on the uphill climbs.

We entertained ourselves by playing 'My Cows', which Zeinab won. Whenever we came up another hill, we would scan the valley below for cows to claim. The one who claims the most cows by the end of the day wins." Team "Free To Run", Afghanistan.

It's all about getting from one checkpoint to the next. Some count sheep...others count cows!

For many, 'The Long March' will continue through the night...





...and well into the following day. The strength of determination is truly inspired.

"Two days ago, I was saying this is it. That's the last one. The last self-supported stage race. And now I am not so sure. The friends you make here are different. Struggles and pain bound people in a very deep way. Friends for life as they say. True that." Stephane Boss, France. Completed the Atacama Crossing (Chile 2017) and the Gobi March (Mongolia) 2018.

TRAIN TO SUCCEED

No matter how much training you've done, you'll question whether it's enough...there'll always be that one person who has done more than you! And even the least competitive person will want to do well.

Once you see just how fun it can be out there on the battlefield...you'll only crave more!



Husband and wife, Sandy and Jean Mouret of Canada by the wall of the ancient city of Karakorum.

If you'd like to know more about the 2019 edition of the Gobi March (Mongolia) and how to sign up, please contact info@racingtheplanet.com or head straight to the website www.racingtheplanet.com where you can easily register - there's still plenty of time to join us this year. Go on...what are you waiting for? #Gobimarch2019 #morethanarace



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A Transformative Trek: 98 Days on the Grand Enchantment Trail

Kathy Vaughan Photos: Ras Vaughan for <u>UltraPedestrian.com</u>



I screamed from both the pain and the terror I felt. Unexpectedly, I had lurched forward, my toe catching a rock obscured by my blowing rain cape. It was just after midnight, and rain was coming down steadily, creating a foggy scene in my headlamp. As I landed hard, needle spines penetrated my left side. I had face-planted into a prickly pear cactus. Hair sized spines had pinned themselves around my left eye, stopping just shy of my eyeball.

Instinctually, I had closed my eyes as I fell. I screamed again, "Help me! Help me!" I felt panicked as I cried out, wanting Ras there to help get me out of the cactus and to evaluate the immediate harm. The cactus was growing around a jagged rock, I had a cut under my eye from it and a painful area on my left upper quad, where it had thudded hard against another rock. Ras ran over upon hearing my cries, scared of what he might find. He was shocked to see me covered in cactus spines, and to see how they crowded around my eye. The rain cape and puffy down pants I was wearing looked like pin cushions. My hand was painful and burning, hundreds of cactus spines causing blood to trickle onto the cold, wet trail.

In the American Southwest lies an 800 mile long route connecting the cities of Phoenix, Arizona and Albuquerque, New Mexico. It is aptly named the "Grand Enchantment Trail" (GET). On March the 4th (March Forth!), with my husband Ras, I set foot on the path that leaves from the First Water Trailhead about 45 miles outside of Phoenix. From there, Ras and I began making our way through the rugged terrain of the lower Sonoran Desert.

I hauled on my back everything I would need on an adventure of this magnitude. In my mind, I carried a sense of excitement, wonder and gratitude that I had this opportunity to spend the next three months, trekking through a landscape of desert, sky islands, expansive pine forests, creek drainages and canyons. I had spent countless hours reading through the trail guide online, studying water sources, and packaging resupply boxes to send to small trail communities along the route. Now, it was time to bring these plans to life.

Hiking into the Sonoran Desert surroundings, I saw ahead the fang of Weaver's Needle, a prominent rock feature drawing me deeper into the lush canyons, and away from civilization. Saguaro cacti, teddy bear cholla, jojoba, grasses and thorny shrubs lined the trail. The air was dry and hot, especially compared to the damp coastal climate of western Washington where I had been living and training for this trek. After the first cruisy 20 miles along a well maintained single track, I got a glimpse into what was about to be one of the most challenging treks I had ever undertaken. This initial stretch of singletrack trail, transitioned into navigating a creek drainage into Roger's Canyon, where Ras and I saw a 700 year-old Salado cliff dwelling, high up the rock wall that had us





boxed in the night before, while the moon shone on the cliffs surrounding us. This was my first experience hiking through a narrow slot canyon and for it to happen in the shadowy dark of the night was a perfect introduction to what would be the first of many canyons ahead.

