

My Path to Ultrarunning

Davy Crockett



The journey to becoming an ultrarunner has many varied paths. I personally never dreamed to be a runner of any kind and in fact most of my life, pretty much despised running. But along these unexpected paths, running somehow evolved. This story is mostly for me, to look back and understand where I came from, but it also may be of interest to others, as they too become an ultrarunner. Perhaps this is my runner memoirs. It is an attempt to bring together many of my experiences and lessons learned over the years.

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Early Running Childhood Roots



Me with older brother and sister

Where did my running ability come from? I was born to two parents with good athletic ability. My late mother wrote about her childhood in El Paso, Texas: “We had testing in various athletic skills in grade school – broad jump, running, basketball throwing, pushups etc. I loved these tests because I could outdo all the girls in the school each year. I would wait until the last girl did the pushups and do one more when I was ten. I did 42 pushups. I would do so many that I had a hard time feeding myself the next day. I’m not bragging but I could always out-jump all the girls in grade school and high school in the broad jump. My father was always setting up a contest with me against the boy scouts in the neighborhood. They never liked me for that.”

My father died when I was two years old so I never was able to witness his abilities, but growing up he was on basketball and football teams. He played tennis for Brigham Young University and was truly a gifted athlete. Hopefully I inherited some of

my athletic ability from these good parents. Clearly I inherited my mother’s intense competitive nature.



My mother at age 11

At an early age, I discovered that I had good hand-eye coordination and thrived at competition. As a third-grader in Salt Lake City, our grade school held a big marble tournament. My competitive juices became to boil. I beat boy after boy and reached the finals for my grade against my best friend. I had a nice lead in our match but time ran out and our match



was suspended to be picked up again the next week. My friend asked me if I could help him practice. I agreed and that weekend I gave him tips. We worked together improving our skills. When we continued our match the next week, I discovered that I had trained him too well. He caught up and won the match. I was devastated. He went on to the multi-grade tournament and won it all.

In my schools we also had those physical fitness tests. Like my mother, the broad jump was my best event and I could jump the furthest of everyone in my classes. In junior high each year we would run long distance test. I can’t recall the exact distance but it was about a half mile. It seemed grueling and I didn’t like it, but I performed OK.

My first love in sports was basketball. I would spend hours in the backyard shooting. I would play on the church’s youth basketball team but my confidence was always weak and the coach intimidated me. In games I never shot the ball well. I recall in one particular game I received a pass near the free-throw line and I was open. I heard my step-father yell, “that is your shot!” Indeed it was. I had shot thousands of those shots in the backyard including 28 makes in a row. I missed the shot in that game but it made me realize that my problem with athletics was mostly confidence.

While in high school, I was viewed by my classmates as a non-athlete. In PE I was usually picked near the last when teams were chosen. Once we had a basketball tournament of PE teams and on one day the

team we were assigned to play had too few players, so my team needed to give them a player. I was given the boot over to the other team. It didn't really bother me since my team rarely passed the ball to me, but this other team wasn't very good and needed help so I just went for it. I lit up the score board and when I made shots my original team shook their heads. We beat them largely because of my efforts and after the game I apologized to the leader of my original team but he said nothing in reply. But I was happy about that experience. In later years, confidence wasn't a problem and I was frequently the leading scorer on my teams. Shooting too much was probably the new problem.

In 5th Grade, now living in Washington State, I joined the swim team at our neighborhood pool. I had very quickly progressed through all the swim lessons provided at the pool and my instructor encouraged my mom to get me on the swim team. The idea scared me and I was intimidated at my first practice. No one else in my family was on the team but other friends were, so I soon enjoyed the experience. I watched my friends win ribbons and awards at the swim meets but I never did. At one meet I won my slow heat and was certain that I would finally place in the top eight and get a ribbon. I stood near the awards tent in great anticipation.



Marine Hills Pool

My mom told me something about “a watched kettle never boils.” She was right, I didn't get the ribbon. Toward the end of my second year I swam at a big city-wide event for summer-only swimmers. I qualified in the final eight and would surely finally get my ribbon. In the finals it appeared that I tied for seventh, but no ribbon came because I was disqualified for an illegal kick. I quit after two years but established a family involvement in competitive swimming by all my younger siblings and all my children in the years to come.

As a boy in the 1960s and 70s when we visited Utah, we would spend several days at a cabin my stepdad had built up Millcreek Canyon, in Porter Fork. I loved going on hikes into the high mountains. Of my siblings, I would always go the furthest. I eventually made it to the top of the ridge (near Mount Raymond) and it felt like I had entered a new world, a quiet world of nature where I could go to be alone to think and not be distracted. I loved my times up there. I persuaded my dad to lead us on a hike all the way over the ridge and down into Big Cottonwood Canyon. We made it a family hike and my mom would pick us up at the finish. However, without a map in those days, we went the wrong way. We descended over the ridge and hiked for a very long and painful 12 miles, which would be my furthest hike for almost 30 years, but we ended up at Church Fork in Millcreek Canyon. My dad quickly hiked back up to the cabin, retrieved another car and went to find my worried mom waiting somewhere in Big Cottonwood Canyon.

In 8th Grade, my best friend, Mike, persuaded me to join the track team. This was my first exposure to true running. He ran the low hurdles so I joined him in learning that event. The workouts were rough on me. I recall one day the coach made us run “continuous 220s.” We would run a 220 and if we didn't make a certain time, we had to quickly walk across the track field to the other side and run it again. This continued on and on until there were just a few of us slow runners who were left. I knew if I ran just one more, I would pass out and made some comment to the coach as he was about to blow the whistle again. He blew it and I took off again but then he blew the whistle again and said that was enough. I was in agony. This wasn't fun.



On another track practice, the coach again had a few of us run a 220. He had the fastest guy on the team start about 30 yards or more behind us. Away we went. As we rounded the corner at the halfway mark I watched this tall runner go past me like I was hardly moving. The coach yelled out laughing that we were his “rabbits.” I was very impressed by this boy’s speed, but it made me realize that I no ability as a sprinter. As the season went on, I ran in some meets but never did very well. In training at times we would run two or three miles and I didn’t like the long runs. Finally I developed foot pain, probably planter’s fasciitis, and I used that as an excuse to quit the team. I had soured on running.

Biking was also part of my life. Somehow I persuaded my mom to let me ride with two other friends all the way to Mount Rainier, about 70 miles away, to camp for a couple days and then return. It was a huge undertaking especially with heavy packs on our backs but we made it and had an amazing time on our own on the mountain. My bike was my connection to going long distances on my own away from home. I would go further and further. I would ride up to Lake Washington and watch the hydroplane boat races. I put in my head a goal to ride my bike from home all the way around Lake Washington and back, a trip of about 80 miles. It was an amazing urban long-distance bike ride that showed to me that I had pretty tough endurance. After making it all the way around the lake, I got a flat tire five miles from home at the bottom of the highest hill, and called my dad to come bring me home.



Me and my buddies on our bikes

In high school, still viewed as a non-athlete, for PE one day we were playing softball. I was in the outfield alongside one of the star football players. A fly ball was hit toward us and we both went for it and collided hard. When the dust cleared, I was standing with the ball in my mitt and the star football player was on the ground in pain. I’ll never forget the look of shock on his face when he looked up to me and realized that some non-athletic nerd blew him to the ground. I apologized but he said nothing as he struggled to get up, clearly embarrassed.

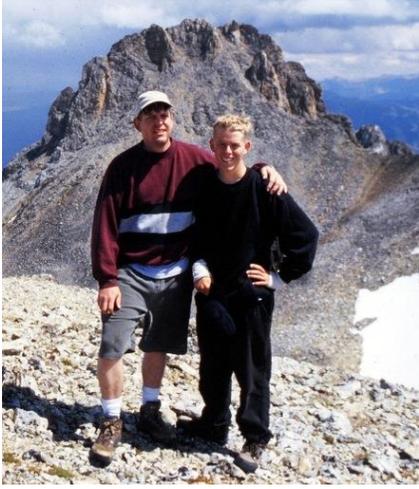
Snow skiing and waterskiing became a passion in my teens and I excelled in both. I joined a ski school and went up skiing every Saturday for a few months. At the end of the season we held a competition doing slalom skiing. Here was my chance to finally win a trophy. I did well, but finished with the second fastest time. The boy who beat me confided that he had missed a gate. I had really won. When they awarded the trophies on the bus, this boy accepted the first-place trophy and I couldn’t resist saying, “But he missed a gate!” The instructor was surprised at my comment, asked the boy, who denied, and I backed down feeling very embarrassed. But I did get the second place trophy and I knew it was actually first place.

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While in high school we bought a trampoline for the backyard, a rare item in those days in Washington. I spent hours jumping on that thing, getting strong legs and perfecting difficult tricks. As a senior, in PE for gymnastics we were able to use a full-size trampoline. I'll never forget the deep respect I saw in the eyes of my class mates as they saw me jump and flip for the first time. As part of the program, we were to pass off a simple, medium, or advanced routine. I was the only one in the class to pass off that advanced routine that even the instructor could not perform.

What about running? I observed that my step-father started to do some running to manage his weight, going a mile or two a day. I followed his example a little but did nothing serious. At a church activity with my best friend, we decided that we would mark off a mile in a campground and then race it. Without serious training I ran like crazy and I beat him, running a 5:41 mile. There were signs that I had running talent but I didn't do anything to develop it...yet.