Ras and I settled into a daily hiking routine that was sustainable and suited our natural rhythms. We are both night owls and enjoy being on the trail past dark. We spent our mornings in camp, organizing our packs for the day, drinking coffee, eating breakfast, journaling and planning our water stops based on the sources, or lack thereof, that lay ahead. The daytime heat forced us into finding shade for the afternoon siestas. Our goal was to hike 20 miles daily. We hiked until 11:00 or 12:00 each night, sharing the trail with rattlesnakes that were coiled up and passively hunting. Deer and cattle lurked in the distance, their golden eyes reflecting back at us, and often nighthawks sat in the center of the trail, taking flight only when we got right up to them, our headlamps having caught the red glow of their small eyes. Kangaroo rats, scurried under sagebrush while scorpions and lizards crawled under rocks. Black widows weaved their webs across the trail during the night hours, all of this helping to create what might seem to some like a scene from a horror movie. The desert is very active in the

dark. These night scenes were some of my favorite times during the trek.

The Grand Enchantment Trail meets up with the Arizona Trail, about 100 miles into the route and follows it for approximately 60 miles. This stretch is well signed with the AZT trail markers and helped Ras and I make good time. Reavis Canyon, with an old homestead apple orchard, pasture grasses, running creeks and willow trees, was a lovely, shaded oasis. When the route reaches Picketpost Mountain, the Legends of Superior Trail can be followed for six miles into the town of Superior with a grocery store, tourist attractions, and a fun pub.

Sandy and smooth singletrack rolls and twists along the Gila River, sometimes climbing high above it, and at other times following just above its banks. After miles and miles of hiking through the hot and arid Sonoran Desert, the riparian zone along the Gila is such a welcome respite. Willow trees creating shade grow tall and withered. Groups of javelina thrive in this environment. While filtering water from the Gila, a limping javelina came out from the willows and wandered down to the river for a drink. It was the closest I'd seen one of these wiry haired, collared peccaries and the sight of it startled me. Much of the environment down on the banks of the Gila is impacted by cattle grazing and the trail crosses through barbed wire fences. The trail intersects many washes, some narrow and clogged with desert brush like sage and mesquite, rock walls rising up on either side. Others are wide and sandy, attracting off-roaders. I saw rattlesnakes, scorpions and all varieties of birds; a desert tortoise, it's shell dusty and scratched; and many types of lizards. Rock formations and tall peaks reach towards the sky, jagged and displaying all shades of terracotta. Red tailed hawks screech as they soar up high near the cliffs. Wildflowers and blooming cactus thrive in the sandy soil; red, yellow, pink and orange blossoms are everywhere.

As Ras and I made our way south along the GET, we passed through the Galiuro Mountains, the first of the sky island ranges we would encounter. The highlight of this area was Aravaipa Canyon, a 12 mile-long stretch of incredibly scenic trekking along the



canyon floor involving numerous creek crossings. This was our introduction to this type of navigation. We left the trailhead to the canyon and wound our way along a nice trail, until it reached Aravaipa Creek. Looking at our GPS tracks and the continuation of the trail on the other side of the creek, we determined that we needed to ford the creek here. The water was a pleasant temperature and it felt refreshing to get wet. It had been rare thus far into the trek to come across any running water sources, so we at first relished this treat.

Before long, our running shoes were filled with the small gravel that became painful on the soles of our feet. We could handle it for a number of crossings, then we would have to sit down on a rock and take off our shoes to dump out the debris. Our gaiters which were velcroed and hooked to our shoes made no difference and ended up detaching, hanging loosely around our ankles. Finally, we stopped on a gravel and sand bar to wrap duct tape all around the collar of our shoes, making a tight seal to keep most of the sand and the small gravel out.