Discovering Running and the Outdoors



Me with oldest son in the Sawtooths, 1999

When I went away to college in Utah, in 1976, I did some semi-serious running for the first time since that aborted junior high track team experience. Early in the school year at midnight on one occasion I went running with a couple guys up around the Provo Temple for about three miles. I came back to the dorm exhausted and feeling dead. A girl who had my attentions would go over to the indoor track to run now and then, so I also went over as a way to spend time with her and later continued running on my own. For the first time in my life I started to enjoy running. I even left the track and started running up into the foothills on pavement above BYU, running multiple miles. Several times I would go running at night. I discovered that it was a wonderful way to clear my head and escape much of the stress of school life and girl frustrations.

I started to associate with a pretty serious runner who also lived in the dorms. He would encourage me and give me advice. On the indoor track I improved my personal best mile time to 5:32.8. He talked me into signing up for a 5K that ran on roads and ended in the football stadium. I started near the front with my friend and kept close to him for the first half mile or so but then I crumbled. There was no way I could keep up that pace, I started crashing. I was such a running rookie. I slowed down and was passed by a couple hundred trained runners. I held on and was able to pass several runners during the final stretch on the track in the stadium. The race had humbled me but still I looked at the hundreds of runners who I had beaten and it felt like an accomplishment. But I would not run another race for 27 years. (I've always wondered how good I could have been at that young age if I would have continued training and racing.)

After my two-year Mormon mission to New York, I again returned to college in 1979. Even though my roommates didn't run, for some reason I picked it up again and started to run fairly regularly, probably about 10 miles a week. I made a bet with one of my roommates that I wouldn't miss a day of at least running a mile. He couldn't miss a day reading the scriptures. The first one who missed had to pay up. One late night after returning from a date, he asked me with a grin, "did you run?" I hadn't and in anger went out of the house close to midnight getting in my mile run, mumbling about that "stupid bet." But running was getting easy. I was very proud about my first very long run, a ten-mile run from Provo to Springville and back. I was stunned at the ease of doing that run. It felt like I could keep running for a very long time.

That summer I received my first running shirt. During 1980, there was a fitness program on campus related to the 150th birthday for the Mormon Church. If students would run 150 miles over a period of months, they would receive a t-shirt. I signed up and tracked my miles for the first time in my life. I reached 150 miles well before the deadline and was proud of actually running 150 miles. It seemed so very far.

What about the trails? Going to school in Provo, Utah the mountains were right out my back door. In 1980, a



Rock Canyon

former girlfriend invited me to hike to the top of Mount Timpanogos with her. I knew she was trying to persuade me to come back to her and I wasn't interested, so I declined the all-day adventure. But the idea of climbing to the top of that high mountain always stayed with me. A year later, during a break from school, I became adventurous and for the first time hiked up Rock Canyon to what now is the Squaw Peak 50 course, about a seven-mile round-trip hike. It felt like I had hiked up into the wilderness with no one around. The feeling was incredible and I dreamed about someday spending multiple days exploring this back country that I never really knew existed, not far from my isolated city existence. This made a deep impact on me.

School and life became busy and I again dropped running for several years as I started a family and a career. For athletics I played basketball nearly every week and softball in the summers. Around 1984 while working for IBM in upstate New York, I became acquainted for the first time with a serious marathoner, a man in his late 40s, Ron Breon. This guy was amazing. I considered him to be old, but he could outrun everyone I knew. How was that possible? Ron would lead a small number of runners several times a week for a run after work. This group would run what I considered a very long loop of four miles around our town. One day I decided to join in, thinking I was in pretty good shape. Ron ran with ease, never tiring. I struggled terribly to keep up and fell way behind but completed the run. I was humbled and never joined in again, but I always remembered watching Ron run. He put in my mind the amazing thought that someone who was "old" could be in such outstanding fitness, outrunning others in their 20s. Ron once said that the secret to being in shape was to never get out of shape. I had not learned that yet. Every couple years, I would pick up running, and do a few miles a week, but it would never last more than a couple months. Instead I played basketball.

Basketball was my sports life in the 80s. While working for IBM in New York, I invited my IBM basketball buddies to play each Saturday at the local Mormon Church. We played hundreds of games over the years together with some great battles on the court when church tournament time came. Enough of my friends participated that we fielded two teams and battled each year. But our chief rivals were a team of younger college guys from Cornell University in Ithaca. They were always cocky and we loved putting them in their place. One of my proudest games was the year the three-point line came to be and in our tournament game against Ithaca I was in a zone hitting shot after shot, sending those boys home whimpering.

I also picked up tennis and participated in a great IBM doubles league. I got better and better and would frequently get in a couple sets before work during the summers. Both of these sports would motivate me at times to get back out and run. I enjoyed running along the beautiful Susquehanna River that flowed near our home. But my big problem with running back there was my competitive spirit. Each time I ran, I had to compete against the clock. I just couldn't run for enjoyment. I had to push myself harder and harder until it was just too painful and not enjoyable at all.

My IBM friends somehow got me to play golf for the first time in my life. I was terrible at first but we had fun hacker's tournaments and later after moving to Tucson where I could play year round I excelled. However, I retired from that sport around 2002 when a buddy's drive sent me to the hospital in an ambulance. For some reason I just gave up that sport after that. It was too dangerous.

In the early 90s, I took up mountain biking, well before the masses did. We now lived in Tucson, Arizona and I explored the miles and miles of dirt roads in the desert. I learned from mistakes and once went out too far and ran out of water in the hot afternoon. I was miles away from any home but to my luck or providence, I came upon a full water bottle in the road that saved me and I learned a very important lesson about safety.

I entered a 110-mile perimeter bicycle race that went all the way around Tucson. I rode it on my heavy mountain bike, suffering from painful ITB in my knee, but made it to the finish in about seven hours. When I visited Utah, I persuaded my brother-in-law Ed to ride a trail with me. We drove up to Guardsman Pass at the top of Big Cottonwood Canyon, riding along the Desolation trail to Dog Lake, down to Big Water, and down Millcreek Canyon to my dad's home in Salt Lake. (Those who have run the Wasatch 100 understand the meaning of that route.) Along the way my pedal came loose and we still laugh about the memory of putting a stick in the pedal hole and making our way to Desolation Lake where another biker had a tool that helped fix the problem.

For the next several years, each summer, Ed and I would go on multi-day mountain biking adventures in the hills and mountains near the Uintas. We would strap about 40 pounds of bags on our bikes, travel 20-30 miles each day and camp for the night. These were amazing adventures to me. I was finally doing what I dreamed, to just go off in the mountains for multiple days, covering far more miles than what was possible on foot (so I thought). Ed and I would play a game we invented called, "Cabin Golf." We would bring a nine-iron with us on these trips and make up a golf course in the wilderness using a tin can for the hole. We had some really wild obstacles to get through.



Ed playing Cabin Golf on a bike trip

On one trip, we were riding fast down a dirt road on Duchesne Ridge and I hit a ditch wrong, flew over my handle bars, and hit my head hard on the ground. Ed came back and rescued me, and I realized that I had lost all my short-term memory. I looked at the horizon and asked, "Are we in Utah?" I then asked, "How did we get up here?" Ed thought I was joking at first but then became concerned. I tried to remember things and could remember that I had six kids. But I had him take out our map to show me where we had traveled that day. Within a half hour, the memory came back and we camped for the night. But the next morning when I went to get on my bike, it broke in half. We gave the bike a proper burial and spent the rest of the day running and riding our way down to Heber. I soon gave up mountain biking for good, but Ed kept it up and became an elite Tri-athlete.

Fast forward to 1995, age 36. I was then out of shape and overweight. A friend invited me to go on a three-day 45-mile backpacking trip in Paria Canyon on the Utah/Arizona border. I was still very inexperienced in the outdoors, had never done any serious backpacking like this before, but I agreed to come. The adventure opened my eyes to a brand new world I had hardly imagined before. I was a city guy carrying a very heavy backpack just trying to keep up with experienced outdoor guys. I learned things like filtering water, cooking over backpack stoves, and how stupid it is to carry a backpack weighing over 50 pounds. The long hike was spectacular! I never dreamed there was a place like this so close to home. By day two, I was in terrible pain. By the end of the trip, my ankles were totally swollen and I could hardly walk for the next two weeks. But I made life-long friendships with David Hansen and Brad Clements who opened my eyes to the remote mountains and canyons around me.



Paria Canyon

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I would join in with this group each year for a new backpacking adventure. Carl Hutzler also joined us on later adventures. Our sons came at times and we experienced amazing times in the outdoors. However, each year, I was pulling up the rear of the group. I would try to quickly get in shape by running a few weeks before the trips, but at times I would tip the scales at nearly 230 pounds. In 1996 this group took me to the top of [Kings Peak](#), the highest peak in Utah. I was still just a baby in the outdoors, wearing heavy waterproof boots that tore my feet to shreds. [See Carl's website about our backpacking adventures](#)



Me (BYU shirt) in Yellowstone, in 1997

In later years we hiked miles in places like [Yellowstone](#), [Escalante River](#), [Sawthooths](#), [Tetons](#), and many other fascinating places in the years to come. With each year the guys helped me become more seasoned in the outdoors and I learned new things from them every year.



Brad, me, and David on Kings Peak trip in 1996

Life Changing Fitness



Running Paria Canyon in October 2002

For some of these yearly backpacking trips, I became pretty serious about getting in shape. For multiple mornings a week I would run back and forth on a paved road near my house along Utah Lake. I progressed to the point where I was running four miles in about 32 minutes. I was pretty proud of that, but after each backpacking trip, I would fall back to lazy life. I didn't really enjoy these pavement runs and I still had a problem in that I kept competing with the watch, trying to beat my times. It became harder and more painful. Another reason I would quit was because of illness. Back in those days with bad fitness, I would get frequent colds and that was an excuse to quit.

But one year, in 2002, something was very different. Perhaps it was the realization that I was starting to feel old. I was 43, between 220-230 pounds and would watch my kids run around in the back yard playing with my fit brother-in-law Ed. I couldn't really join in if I wanted to. I was too heavy and out of shape to jump on our trampoline like I used to. As far as basketball goes, I could no longer even jump and touch the bottom of the net. Back in my early 20s I could come close to dunking a basketball. I kept trying to touch that net, but just couldn't. It was depressing. When I tried to play basketball, I would quickly get injured and now in my 40s, it took much longer to heal. So I gave up basketball. Was this it? Was it all downhill for the years to come?

Memories of my 20s came back when I watched Ron Breon in his 40s run like the wind. He didn't quit and curl up on a couch for the rest of his life. I observed some dedicated individuals who seemed to be out running on the streets or swimming in our neighborhood pool each day. I concluded it wasn't too late to turn things around.

With a backpacking trip to the Wind River Range in Wyoming just a week away, I knew I better start getting in better shape or I would really fall behind the others all week. My thoughts turned to Mount Timpanogos and memories of an invitation I turned down to climb 22 years earlier. That mountain was calling me. There was some sort of connection I couldn't explain, but I would understand it in the years to come. I did a little research, figured out where the trailhead was, and decided to climb it for the first time. I prepared a daypack because I had read it took about 10 hours or more. Early Saturday morning before dawn I was on the trail. My pace soon slowed, but I continued mostly non-stop. As I climbed above 10,000 feet, a group of young hikers who had continually stopped and rested, but always caught up to me commented that I was just like the "tortoise." That hit me as an insult and was the wakeup call I needed. I was indeed a slow, fat, out of shape tortoise. I made it to the top and then slowly hiked down. When I reached home I felt physically sick and terribly worn out. What a humbling experience!



Mount Timpanogos. 14 miles round trip with 4,500 of climbing

The following week I spent a wonderful time in the Wind Rivers with my buddies, Brad, his son, and Carl. The first day was torturous with an ill-planned route causing us to climb over hundreds of deadfall. But as the week went on I continued to push myself and at times was leading the pack.



Building a dam in the Wind Rivers



Our base camp in the Wind Rivers

On the last day, we spent the afternoon building a dam across a stream. Boys will be boys. The hike gave me plenty of time to think. When I returned home, I was a changed man.

On the following Saturday, what did I do? I went right back up [Mount Timpanogos once again](#). But this time I was amazed how much easier it was and I accomplished the trip several hours faster. A friend who knew I had backpacked the week before was surprised to see me on the trail. “What are you doing?” he asked. I explained that I was not going back to my old ways again but was going to keep on hiking.

My new focus was on fast power hiking in the mountains. That became my love. Most runners set a goal to run a marathon. That never at any time became a goal of mine. Thinking back, I’m amazed that I never considered it once. I had no interest in running on paved roads. I had never heard of ultrarunning and would not learn about it for another two years. I was simply interested in being able to go very long distances fast in the mountains and canyons.

Within only one month an idea came into my mind. Back in 1996 when I hiked Kings Peak for the first time with my buddies I had observed a guy who was doing the hike in only one day. It had taken him all day, but he had accomplished it. That captured my imagination and even though I was very early in improving my fitness, I believed I could do it. In mid-September [I headed to the trailhead to climb that highest Utah peak solo in one day](#). Memories of my multi-day painful trip six years ago came back to me as I began my quick journey up the trail at about 2:30 a.m. Overnight it had rained and as I discovered soon, it snowed above 10,000 feet. I made good progress but became chilled and experienced some hypothermia for the first time. But I put on warmer clothes and arrived at Gunsight Pass (11 miles) just before dawn. But being inexperienced, the snow surprised me and as I was approaching the base of the peak near Andersen Pass, I was trudging through snow about a foot deep. I had to turn back a mile short of my goal. But as I returned, I met various groups heading up who were amazed to see me coming down and learned that I had started from the trailhead. They were very impressed, a very different reaction from just a month earlier when I was called a tortoise. The final three miles were the most slow, painful three

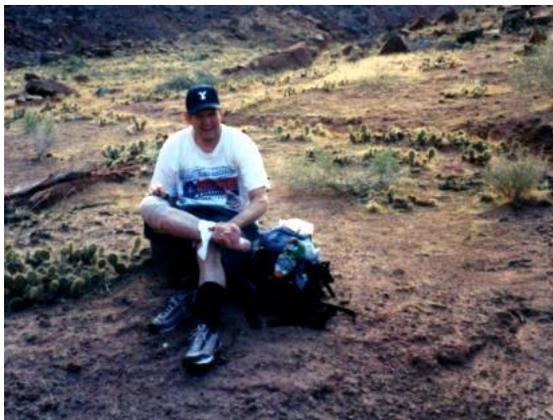
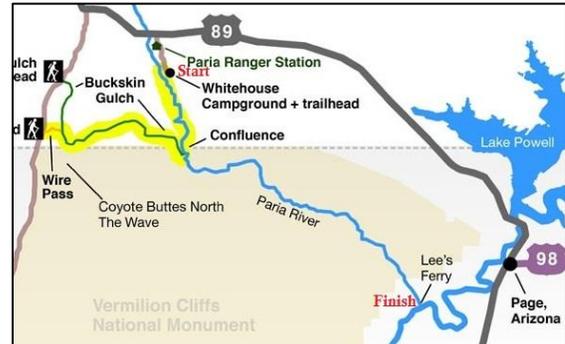


Kings Peak. 26 mile round trip to summit

miles I had ever experienced up to that time. I had tried to go too far, too soon, but I was pleased with my accomplishment.

A couple weeks later, in the late afternoon I ran the high trails above Millcreek Canyon, a canyon near Salt Lake City, Utah. I truly ran and had an amazing time running among the fall colors on the Desolation Trail from Porter Fork to Dog Lake. I had never gone that long stretch before in one trip. Dark came and I ran via headlamp down to Little Water. By that time I was thrashed with a blister and hitched a ride down the canyon to my dad's cabin. This was my first experience running trails in the Wasatch Mountains on September 27, 2002.

I next put in my mind the idea of running many of my past backpacking trips. Instead of taking several days and time away from work, I believed I could do the route in a day. My first trip was spectacular Paria Canyon, the site of my first long backpacking trip in 1995. Ed agreed to join me and I just couldn't wait for the day to arrive. Instead of three days, we would aim to run [Paria canyon](#) all the way to Lees Ferry in a day and a half.



At about mile 35 in Paria Canyon – wrapped knee and blisters

It felt like I was in heaven jogging through the canyon, singing tunes playing from my portable CD player (which later sucked in the sand and scratched all my discs). We passed many backpackers who had been traveling for a couple days. They stared at us as we ran by with our very light packs, wondering how far we were going. Up to that time, this was the most amazing and fun outdoor activity I had ever been on. But by mile 25, my knee started to hurt terribly. I knew nothing about leg injuries but I had a terrible case of ITBS caused by increasing your mileage too fast. I limped very painfully for the remainder of the 42 miles to Lee's Ferry.



In giant alcove in Lower Muley Twist

I had experienced my first running injury and my lack of patience wouldn't let in completely heal for months. But I was completely hooked and wouldn't look back. I had experienced the joy of running/hiking long distances on trails and saw that a new world had been opened up to me. After tasting this amazing experience, I wanted to share what I discovered with others. First, I convinced Brad and David, my backpacking buddies, to ditch their heavy boots for running shoes and go fast pack [Lower Muley Twist](#) with me in Capitol Reef National Park. This is one of the lesser-known parks in Utah. The park is in a remote area of south-central Utah that did not have a paved road going to the area until 1962. It is still a relatively secret national treasure compared to the other well-known parks in Utah. It is a runner's

paradise because of its solitude, spectacular scenery, primitive and rugged trails, slot canyons, and gorgeous slick rock. The major feature of the park is the Waterpocket Fold. This is a remarkable, nearly 100-mile long up-thrust extending like a rugged spine for 100 miles. In the middle of the Fold is Muley Twist Canyon which gets its name from pioneer days because it was so twisting it could twist up a mule train.

Brad and David were skeptical about this approach, fast packing, but came with me and observed the change already in my fitness. They would laugh as I kept running ahead, having a blast, running down the canyon. We accomplished the 15 mile loop and had a fantastic time.

I did a little mid-week running in the neighborhood but not much. It was so much less enjoying than running on trails. But also, still over weight, my joints just couldn't stand the pounding of daily running. So, I turned to swimming. I had not done any serious swimming since the 6th grade, so I was starting at nearly square one. There was a small group of guys at my neighborhood pool that would swim laps and get tips from the local high school swim coach who would do this service in exchange for letting the team use our pool for practices. I quickly got better and progressed to the point where I could swim a mile at a time. My fitness improved greatly and the pounds started to shed little by little. During these first six months of my life-changing fitness, I swam more than 100 miles.



On top of the Oquirrh Mountains with Pablo Riboldi, Ed Johnson, and David Hansen

In the weeks to come I would persuade others to join me on these quick long outdoor adventures. Even though it was now winter (2002-2003), it didn't stop me. We ran in places such as: [Lake Mountain](#), the [Oquirrh Mountains](#), the [Tintic Mountains](#), and [Price River](#). In southern Utah where it was warmer, [Kolob Arch in Zion National Park](#), and [Huber Wash](#) with its amazing petrified forest. On that last event, for excitement when we returned to the trailhead our vehicle was gone. We reported it stolen and then tried to figure out how we would get home. But a half hour later we were informed by a group of guys laughing, that our car was actually around the next corner at a different trailhead. We had not come out at the right place.