Mystical looking side canyons led off of the main canyon floor periodically, the lush green passages catching my curiosity. Schools of fish swam through the creek, darting away as we crossed through to reach the continuation of the trail on the other side. Ring-tailed cats spied on us from cottonwood tree branches, and a brightly striped king snake slithered underneath rocks as we stepped over them on one of our crossings. Sometimes the trail disappeared amid flood debris from an event several years beforehand. We had to step carefully, watching for rattlesnakes that like to hide in tall grasses along the creek bottoms. We had thought a 12 mile hike through Aravaipa would take about 5 hours. We learned quickly that it was going to take more than double that to work our way through this challenging and lovely canyon.



Rock cliffs rose on either side of the creek, at times more narrow than others, forming a slot canyon and forcing us to hike the creek itself. Other times, the canyon floor broadened and became a forest of cottonwoods and willows. Birdsong blended with the rushing of rapids in the creek, and hawks cried out as they soared high abreast of the cliff walls. An unusual frog croak, sounding more like a goat, came from the shallow, algae rich pools that formed off the main creek. There was so much to see and take in, I felt a sense of awe. I imagined what it would be like to disappear into one of the side canyons for a couple of months.

Ras and I continued our hike in the canyon into the dark, our headlamps leading the way. We suddenly saw headlamps coming towards us and were surprised to see anyone else night hiking. As the group of lights got closer, someone called out to us and asked if we had any first aid experience. Ras answered that he was a trained First Responder. The voice that had called out to us belonged to an older woman named Anne. She explained to us that her hiking partner had injured her ankle first thing that morning and needed to be evaluated. She was waiting at a sandy spot near the creek a number of miles away. The two ladies had only one pack of gear between the two of them and Anne had the pack with her. She was carrying it with a previously injured shoulder and was recruiting other hikers to assist her with the pack, while she hiked through the canyon looking for any help she could get for her friend. We joined Anne and the hikers she had gotten to accompany her already, and continued our way through the canyon. Ras would look





at the ankle and a decision about a rescue could be made. One look, and Ras advised the ladies to call for rescue. They activated an Emergency Position Indicating Response Beacon. We helped set their tent up and the injured lady get into warm layers and settled into her sleeping bag. We went on our way, feeling like we'd done the best we could in this remote canyon to help the two ladies.

We hiked for another hour or so to set up our camp near a huge cottonwood tree, in a pleasant sandy spot. We were just about ready to get into our tent when we heard the loud whir of the helicopter above. It circled overhead, having seen our headlamps. We wanted to avoid being seen, since we weren't the ones in need of the rescue. We turned off our lights and the helicopter shone a bright spotlight down on us. We sat still. We didn't know any signals to give them or any way of letting them know where the ladies were. After what seemed like an hour of the chopper hovering above us and checking out the side canyon near our camp, it finally fell silent. In the morning, the sound returned and then ended quite promptly, we envisioned the ladies being rescued. Aravaipa Canyon had given us a full dose of excitement.

After leaving the canyon behind, we ascended into the Santa Teresa Mountains, another sky island range. Huge rock formations and gnarled pine trees drew us along, making our way from one blue ribbon to the next, markers had been tied onto trees or brush indicating the way. Ras navigated also by GPS tracks, but it was very challenging. We got scratched and torn up by thorny bushes. At times, we didn't know how we would make our way through this area. The enormity and difficulty of



the GET was making itself known. Route finding, creek crossings, disappearing trail and remoteness, we had our work cut out. Always on my mind in the most challenging areas, was knowing that we would be passing through a second time on this yo-yo attempt.

The Pinaleño Mountain Range, the next sky island range along the route, was easier to navigate than the Santa Teresa Mountains. Silvered juniper, large pine and rugged creek crossings made up this range. We climbed 10,000 foot Webb Peak and viewed the fire lookout on top of its summit. A very technical and slow going descent along Ash Creek led Ras and I down from the high country to a challenging bushwhack section across a mesa in the dark. Hidden rocks and cactus under our feet made for slow going. We were determined to get through this area to make camp just outside of Safford, the biggest city along the GET. We looked forward to resupplying our food stores. After a restful night in a camp on a sandy wash bottom amongst the juniper, Ras and I hiked along a dusty dirt road for seven miles to reach Safford, fueled only by some dry strawberries soaking in our water bottles. We were now about 300 miles into the hike.