Each week or two, I wanted to do another adventure run but it became harder to find anyone who had the time or could do the miles. Besides those who I brought along with me, I still had never yet seen another trail runner on my adventures. I almost believed that I was doing a sport of my own creation. I knew there must be others but didn't know how to find them, so more and more of my runs would be solo.

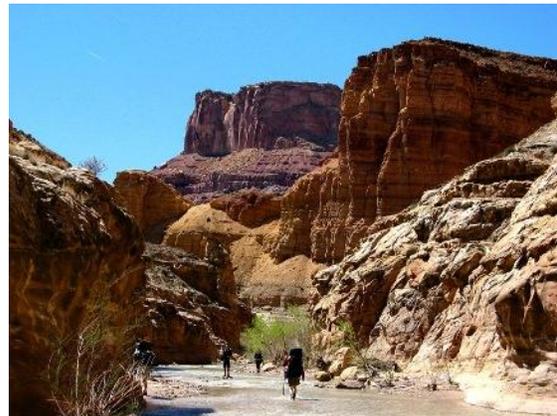
Injuries and Rookie Mistakes



My over-enthusiasm for my newly discovered running passion brought with it mistakes and injury. I always wanted to go further than I was ready. That tended to be my nature. My boys still tell stories when they were children about the hikes we went on above our cabin. I would push them too far or take what they called a “Dad short-cut.” They would point to scars on their arms or legs that were a result of one of my adventures.

In 2003, I still wasn’t really a runner, more of a fast hiker or slow trail jogger. But the problems I encountered are many of the same problems new runners encounter. My early injuries were typical rookie runner over-use injuries. The first was Iliotibial band syndrome (ITBS). The IT band on the outside of the knee gets tight and inflamed causing terrible pain that you can’t run through, especially on the down hills. Also I suffered from Patello-Femoral Syndrome (PFS) or Chondromalacia caused by improper tracking of the knee cap. The underside of the knee cap gets terribly bruised causing bad pain, even when sitting for a while with your knee bent. I was plagued by both of these, did take some weeks off, tried to use bands or braces, and then sent ahead and pushed through the pain.

In April 2003, I severely injured my right knee. I believe it probably happened while skiing, but I did not notice it much until the following week on my yearly backpack trip to [Muddy River in the San Raphael Swell](#) in Utah. I felt bad pain behind my knee at the start of the hike and used a brace I had brought to help. I was stupid and even jogged while carrying a 30-pound pack, further aggravating it. By the second day the knee swelled up like a balloon and I was taking far too much Ibuprofen. By the third day I could barely bend my leg and we slowly exited the canyon. I asked my buddies to dump me off at a motel while they four-wheeled the last day in Moab.



For the next several weeks I made doctor’s visits. I was very anxious to get fixed up so I could resume my running. After an MRI, the verdict was a torn meniscus. The doctor recommended surgery. I agreed and wanted him to perform it as soon as possible so I could resume my activities. I was very hopeful but also concerned that I may have lost my life-changing activities in just six months. I realized that the cause was likely because I was pushing too hard, too fast.

In the Mormon faith we believe in receiving blessings in time of sickness and trial, and we also usually receive them before surgeries. A priesthood holder gave me a blessing the night before my surgery. In the blessing he gave me a promise which I believed was from the Lord that I would fully recover and “would be able to run with great speed.” This gave me hope but also puzzled me because I was slow, just a fast hiker, a slow jogger, not a runner with great speed. That had not been my goal.

When I woke up from the surgery, the doctor came in and explained that it was a good thing that he operated because there was some serious damage. He repaired the meniscus as much as possible but also scraped the underside of my knee cap. I had been damaging the knee cap and it needed smoothing out. He then dropped a bombshell. “You need to give up running.” He noticed the expression on my face and then added, “but if you need to because it is really important to you, stick to soft trails.” I let out a sigh of relief.



Scope picture of part of the injury

I next entered a period of frustrating recovery. I didn't want to lose the level of fitness I had achieved thus far so I went back to the pool. But the kicking motion loosened the knee badly until I resorted to a knee brace to keep things in place while I swam. I swam 60 miles during these recovery weeks.

Recovery came quicker than expected, however I would feel the after-effects for years. But I learned how to manage and take care of the knee. (Years later I would return to that doctor for my next serious injury and I explained that I had run 23,000 miles on the knee that he had repaired. An MRI showed no new damage to the knee. He then bragged to all his office staff and had me tell them how much I ran.) On the bright side, with the time off, my ITBS was cured and never returned.

I bought trekking poles and learned to use them well. Just two months after surgery, I felt mended enough to resume hiking. With my trekking poles, I again climbed Mount Timpanogos. I was pretty emotional standing on top. I had feared that I would never get up there again.

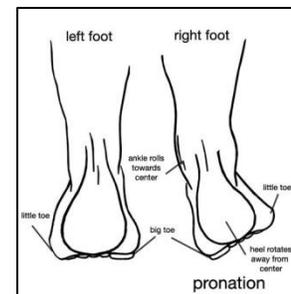
As a rookie, I made plenty of other mistakes. On another run to [Lower Muley Twist](#), going the opposite direction, I entered the wrong canyon and got all turned around. After two hours of running, I came out of the Water Pocket Fold only a mile from my starting point. I solved that by buying a GPS. I didn't want to get lost again.

I failed to understand how bad cotton is to wear while running. I would wear cotton shirts and sweat shirts that would get wet and heavy and make me chilled. On one outing in the Uintas it rained all day and my sweatshirt became so wet and heavy that I had to leave it hanging on a tree. I also wore cotton socks at first and those of course caused bad blisters. I eventually figured out that I should not wear cotton.



The shoes I first used were just cheap running shoes. I believed that the expensive shoes just were not needed. I would go into a sports store and just find something off the shelf that was cheap and felt good. These shoes were bad and it took me another year to understand the great value of using a high quality shoe.

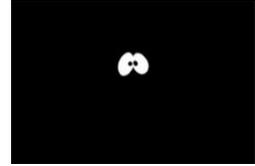
I knew nothing about foot pronation. I never noticed that my right foot over-pronated terribly and was very likely the cause of most of my injuries. I received help from a foot doctor who gave me custom orthotics but I eventually stopped using those and learned to build my own using tape under my insoles.



**Yeah, I have
a diet...
It's called
RUNNING!**
I ♥ TO RUN.

A big problem early on was learning to eat while running. I would lose my appetite and just stop eating. When I ran with my brother-in-law Ed, I would observe that he would eat a ton. I knew that he was doing the right thing, but it took a while to teach myself to eat during my runs.

Another mistake was using poor lighting during my light runs, just a cheap headlamp from Walmart. More than once the batteries would run out, leaving me without much light. It would take me two years to wise up and invest in a great lighting system that make running at night turn into a joy.



The packs that I would wear were far too heavy and would bounce around. I eventually switched to waist packs, which I used for a couple years, but would cause abdominal problems. I eventually ditched waist packs for good and bought much better packs made for biking or running.



It took me another year to understand the importance of electrolytes. During another run in Paria Canyon with my brother Bob, I drank mostly straight water even though the last 20 miles were in very hot conditions. When I reached Lees Ferry I was in bad shape and would have to lie by a creek to continually try to lower my body temperature. But I continued to feel ill. As we took a shuttle back to our starting point, I had to have the driver pull over as I threw up violently. Bob knew what my problem was and from then on I appreciated the importance of salt intake during my long runs.

I would at times run out of water and get dangerously dehydrated. During an amazing two-day adventure run in Canyonlands National Park I totally ran out of water and had to drink from little pockets in the slick rock. Thankfully I understood the importance of filtering water or choosing wise water sources and never have had a sickness because of bad water.



Another problem I was experiencing but didn't realize it was hypernatremia, an electrolyte imbalance where my body would retain too much water. I had no idea what this was, didn't know the signs, but as I looked back a couple years later, I understood what was happening at times. For me, the cause was too little electrolytes taken in. Once I learned about electrolytes, I thought I could get what I needed from Gatorade. Not so, for these distances.

Physically I was still too heavy, more than 200 pounds. If I didn't shed more weight, I would still face many injuries. Going further than I should was the biggest mistake and the most common error for new runners. Establishing a mileage base takes time and you have to ease up the miles traveled gradually or you will surely experience over-use injuries or worse.

But my health was improving. I had my cholesterol checked every few months and my levels continued to improve especially my HDL (good cholesterol) that became higher and higher as I lost weight and improved my fitness. I improved my nutrition, watched the calories and started taking supplements. I noticed that I wasn't getting frequent colds any more. Something unexpected, I just didn't need as much sleep as I used to need. I woke up in the morning fresh and excited to exercise.

I rediscovered the joy of listening to music. I started listening to music as I ran and really enjoyed it. My CD collection grew and it still would be a couple years before MP3 players made portable music far easier to take with me on runs.

My Path to Ultrarunning – Davy Crockett

I finished 2003 running with a total of 566 trail miles, which I thought at that time was a huge number. At first I didn't include any miles I ran on the pavement because to me that wasn't what I was trying to do. For me, it was all about the trails.

Pushing the Limits and Discovering Ultrarunning



During this first year (2002-2003) of increased physical activity and adventure running, I started to push the limits even more and considered accomplishing runs that no one had ever run before in a day. One day I read in the newspaper about two guys, [Craig Lloyd](#) and [Scott Wesemann](#), who accomplished a “Utah Triple Crown,” summiting the three highest peaks in Utah in one day. The three highest peaks are located in the Uinta Mountain range. 1- Kings Peak – 13,528, 2- South Kings Peak – 13,512, 3- Gilbert Peak – 13,442.

My first reaction was excitement, that such a feat was very cool. But when I discussed it with my brother-in-law Ed, I expressed the feeling that they did it wrong. They used a base camp instead of starting and finishing from a trail head. Ed and I were convinced that we could do it right.

Within a couple weeks, in August, we made our attempt. Unfortunately that evening it rained for several hours. Around 2:00 a.m. the rain stopped and we decided to go. Our objective was to first summit Kings Peak, next South Kings, and as we returned, go up Gilbert. Our run up Henrys Fork was great fun. As we approached the peak, we were surprised to find that about eight inches of snow fell the evening before. It wasn't enough to stop us, but it was a bother. Ed decided to scramble quickly straight up the boulders to the summit and he beat me by 30 minutes as I took the traditional route. But once up on top, my eyes were really



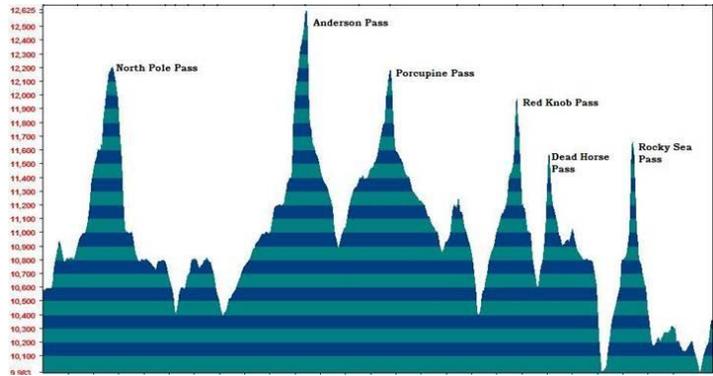
In Henrys Fork looking toward Kings Peak

bothered by the bright sunshine reflected off the snow and it was getting very wet and slippery. I failed to bring sunglasses and feared of suffering snow blindness, so we decided to abort our “triple crown” and save it for another day. Our run back down the valley was fast and I enjoyed seeing Ed have so much fun. This adventure got me hooked on trying to accomplish “firsts.” (It would be another five years until I became the first person to run a “Utah Triple Crown” from the trailhead, accomplishing it on my 50th birthday. Soon after that I became acquainted with Craig and Scott).

I shortly had summited Kings Peak five times, three of those were one-day trips. Each time as I would make my way to the peak, I would run a little on the Highline trail. I knew this trail extended the length of the Uinta Mountains. I dreamed of running the entire Highline trail. As I researched it, I came across a trip report about some guys who fast-packed the entire trail in 1991. John Moellmer and Dana Miller traversed the entire 105-110 miles of the Highline Trail from Lonetree Campground (on Rt. 191 north of Vernal) to Hayden Pass (near Mirror Lake) in 3.5 days. Clearly these guys were not just average backpackers, there were extraordinary distance hikers. I didn't realize at that time, but both John and Dana were ultrarunning pioneers in Utah. I still had never heard of ultrarunning. (In later years I became good friends with both and I have great respect for their accomplishments. They paved the way for the following generation of ultrarunners.)

My Path to Ultrarunning – Davy Crockett

I decided that I wanted to be the first to run the Uinta Highline Trail solo from Chepeta Lake trailhead to Hayden Pass, a distance of about 70 miles. I believed I could accomplish it in under 36 hours. Looking back, I was getting in way over my head on this one. The Uinta Highline trail is very remote and rugged. This is a very advanced adventure run, even for an experienced ultrarunner, especially solo. I was naïve. But I was excited to give it a try. I tried to be well-prepared, bringing with me a tent, sleeping bag, food, and extra clothes.



Profile of the Highline Trail



View from North Pole Pass looking toward Fox Lake clear.

The trail got tougher and tougher, but I continued on. I reached the familiar basin below Kings Peak near dusk, mile 25 and called my wife to tell her all was OK. After I descended down into Yellowstone Basin, my cheap headlamp was dimming. I searched for spare batteries but could not find them. This was a major blunder. For the next few hours I only travelled one mile per hour because of difficult route finding with a very dim light. By midnight near Tungsten Pass (mile 30) the moon had set so I had no choice but to stop, set up my tent, and wait out the night. I was very discouraged because I was way behind schedule and knew it would be impossible to finish by the time my wife planned to meet me the next evening at Hayden Pass. (Actually, even if my light worked well, ahead I would have battled all night trying to navigate the trail because it becomes faint and the trail markers are very far apart.)



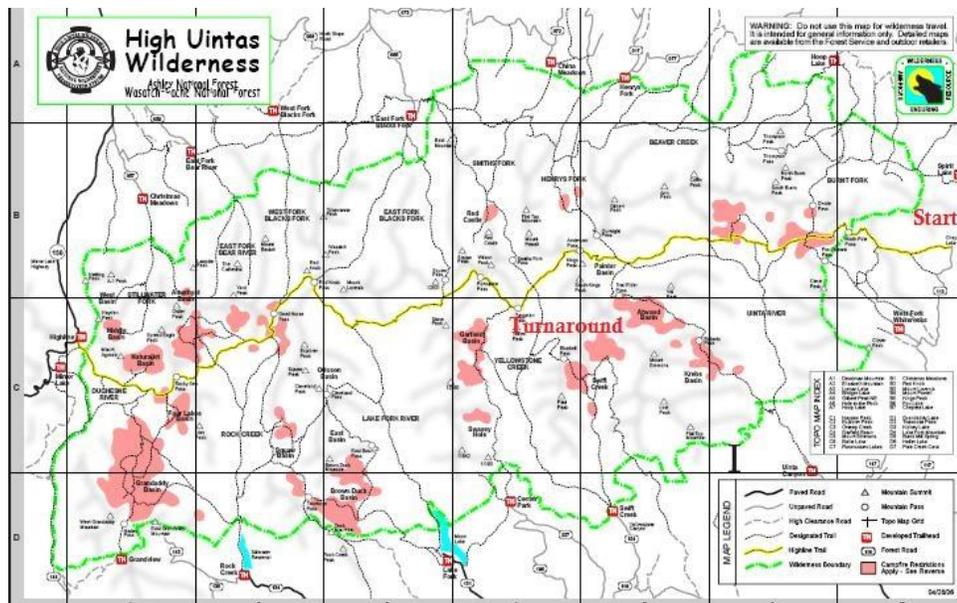
Steep descent into Yellowstone Basin

When morning arrived, I decided to abort and head back the way I came. Once back near Kings Peak, I called my wife, told her I was heading back, to not worry, and that I probably would be late. My hike back was slow. It rained for four hours straight and I became soaked. At Fox Lake in the late afternoon, I almost stopped for the night with some campers who had a huge heated tent, but I pushed on. More problems arose, my GPS stopped working and I headed up a wrong pass, wasting an hour.



Near North Pole Pass a few years later

As dusk arrived, I was on high North Pole Pass when a bad snow storm hit. I was in some serious trouble and had to get down fast. I was still six miles from my car without a light. I stumbled down the trail in the dark and fierce wind and snow. Finally down in the basin, I couldn't find the trail anymore. I made the wise choice to find a giant boulder to pitch my tent out of the wind, take shelter, sleep, and wait out the night. I knew my wife would be worried. (Early the next morning, she called my brother-in-law Ed. He assured her that I knew what I was doing, would be fine, and they should wait longer before calling for help.)



Highline trail in yellow

At dawn I packed up and hiked out in a peaceful, beautiful morning and quickly called my wife when I reached cell coverage. My crazy adventure had covered 60 very tough miles and I learned many good lessons. Despite my blunders and greatly underestimating the difficulty of this expedition, I gained important experience in the Uintas which would lead to accomplishing my end-to-end goal twice in the coming years. (In 2010 I would establish a solo fastest known time starting from Leidy Peak.)

In just a year, with lots of hard work and training, and overcoming a serious injury, I had progressed from an out-of-shape couch potato to a self-sufficient long distance rugged outdoor hiker/runner. For the rest of 2003 and into 2004, I was more careful, staying closer to home. I took six trips up Mount Timpanogos and on these trips instead of being called a tortoise, I received constant complements including, “you are amazing.” I ran in remarkable places including [Grand Gulch](#), [Canyonlands](#), [Buckskin Gulch](#), and [Paria Canyon](#). My longest one-day run was near home, on the [west side of Utah Lake](#) for 37 miles.

As my mileage increased, I could no longer find people to go with me on these very long adventure runs. During the spring of 2004, I found a Utah trailrunning website and asked the owner if he knew of groups who went on these types of adventure runs. He suggested that I try “the races.” I had seen some trail race results on the Internet such as Brighton Marathon, but I still had not discovered ultrarunning. At a family gathering, in June, Ed suggested that I go run Wasatch 100. I really had no idea what that was. I had heard about it over the years but thought it was a road/pavement race up in the mountains run by crazy people. But I soon learned it was on trails (and yes, run by crazy people) and I quickly became very excited about the idea. I tried to figure out how to register but learned from the race director that the race was full (of course!). He suggested that I look at the Bear 100.