After a night in a motel to bathe and do laundry, we headed east away from civilization, hiking along the edge of furrowed cotton fields. The fields were clean of cotton, only for a few puffs here and there. I hadn't known cotton was grown in Arizona. Extensive irrigation ditches reached as far as the eye could see, making it possible for water to reach the massive spread of the cotton fields.

Easy dirt road walking made covering miles fast for a stretch, leading to the high desert Gila Mountains and the Old Safford-Morenci Trail. From here, the trail fords the picturesque Eagle Creek as it winds through the rugged drainage, at least 50 times. Cattle graze in the creek drainage and off roaders



cruise through on jeeps, four wheelers and pickups. Ras and I had a friendly family stop to visit with us, reaching into the back of their four-wheel drive pickup to hand us bottles of water, a couple cans of soda and a bag of chips. We were thankful for this trail magic and stopped to take a break and enjoy the fare after they continued on their way. At this point in the journey, we were feeling hungry most of the time, burning more energy each day than we could consume with the calories that we were carrying. We had left Safford with a good supply of food, but the going was tough and slow. We would be more than ready to hit the small ranching community of Alma, New Mexico, our next resupply, by the time we got there.

We hiked through the Blue Mountain Range and looked down on the fertile valley of the San Francisco River. We crossed from Arizona into New Mexico and looked beyond the river valley out towards an expanse of mountain ridges. The views stretched forever and I couldn't wait to get deeper into this trek.

Mogollon Baldy is the highest peak along the GET at 10,770 feet in elevation. It was characterized by aspen groves, creeks and historic cabins. Some snow lingered in this high country where the massive elk and wild turkey call home. I enjoyed following the arrow like the tracks of the turkeys, marveling at the grit it takes for them to live in the high, cold and dry elevations as they do.

Ras and I descended from the high country of Mogollon Baldy to reach Magdalena, our favorite trail town along the GET. We had sandwiches at the Magdalena Café and shopped at



Family Dollar, craving a combination of fresh salads, veggie burgers, fries and junk food. We stayed at the historic Western Motel and were given a spaghetti squash by the owner, Dami, which we were able to cook up in the microwave in our room. The houses were mainly adobe with a lot of character and charm. We picked up our resupply box at the post office and visited with the postal clerk about our hike. It was a very hiker friendly town.

Leaving Magdalena behind, we stayed on the dirt road for quite a few miles, climbing back up into the higher elevations. Soon, we were at the mouth of San Lorenzo Canyon, with red rock formations and a creek that eventually disappeared underground. The canyon floor broadened and we followed the wash it became, until it reached a highway overpass.

The Rio Grande Valley, the Manzanita and Manzano Mountain Ranges, and then finally the Sandia Mountains all characterize the far eastern reaches of the GET. The route passes through a 28 mile stretch of land that belongs to the Chilili Land Grant and no camping or trespassing whatsoever is allowed. It was here that a late spring snow storm crept in, starting with dark clouds and howling wind. The temperatures dropped and Ras and I continued making our way along the highway shoulder, not allowed to set up our shelter for protection from the weather on this private land. The shoulder was quite wide in some areas and juniper trees grew abundantly. This was our saving grace and we were able to take shelter under the trees during some of the snow fall. Eventually, we came to a big, dry culvert that ran under the highway and we stepped inside. As we sat on our sleeping pads on the dry dirt bottom of the culvert, we could see the snow accumulating quickly outside. The wind gusts blew it sideways. It didn't take long before we realized we had just stepped foot into what was going to have to be our shelter for the night. There was just enough room

to pitch our tent and crawl inside to escape the cold.