Suddenly this opened up a new world to me. Up to that point I had run about 1,300 miles on the trails, but I do not recall even seeing another trail runner on the trails ever, even with about ten trips up Mount Timpanogos. But now I had discovered the existence of ultrarunning. Still naïve, I sent in my registration for the Bear 100 just three months away. I found the email discussion list, “ultralist” and suddenly was connected with about 1,000 ultrarunners across the country and I learned that there probably were more than 100 in Utah. Finally, I had found my new home. I only wished I would have discovered this sport years ago.

Rookie Ultrarunner

>26.2

Ultramarathons? I could do that, couldn't I? I had just discovered the existence of ultramarathons and within a week registered for the 2004 Bear 100 to be run in less than three months. I was eager to test myself in this new-found sport. I believed I could do it, but still had my doubts. I began researching ultramarathons on the Internet, reading various race reports, and studying the Bear 100 course. I discovered that a 50K race, the Midnight Mountain 50K was held on the exact same course in just two weeks so I quickly entered it. It would be a good way to learn about the course and get a taste of this ultrarunning sport. I had run about 600 miles so far this year which I thought was a ton of miles, and felt ready. The last running race I had entered was back in 1977, a 5K.

I needed to prove to myself that I could run really big miles. As I read Wasatch 100 race reports, I kept saying to myself, "I can do that." In response, I quickly planned another fool-hardy adventure for a 48-hour run. I started at Spanish Fork Canyon, a few miles below Soldiers Summit, and planned to take the Great Western Trail all the way to Provo Canyon. I'm embarrassed to admit that I really believed I could continue all the way to Brighton in those two days. No one told me I couldn't, so I believed I could. I knew nothing about the concept of tapering before my 50K in a week.

I started on a Thursday afternoon and by evening had climbed up to Strawberry Ridge (the ridge to the west of Strawberry Reservoir) with my much too heavy seventeen-pound pack. (What was I thinking?!) At about the sixteen-mile mark on the ridge, I made a camp for the night and started a campfire for my dinner. Sparks thrown by the fire made a hole in my camelback bladder which I eventually patched. I tried sleeping for a few hours but was literally chased away at 1:00 a.m. by a skunk that wanted my stuff, so I continued on in the early morning. My route joined what years later I learned was the Katcina Mosa 100K course at the Bath tub spring and I would take that route all the way to South Provo Canyon. It was grueling but beautiful to be in the Wasatch back country, where in 1980, I dreamed of exploring. But I totally underestimated the difficulty.



I ate the last of my food at Little Valley, the 40-mile mark. When I saw the 1,500-foot Bozung Hill for the first time, my heart sank knowing that I would have to go up and over that ridge. I was already totally out of gas. I noticed some pink flags along the trail and just couldn't figure out what they were for. I told myself, "No way could there be a race on this trail! Maybe it could be a mountain bike race course? It surely was not a running race going up or down this steep hill!" Months later I was amazed to learn that I was on the Squaw 50 course. I had discovered ultrarunning just a week earlier and little did I know, I was on an ultramarathon course.



View with about 12 miles to go

After more than 24 hours, I finally made it to the South Provo Fork road where my wife took me home in great pain. I was very humbled, but I had traveled about 55 miles from Spanish Fork Canyon all the way to South Provo Canyon, climbing about 12,000 feet along the way.

My first ultramarathon – 50K

I recovered fast and just one week later traveled with my family to Preston Idaho, to run my first ultramarathon, Midnight Mountain 50K. This was the first time I had ever seen other trail runners. I felt like an outsider as many of this group of about 45 clearly knew each other and talked excitedly about other races they had run. It seemed like many of this group traveled from race to race together over the summer. (Little did I know that among this group were at least 10 runners who would become my very good friends in the years to come). I observed two types: A group of experienced runners and a group of rookies like me, some who had pretty heavy day packs. I was the only one with trekking poles and I was asked by others how I used them. I had no idea how well I would perform in this 50K (31 miles). I actually believed that perhaps I was very good and would compete well. I had no way of knowing, having never run with an ultrarunner before. I thought I could finish at least in seven and a half hours. I was surprised that the start was so casual. The race packets arrived late so the race started 20 minutes late.

Off we went. For the first monster climb among the scrub oak, I did well and ran in mid-pack. It seemed very unusual to have so many others running with me who also loved running the trails. Yes, I was in the right group. But after three hours, at about mile 14, I fell behind. We had a long downhill section and I was in complete awe how the runners could run downhill with speed. My knees just wouldn't let me go fast at all. I realized that I was being totally out-classed by those around me. I continued on and never had thoughts of stopping. I saw my goal pace slip away. I was very impressed by how friendly people were. They would stop and ask me if I was OK and I found a good friend in Tony Dearcos who had finished his first Wasatch 100 in 1998.



[View on climb up German Dugway](#)

I knew my family would get tired of waiting for me, but I just couldn't go faster so I enjoyed the forests, ridges and valleys up above Bear Lake. Eventually the finish line came in sight and my little boy shouted, "Finally!" I finished in 9:23, 30th place out of 43 finishers. [See the results.](#) I was shocked to see that the winner, Ty Draney, had finished more than four hours before me. But, for the first time I was able to measure myself against the best ultra-long distance runners in the area. I learned that I was back of the pack, but still was part of the group. I was hooked on ultrarunning.



[About 10 miles to go](#)

I recovered fast and continued to work hard. The next Saturday I attempted my first double Timpanogos, running to the Summit twice from the trailhead. On my

second trip I created quite a stir on the mountain. Many people asked how many times I was doing it. A couple groups yelled out, “Go for 3!” “Go for 3!” One group clapped and cheered. Many would say, “you are great” and “way to go.” I didn’t expect this reaction, but I guess if you pass hikers three times on one hike it does get their attention.

My first 50-miler

Three weeks after my first ultra, I stepped things up again and was in Washington with my family to run White River 50, my first try at a 50-miler. The race ran near Crystal Mountain where I skied often in my youth. At the check-in for this race, I looked around at the athletes and very quickly concluded that I was a pretender. They were all lean and strong. In the past two years I had lost a lot of weight but was still 190 pounds and looked like the heaviest one there. The field included so many elite runners, runners who I had never met or heard about before, Karl Meltzer, Uli Steidl, Hal Koerner, Ian Torrence, Nikki Kimball, Jeff Browning, and others. I felt embarrassed to be there and almost hoped that no one noticed me. But it was fun to be with my family in the beautiful Cascade Mountain Range, not far from Mount Rainier.



View of Mount Rainier from the course

I took the one-hour early start with a few others, including a guy who was running his 50th ultra in 50 states. He was giving others advice about using a run/walk pacing technique. But after the first half mile, I just ran, still with my trekking poles. I was the first one to the first two aid stations. It was then fun to watch the front-runners from the normal start catch up and really go up a hill fast. These elite runners were very nice and said kind words to me as they passed by. Streams of runners started to pass me and I tried to keep up, but at the half-way mark, 25 miles, the clock was at 6:40. I would have a very tough time finishing before the 14-hour cutoff. I saw some runners quit at that point but I continued on. I didn’t look at all like an ultrarunner with my trekking poles and two soft braces on each knee, but I was just trying to finish. I kept a very close eye on the clock and with ten miles to go, I knew I was in last place. My knees were in great pain (probably because I wore those stupid braces) and I pushed the last seven miles as hard as I could. With a quarter mile to go, I threw down the poles and sprinted as fast as I could. I indeed finished in last place (DFL) in 14:00:02, only two seconds over the 14-hour limit. But I was credited with an official finish, I guess because I took the early start. I always love looking back at the finisher list and seeing my name at the bottom. [See the results.](#)

I was in great pain at the finish and my son asked me if I still was going to run Bear 100. I didn’t answer, but the thought in my mind was, “no way. I was in so much pain going only half that distance.” I learned many good lessons: Fix a blister when it first gets noticed. Take time at each aid station to eat and drink. Don’t get lazy and walk slowly for long periods of time. Don’t let the cut-offs get too close and add stress. Don’t wear knee braces. With your family at the finish, don’t get them worried when you really are just fine.

My first 100K

I didn't stop. Three weeks later I travelled with my son to Oregon and toed the start line of Where's Waldo 100K. I took the two-hour start with a large group and led the pack after five miles feeling great. The day was beautiful running in the evergreens. It was thrilling to have my son pace me for about 12 miles. But about mile 40, I looked pretty thrashed. The aid station captain was quite concerned and I assured them that I fine and had done this before. But still he sent a guy on a horse to trail me for several miles to make sure I didn't collapse. At about mile 50, I found myself in last place again and two sweepers were nipping at my heels. My other knee was having some serious problems. When I reached the next aid station, with still another monster climb ahead, I decided to quit, my first DNF. I then hiked another five miles down to our campground. I had covered 54 miles, a new one-day personal record for me.



Running Where's Waldo in 2004

Witnessing my first 100-miler

One big problem I still had was that I did not have a mentor. I soon discovered that an old friend from my youth, the brother of my best friend, was an elite ultra/adventure runner from Colorado, Todd Holmes. This year he was running what is called the "Grand Slam," four prestigious 100-milers. As I was licking my wounds for the next couple weeks, we traded emails and I was excited to have someone that I could get advice from.

Todd was running in the last race in the Grand Slam, the Wasatch 100. I decided that I would surprise him and greet him on the course during the night. My knee was still bad, but I hiked up to the Rock Springs aid station (mile 87), surprising the volunteers there who don't see any spectators in that remote location. I then ran backwards on the course looking for Todd and greeting the front-runners with their pacers. It was a wonderful night and I was thrilled to be on the Wasatch course, witnessing this amazing race first-hand. I reached Pole Line Pass (mile 83) and waited about an hour, watching all the runners come in at from about 2-3:00 a.m.



Running with Todd Holmes during Wasatch 100

I then started running toward Ant Knolls but very soon ran in to Todd. He was totally amazed to see me. We had not seen each other for about 30 years. What a crazy place and time for a reunion. He introduced me to his pacer, Joe Kulak, who was the current record holder for the Grand Slam. I was in awe as I ran with these two guys. Todd had been at a very low point, but Joe commented later that I really perked him up. I had no problem keeping up as we ran back to Rock Springs and beyond. Todd and I caught up on things for the past 30 years and talking about all our family members. I was like a gushing fan running with the two amazing ultrarunners.



At Rock Springs with Todd Holmes

I finally bid good-bye at the top of The Plunge. Later in the afternoon I went to the finish at Midway and watched for a couple hours as the final runners finished their 100 miles. I saw great emotion among the finishers, including pain, tears, hugs, and smiles. I wanted that experience in two weeks at the Bear 100. I received plenty more advice from Todd, the only runner there I knew. (Looking back at the finishers, I was actually surrounded by about 40 of my future good friends).

My first 100-miler – defeat and victory



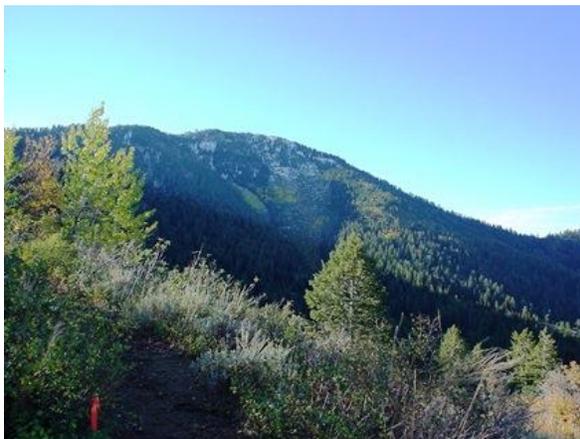
I was both excited and very nervous about running the Bear 100, my first attempt to run a 100-mile race. Good friends agreed to crew and pace me, and even brought a camper for me to sleep in at the start in Cub River Canyon, in southern Idaho. [Back in 2004](#), the Bear 100 was still a small race and there were only 51 runners starting at 6:00 a.m. The original course was a large loop course, all in Idaho up in the mountains above Bear Lake. The course markings that year were an adventure and many people took wrong turns. An entire group of front-runners went off course and later would pass me in the

morning. That night, two runners were so lost they had to spend the night up on a ridge and wait until dawn. But I navigated pretty well. I carried my GPS with me and several times it helped me stay on course.

My sore knee was a serious problem at times but I continued to push through it. It was such a pleasant setting for a run, fall colors, snow, pleasant temperatures, and beautiful sunlight. My crew was great at each of the stops and lifted my spirits and cheered loudly as I arrived. With the small field, we became very spread out and at times I wouldn't see another runner for hours. For miles I ran near ultra-legend 62-year-old Hans-Dieter Weisshaar who has finished more 100-mile races than anyone in the world.



Early portion of the Bear 100 course in 2004



I reached 50 miles at about the 13-hour mark and changed into my warm clothes for the night. I was familiar with much of the remaining course because it was the same route as the Midnight Mountain 50K, which I had run recently. The 60-mile mark was a high point. I was feeling great and running strong. But by 8:00 a.m. in the morning, at mile 79, I started to feel sick. During the night my body had retained water and then dumped it continually in the morning. I had a bad imbalance of electrolytes and carbohydrates, and experienced my first hard “bonk.” I couldn't understand what was happening

and it felt like I was dying. I pushed on slowly with my pacer Pablo, but at mile 85 it was hot and I just couldn't pull myself out of the shade. I now was in last place. By mile 87, I wasn't moving anymore, and knew I was not going to make the next cut-off. It was time to quit. I had given all that I could. A couple

guys on motorcycles came by and offered to take us forward to the next aid station. I took them up on the offer and DNFed (Did not finish) my first 100-mile attempt.

After a ride to the finish, my family was there to greet me. I announced that I had attempted my first and **last** 100-miler. I watched runners who I had run with finish and I concluded that I just wasn't cut out for the 100-mile distance. The other runners seemed super human. I even said running 100 miles was "stupid." The runners who had finished, and were resting nearby, were kind to me and treated me like a finisher. I did go the furthest of anyone who didn't finish, 87 miles.

Within two days, I changed my tune and vowed to run and finish The Bear next year. I learned many great lessons, but the best lessons were simply from the experience itself and facing the many challenges along the way. Clearly I needed to learn proper fueling and keeping a good balance of electrolytes, carbohydrates, and fluids.

A Bear 100 film was produced using footages from both the 2004 and 2005 race years. I make several appearances in "Dancing The Bear" including a funny night scene when I look totally hammered at an aid station. [You can view the video on YouTube.](#)

I came away from my first 100-mile attempt injured and humbled. I went to various doctors, had an MRI, but it turned out to only be soft tissue, over-use injuries that took a couple months to heal. This gave me time to learn. I received advice and encouragement from Todd Holmes and Joe Kulak. I came to the conclusion that I needed to make the transition to a runner, and truly learn to run. As I recovered, I first ran on soft golf course fairways and worked on my foot speed. I soon put aside the trekking poles which helped me run much faster. I also adopted the use of handheld bottles instead of a cammelback. I felt lighter and still increased my speed some more.

Through the ultralist, I finally became acquainted with local runners including Jim Skaggs who had recently moved to Utah. We got together to run and I took him on a 50K run around Lake Mountain. I had been documenting most of my adventures in a Word document that I had shared with a few friends, but now I started publishing them on the Internet.

I fully recovered from my injuries and in December 2004, I got the idea of running the [Pony Express Trail](#) from my home clear to the Nevada border in stages. (This would eventually evolve into the creation of the Pony Express Trail 50 and 100 race.) I was able to publish two articles about my run in the national publication "Marathon and Beyond." My running skills and speed increased and so did my confidence. I finished 2004 with a total of about 1,400 miles. I realized that I should run a much easier 100-mile race to get my first finish, so I entered the popular [Rocky Raccoon 100](#) in Texas, to be held in February.



In addition to my lowland winter dirt road training, I added midweek treadmill training for the first time. I noticed my foot speed increasing. I was starting to turn into a runner. My weekly miles increased to about 50 miles per week. Since I would be running in Texas, renting a car from Alamo, I had the great idea of starting to use the name "Davy" as my running name and bring a coonskin hat with me to Rocky Raccoon. Texas is always kind to Davy Crockett and the jokes started at the airport at the car rental counter.

My Path to Ultrarunning – Davy Crockett



This time, I approached the 100-mile race with great respect. I wasn't racing against anyone else, I was trying to beat the race itself. The course for this race consisted of 20-mile forested loops in Huntsville State Park, north of Houston. I would be running with a large field of about 150 runners. With the flatter course and all my recent training, things went very well early on. I finished the first 20-

mile loop in 3:29 in 25th place.

People had noticed my name on the entrants list and with my coonskin hat on, I was continually greeted on the out-and-back portions with “Good job Davy”, “Looking good Davy”, “Keep it up Davy.” “Davy Crockett, who are you running from?” I replied “Santa Ana.” A few erred and tried calling me Daniel Boone. Hans-Dieter called me “Beaver Boy.” I found a group of new friends, most from Colorado.



I reached 50 miles at about the 10:30 mark, a huge personal record for me and I was running in about 50th place. With better education, my fueling strategy had advanced to items such as Gels, Ensure, boiled potatoes, soup, PBJ sandwiches, and Succeed Caps (salt). Also new during this race was my signature green handheld light. It made an enormous difference and let me keep my pace going fast at times during the night.

At about mile 72, I started to crash. I had a bad blister under my foot, my knee started to hurt, and my leg muscles were thrashed. But I kept on going and was thrilled to consider that I was eight hours ahead of my pace compared to the Bear 100. I mostly walked the final 20-mile loop which took me nearly eight and a half hours, but I knew I had plenty of time and was no longer in a hurry.

Dawn arrived at about mile 95. I felt a few raindrops and the wind started to blow, but thankfully the storm stayed away. Friendly volunteers at the last station greeted me with some warm oatmeal that hit the spot. They told me that I “had it made,” with less than three miles to go. Those were the longest three miles of my life. When I finally arrived near the finish, kind spectators clapped, cheered and congratulated me. Somewhere inside of me, I found a jogging pace, and finished the race with pride, with a time of 26:53 in 72nd place.



Wearing coonskin hat at 2004 Rocky Raccoon



My Path to Ultrarunning – Davy Crockett

I received the traditional finisher award for a 100-miler, a belt buckle. All my hard work had paid off. I felt happy, but tired. I had accomplished my goal. I flew home that afternoon and after arriving in pain, told my family that I would never run a 100-mile race again. This time that vow wasn't rescinded until 24 hours later. I now was truly an ultrarunner. I held my finisher buckle in my hand and smiled. (I would go on to finish Rocky Raccoon 100 five times by 2012 and received a 500-mile jacket.)



Gaining Experience and a Mentor



The exciting afterglow feeling of finishing a 100-miler lasted for days. I really did it! For several days I wore sandals to work because my feet were swollen and blistered, but I soon started thinking about what I could run next. I had gained some good confidence and was anxious to race again. Yes, I was really an ultrarunner, but still quite the rookie and making many mistakes. But these mistakes were somewhat overcome with my stubborn determination. I was stumbling through this new sport mostly on my own but soon I would find more help.