By the next morning, more than a foot of snow had accumulated outside and more snow was falling. We stayed inside the tent and listened to the local FM station on our Mp3 players. Interstate 40 in Albuquerque was closed down. Semi trucks were jack knifed on the freeway and the driving conditions were terrible. We had no choice but to stay put until this storm let up. We made repairs on our gear, using the needle and thread Ras had packed in his "MacGyver Kit". I wrote in my journal. I had a strong thirst that I could not quench. We were running quite low on water and did not know when we would be able to exit the culvert and find the next water source on the shoulder of the highway. It was feeling like the situation could get quite serious. We had been eating some salty snack foods from our last resupply stop, I thought maybe this was causing the extreme thirst.

By early morning, I crawled over Ras to get out of the tent and scoop some snow into my water bottle. I could not handle the dry mouth and thirsty feeling any longer. Even though it was possible chemicals from the snow plows going by had contaminated the snow, I had to take the chance. The snow froze into little balls inside my water bottle and I sucked on them to try and relieve the dryness I felt. Finally, on the second morning, after 36 hours holed up inside the culvert, we were able to emerge and continue hiking on the shoulder of the highway. After about 4 hours of hiking in a bitter cold headwind, we came to a small store where we could step inside and get cold drinks, fresh water refills and a huge vegetarian pizza.

Miles of high ridge walking got us to the Sandia Crest, the final challenge before reaching our turnaround point in Albuquerque. An aerial tram transports tourists from the base of the Sandias up to a high terminal and ski area. There was a lot of snow still remaining when we got to this area,



keeping our shoes sopping wet and our feet painfully cold. The wind was blowing strongly up on the ridge and we knew camping would be miserable up there, so we began the descent towards Albuquerque. Our goal was just to get below the snowline, set up our tent, crawl inside and warm up our feet. The trail switched back repeatedly on the descent towards the city lights, following the La Luz trail now. The lights glimmered several thousands of feet below. It was a beautiful sight, although it was a snowy descent with lots of exposure. I couldn't wait to get to a safe, snow free spot. We finally got down to a pine grove with a flat area to camp.

The next morning, we finished descending on a favourable trail, seeing many other hikers as we were so close to the city. We couldn't wait to get to the bottom and see if the tram building had a restaurant or small store. After 800 miles of rugged and challenging hiking, we reached the halfway point, our turnaround spot and a fine dining restaurant that served the most delicious and well earned portobello burger anywhere.

The temptation to hike the 7 miles into Albuquerque and spend the night in a motel overtook us. We hiked through residential areas with southwestern architecture, adobe homes and brightly painted gates, rustic ladders leaning against the homes, and cool outdoor hangout areas with cacti and swimming pools. We shopped at Trader Joe's and Albertsons, hitting the trail with a heavy load of delicious foods. While at Trader Joe's, extreme nausea hit me and I had to find a shady spot adjacent to the parking lot to set up a place to rest. I couldn't kick the queasiness. We finally had to head back into the Sandias and begin our return trek

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towards Phoenix. It felt daunting, but exciting. We camped at the same spot we had on our way down the La Luz trail towards Albuquerque. It felt good to be heading west.

The snow we had encountered heading east was now melted and hiking west along the high ridge trail was much easier. The high elevations caused me to feel weaker, lightheaded at times, and struggle to catch my breath. Hiking along, I envisioned all the terrain we had passed through heading east, and was drawn to return to these places again.

We hiked back through the Manzano and Manzanita ranges, passed through the town of Magdalena again and stayed at the Western Motel with Dami a second time. On our way out of town we enjoyed lingering at the ghost town of Kelly with a white painted Catholic Church that stands vacant. We then traipsed back into the Magdalena Mountains. This time, the bald peaks we had ascended in the dark we were now able to climb in the daylight. It was alarming to see the drop-offs to either side of us. I was shocked and felt fortunate to have hiked through there safely in the dark.

The queasiness I had felt in Albuquerque was becoming more common. I was experiencing some other health concerns as well, I had lost quite a bit of weight. My hip bones protruded and my spine felt bony. I spit blood when I brushed my teeth and the chronic thirst issue I was having in the culvert was present most of the time now too. I began wondering if these symptoms were something more than simply the result of having spent so many days on the trail, working hard and not having enough calories all the time. Sometimes my mood turned ugly, I was prone to irritability and tears. Was I just getting worn down, or was there a deeper health issue happening? I began wondering about cancer, malnutrition, or some other disease.

Our trek continued climbing up into the high elevations of the Continental Divide, where the GET follows the actual Continental Divide Trail for about 60 miles. Up on this high divide, we were able to hike steadily on the route. Trail markers for the CDT led the way, an established trail was easy to follow. Water was scarce on this section of the CDT, many thru-hikers take an alternate route that keeps them in lower elevations along the Gila River. We stayed up high and by studying the water data, Ras found a spring not too far off the trail that kept us hydrated until we got to South Diamond Creek the following day.

Our second day on the Divide, we were hiking along the trail when suddenly we saw a huge animal ahead. Ras realized it was a large elk and paused to get out the camera. Just as he started to take some pictures, up rose several humongous bull elk with impressive sets of antlers. The sight of these creatures took my breath away. They had been down in a depression and when they rose to their feet, it was the most amazing sight. They took off fast and we caught but a mere glimpse of these gigantic animals.

From here, the trail heads to the West Fork of the Gila River. Several fords back and forth eventually landed us on the south bank of the Gila, we hiked until reaching the hot springs we'd passed up on our way east. We intended on camping inside a cave we had seen above the hot pool, but noticed right away that the pool was occupied by two men and their camp was set up in the cave. This was disappointing, but we decided to cross to the other side of the river and set up our camp on a sandy beach over there. The men were Italian and invited us to join them for a dinner of cannellini beans heated in the can over their fire in the cave, after our soak. We took them up on the offer and it was fun to exchange stories of how we'd each arrived at the remote and ancient cave.

Gila Hot Springs was an inviting place to spend some time on our return leg. We camped in the RV Park and were allowed to use the indoor, developed hot spring there. We bought a bunch of good food from the store and picked up a resupply box. We drank several sodas. I was still feeling thirsty and could down one soda after the other. I simply could not quench my thirst.

I had looked forward to stopping at the Gila Hot Springs Visitor Center on our way back west. It had been closed when we headed east. We left the community of Gila Hot Springs to walk the three miles along the highway to the Visitor's Center. Dark clouds loomed overhead and thunder erupted. Rain began to pour down in sheets. Ras and I found a big pine on the side of the highway to tuck under for a few minutes, finally we resumed our walk to the Visitor's Center. There was an indoor bathroom there, and a shelter where we could sit out some of the storm. I had my eye

on a stuffed toy javelina I had seen through the window when we passed by the closed shop on our way towards Albuquerque, I wanted to see if she was still there. Arriving at the center, I took off my wet layers on a bench and hung them to dry underneath an overhang by the restrooms. I went inside to see about that javelina and was pleased to see her eyeing me from the shelf. Too big to reasonably carry in a pack as a trail totem, I decided to bring her along anyway. I never regretted that decision, I named her Magdalena May.

Now off the Continental Divide, we hiked through some lovely and gentle canyons, wide and grassy, with wild iris growing in the more damp areas. Water was now abundant and this made it easy to cover good miles each day, reaching at least our 20 mile per day goal. We were feeling optimistic about finishing our trek before the oppressive heat of the Sonoran Desert would make it too challenging to continue. For several days, we moved well through Diamond Creek Canyon, Tom Moore Canyon, and Me Own Hill. We passed back through the ranching community of Alma and back into Arizona.

With the progress west, we were beginning to feel some hot temperatures. Triple degree days stifled our movement as well as our breathing, and contributed to this chronic queasiness I was experiencing. We were just over 300 miles from completing our yo-yo when my health concerns, combined with the desert heat, called into serious question whether we would need to give up our quest. We had hiked over 1,300 miles together across Arizona and New Mexico and back. Would we be able to continue until the end?

Somewhere around the open pit Morenci copper mine, we had a signal on our phones and were able to make some contacts for advice on our best course of action. We laid in the shade of a juniper during the heat of the day, above the mining operation so that we could use our phones. I mainly slept, feeling pretty weak and nauseated. Ras did some research on my symptoms and contacted a couple of our Arizona friends to see if they could meet us with some supplies and good water within the next couple of days. Our friend Gary Householder agreed to meet us on the west end of the Eagle Creek drainage.

When the cool of the night came upon us, we emerged from underneath the juniper tree and hiked towards the Painted Bluff trail. We had decided to only hike at night, since the daytime temperatures were getting too hot to handle. We hiked all through the night along the mostly unmaintained Painted Bluff. It took hours to make any forward progress. At one point, we stopped to rest on a slab of rock and heard a unique and eerie call echo off the cliffs behind us. It might have been a wild cat, like a cougar or bobcat. The cry made the hair on my arms stand on end and Ras and I just looked at each other in disbelief. Just before dawn, we reached our water source; a creek with gigantic cottonwoods growing in it. Some of the huge trees had toppled over or rotted at the base and fell to where they now lay. Thousands of harvestman spiders crawled around us as we sat filtering water. They crawled out from the dark root mats and scurried across the cold mud on the banks of the creek. They were everywhere.

We reached Eagle Creek at dawn. It was time to find a cool spot at the base of a cliff, or a big enough tree to set up our tent and sleep. The heat was already hot enough to melt my sleeping pad when I got up from it for just a minute to take a cooling dip in the creek. Could we even continue with this kind of heat? Eagle Creek smelled dank and dirty. It looked cloudy and impacted by the cattle grazing along it. It was tempting to have Gary just take us back to Phoenix with him when he met us later that night with food and water. We still had the 50 some fords of Eagle Creek



ahead of us, he would be waiting just beyond it late that night. We still had 300 miles to cover to finish our yo-yo hike, I seemed to be slowed down and without energy from a health condition. I had an appetite still, but had an increase in nausea after eating anything. My gums were bleeding more and I was constantly peeing. Both of us breaking down in tears as we lay sweating in our tent during the day, we knew that finishing was probably not going to happen. We would let Gary know when we saw him later. We dozed off for a while. exhausted, saddened and defeated.

We took our time making our way through the Eagle Creek drainage after our daytime nap. The weather was too hot now for the off-roaders to be driving through here, as they had been on our way east. We didn't see any humans that day, only three friendly horses that allowed us to approach and pet them. By nightfall, we saw many sets of eyes glowing, the ring-tailed cats scampering from tree to tree to watch us hike through. Some of the eyes were from small foxes. We reminisced about the incredible experience we'd been blessed with on our Southwest journey, the people we'd met and the challenges we'd conquered. We'd each gone outside of our comfort zone and

pushed the limits on water carries, canyon scrambles, snow hiking and temperatures encompassing both extremes. When Gary pulled up to the closed gate on the dirt road just beyond Eagle Creek, he announced that a raging forest fire had closed our route ahead near Mount Graham. Our decision to end our yo-yo attempt was confirmed. We hopped in his SUV with him and before our doors were shut, he handed us a cloth shopping bag overflowing with cold drinks, fresh cut veggies and fruits, hummus dips and veggie salads. He drove us off, leaving the GET behind and memories of a 98 day adventure, swimming about in our heads.

Upon returning home to Whidbey Island, Washington, I had a doctor's appointment to get my health evaluated. My average level of blood sugar over the last three months (A1C) was dangerously high and I was underweight by at least 20 pounds. I was diagnosed with Type 1 Diabetes. Ten years previous doctors had removed 40% of my pancreas because of a growth encapsulating it. Sometime during this adventure, the remaining portion of my pancreas had stopped producing insulin. I began insulin therapy.

A year and half later, I am back to my normal weight. I manage my diabetes quite well utilizing simple old-school methods: finger pricks, a glucometer, and injections of both slow acting and fast acting insulin daily. High tech solutions such as continuous glucose monitors and insulin pumps are not only beyond my financial means, they do not perform well when faced with the unique challenges of an endurance athlete who spends months in the wild. In fact, I am able to manage my condition well enough that I just completed a 2,600 mile thru-hike loop through the Inland Northwest that I designed with Ras.

About

When not on an adventure, Kathy and her husband Ras use Whidbey Island, Washington, as their base camp, where they are currently working on their next book, Her Bones Showing Through, which documents their pioneering inland Northwest route the UP North Loop. Their book 98 Days Of Wind: The Greatest Fail Of Our Life, which details their 2017 attempt to yo-yo the Grand Enchantment Trail, can be purchased here: www.lulu.com/ shop/ras-kathy-vaughan/98-daysof-wind-the-greatest-fail-of-our-life/ paperback/product-23627583.html Kathy and Ras write about their adventures at UltraPedestrian.com



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Contributors



Mireille Cormier has been running ultras since 2005 and in 2006 ran her first multiday at No Finish Line in Monaco. She writes, "I am a racer at the of end of the peloton and I run only for the pleasure of participating in sporting events which will allow me to mix with champions, something which I can not do in short races. My objectives for the first semester, if my health does not prevent me, are Athens and Nice in April and the 6 days in Budapest in May."



My name is **Stewart Unsworth**; Bolton-born but now happily exiled in Wiltshire, competing for Corsham Running Club. I started running when I was 41, nearly five years ago. It soon became clear that attrition came above ability and steep hills above flat tarmac. Thus even though equations were not a strong suit at school even I worked out that it added up to off-road ultras.



Tom Radley, 24, lives in Cheshire, UK, where he farms 250 dairy cows and he runs in his spare time. He's new to ultra-running, keen on adventure and can be found on Twitter: @T_Rad95.



Victoria Carter Mum, maths teacher, knitter and ultra runner. I live in Greater Manchester, on the edge of the Peak District. I began running in 2011 to help me stay off the cigarettes; it worked. I may have just swapped one addiction for another, but I'm ok with that.



Kathy "OBAL Unbranded" Vaughan is an adventure runner, thru-hiker, long-distance skier, and peak-bagger who is fascinated with pursuing Only Known Times. She and her husband Ras use Whidbey Island, Washington, as their base camp, where they are currently working on their next book, *Her Bones Showing Through*. Kathy and Ras write about their adventures at <u>UltraPedestrian.com</u>.



Sarah Cameron is an ultrarunning 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



James Campbell Husband, father of four and former rugby player juggling life with taking part in multi-sport, ultra distance running and cycling events since 2012. Based in the North East of England training and racing in East Durham, the Yorkshire Moors and the Yorkshire Coast. https://jamescampbell78. wordpress.com/



Wendy Whearity Mum of two, who started running in 2010. In 2011 completed my first 50-mile ultramarathon. I have since completed 25 x 100 mile events with many podium finishes, 1st female - 6th overall KACR (2018), European 24hr championship bronze medal winner (2018), 2nd female, 5th overall (220.5 kms)- Barcelona 24hr – (2017), 2nd female GUCR (2017), 1st female - 3rd overall Crawley 24hr – (2017).



Helen Hayes is a writer lodged on the rugged south coast of Ireland. Enjoying randonneuring in the Comeragh mountains with Ireland's oldest cycling club, running the boreens and beaches with her dog pack and wild swimming in the glacial Coumshingaun Lough.



Etienne de Beer

I am passionate about running and long periods of extreme challenge. It is for this reason that I have chosen to become a running coach, specifically leaning more to the mental toughness side of running long distances. I am also a personal trainer and naturopath nutritionist who has found that following a plantbased diet has increased my performance and wellbeing whilst decreasing my recovery time. In 2012 I set the fastest Known Time for circumnavigating the entire coastline of the UK (England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales) with a distance of 4200 miles in 49 days for The Haven Breast Cancer charity. After this challenge, I put my journey in words and released an Ebook, Through Blisters and Saddle Sores



Tim Hardy is an ultrarunner living in Marietta, New York with his wife, their three dogs, one cat, and four horses, they lure their three grandchildren and daughter over as often as possible. Tim served in the US Army for twenty years and has completed a combined seventy ultramarathons and marathons, including the Arrowhead 135 and Badwater 135 in the same calendar year, and the Last Annual VolState 500K in July 2018. Tim is the race director for the Green Lakes Endurance Races 100K and 50K trail races. OneAverageRunner