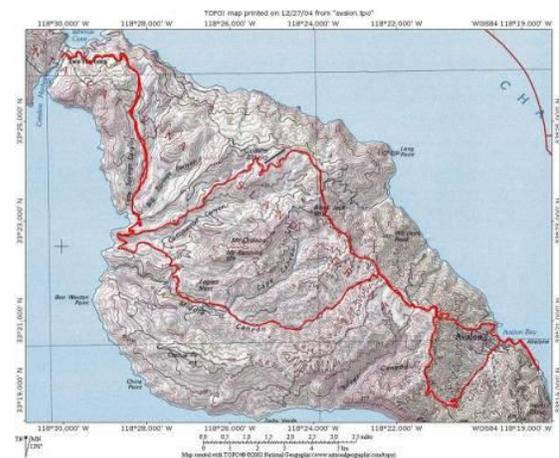
For the next few months, I would run and finish four 50-milers. The first would be [Old Pueblo 50](#) near Tucson, my home from 1990-1998. We made it a quick family vacation. Since Rocky Raccoon 100, a month earlier, I had only run 40 miles, trying to heal up from my various aches and pains. I again brought my coonskin hat and many runners who had been at Rocky recognized me.

[Old Pueblo 50](#) is a wonderful desert run in the Santa Rita Mountains. During this race, I met and ran with Matt Watts from Colorado for the first time. This started a friendship that would last through the years. I experienced highs and lows during the race. I was shocked to experience an amazing high point, similar to what I had experienced for a time during Rocky Raccoon 100. At mile 42, I tried to really kick up the pace and was shocked that I could sustain it. On a rolling single-track section I was sprinting along the trail, passing runner after runner. I got great reactions. One runner said he would draft behind me. A minute later I looked back and he was gone, he just couldn't say with me. It was a great feeling. This was the first ultra that I finished feeling great, full of energy. I finished in 58th place out of 111 starters. I was truly believing that I could be a midpack runner.



In coonskin hat heading up to Gunsight Pass

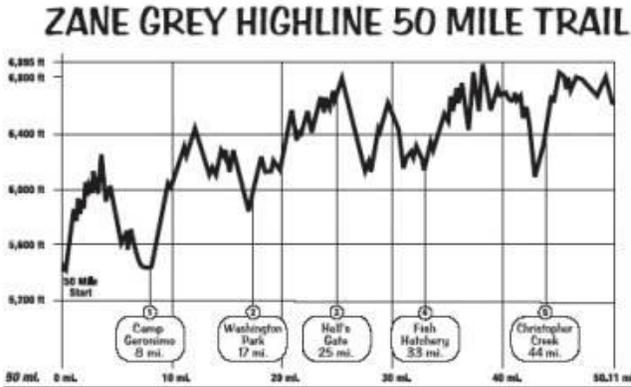
Next up was [Avalon 50](#) on Catalina Island in California. I was in town for a business trip but extended it to run on the island. Running at sea level was an amazing feeling. It felt like I was in an oxygen tent. Again, I had sections during the race when I surprised myself and could run very fast. With a few miles to go, I realized that I could actually break 10 hours and beat my 50-mile personal record. I sprinted through the city streets of Avalon and finished in 9:49, in 19th place out of 90 starters.



This was the first time that I truly raced in an ultra. I ran to place well, it worked, and I liked it. How was this possible for a guy who finished dead last in a 50 miler just ten months ago? I was so excited and spent the next hour with other runners cheering the finishers. This was probably the most important race in my ultramarathon history because it greatly boosted my confidence and showed me that I could actually run fast. With more work, what could be possible?



Passing three runners at mile 19



With my confidence high, I guess it was time to run something to bring me down to earth. I went to run [Zane Grey 50](#) in Arizona which is billed to be the toughest 50-miler. I was able to stay with my ultrarunner friend, Todd Holmes at his parents' house. It was great to further learn from him and feel like a peer now that I was truly an ultrarunner. Zane Grey

50 is so difficult because of the continual climbs and descents on very rocky trails. There are also long stretches of exposed burned areas that become very hot.

For each new race, I would try new things to help. This time I taped a small version of the course elevation profile to my hand-held bottles. I referred to the graph often and it helped me to set my expectation correctly regarding the course ahead. Because of the heat, my coonskin hat lasted only 17 miles. At mile 25 it was very hot. I noticed a guy with some sort of uniform eyeing me. I suspected he was a search and rescue guy wondering if I would be the dude that he would have to haul out of the wilderness. At the 38-mile mark, everything came together. I felt great and was able to really start running again. I pushed through it all and finished in a respectable, 13:55, in 56th place out of 125 starters.



Typical rocky climb

In May 2005, I linked up with a couple other newer local ultrarunners, Jeff Gerke, Wynn Shooter, and Jason Berry. They were all training to run the Bear 100 that year too. Jeff and Wynn had run in my first 50K the year earlier and finished two hours faster than me. But in the past nine months I had progressed to the point where I could now keep up with them.

I joined Jeff and Wynn in a run on the [West Rim](#) of Zion National Park (now part of what is called the Zion



Me, running down from the West Rim

Traverse). We had a great time. Near the end of the run I had so much energy that I would run ahead to take pictures of the guys descending into the canyon. It was great to be linked up with local runners. But, our problem was that we were just learning from each other. We still lacked an experienced mentor.



Phil Lowry on Timpanogos in 2005

A mentor showed up when I offered to pace anyone at Wasatch 100 and Phil Lowry took me up on the offer. Phil was a 100-mile veteran and was going for his 10th Wasatch finish. I hadn't met him yet, but he gave me much advice in the weeks leading up to that classic race in Utah. He would call me many times and share his experience and offer me advice. I decided that I would pace him for 60 miles, from Big Mountain to the finish. But my confidence was shaken after a DNF at 2005 Leadville 100. I wasn't prepared for running at that altitude and didn't make the cutoff on the return to Twin Lakes (mile 60). I told Phil that I thought I should cut back the number of miles I would pace him. He convinced me that I just had a bad day and

could handle it.

I met Phil for the first time at the Wasatch 100 race briefing although I realized that I had seen him on the trails before. (Who can miss Phil?). I took in all the nervous excitement coming from the runners and enjoyed meeting many runners who had been reading about my adventures online. Several of my new running friends from Colorado were also there. I decided if all went well during my pacing duties, I would enter Wasatch in 2006. All did go well, very well. I ran with Phil for 60 miles and never had a problem keeping up. For those many hours I observed, learned, and participated in an amazing experience. I noticed that Phil kept a steady pace and steady heart rate. Using a heart monitor he keeps attention to how hard he's working. As I would follow him for miles, I discovered how much easier it seemed if I kept a steady heart rate pace. As the aid stations arrived, I could run fast ahead and get things ready for him to arrive. In the final miles, I was full of energy. Phil finished in 29:08.

Two weeks later, I was very nervous at the start of [Bear 100](#), my chance to get even for my DNF from the previous year, the site of my first 100-mile attempt. I started the race by simply running behind my new mentor, Phil Lowry. He yelled back to me, "I would have thought that you would be tired of seeing my butt by now." I kept up with him for the first 15 miles until he kicked it into gear up a tough climb after he had led several of us up a wrong canyon. I hated to see him disappear up and over the ridge because I knew I was now on my own.

My race went well and I was nicely far ahead of my pace from the previous year. But at about mile 50 up on an exposed ridge I experienced the most terrible lightning storm I would ever run in. With fury, the storm blew in and huge flashes of lightning flashed above me. As we came to exposed ridges, with fear in my legs, I did my best to sprint across before the next lightning strike. I ran hunched over, ducking from the lightning. Several times the strikes seemed to be within 100 yards with no delay between the huge flash of light and the loud crack of thunder. I finally arrived at the next aid station where many shaken runners would later quit.



Early on, running the Bear

For the second half of the race I learned an important lesson about pacers. Two pacers from work offered to help, both with some good road running experience, but very little trail running experience. I soon learned that if you don't have the right pacers, they can slow you down. With the weather still poor, I worried about one of my pacers and would slow way down to make sure he was alright as he kept slipping in the mud. Eventually I would just go ahead but then worried and slowed down even more. In the years to come, I would run most of my races without pacers. I would only use those who I trusted and those who would be fine if they couldn't keep up.

Then disaster struck. At mile 75 I learned that my pacers had driven my van on the wrong road despite my very detailed written instructions. They punctured the van's oil pan and all the oil had leaked out at the aid station. It was no longer drivable. For the rest of the race I worried. When I worry, I slow down. Unfortunately my pacers offered no solutions for me and were just anxious to get home. As I ran, I called my wife to come rescue me and help me figure out what do to with the van. I continued on, feeling depressed, and crossed the finish line at 32:23 in 29th place out of 62 starters. Phil yelled out that it was Davy Crockett finishing and the cheers went up.

I should have been overjoyed about finishing the Bear 100, a race last year I believed was impossible for me to finish. I collapsed on the lawn, a muddy, tired, painful mass of quivering flesh. It was good to be finished and I was surprised how low my spirits were. My car was broken and my pacer quickly left with no offers to help. Instead of resting, I would have to go get the van towed. My wife arrived several minutes after I finished, and I firmly told her that I was retiring from ultra races. I felt low and unsatisfied by the whole grueling experience. I was done. Over the next couple days at home I packed away all my running things, and told all my friends that I had retired from ultrarunning. I regretted that I had recently subscribed to Ultrarunning Magazine for a year — more wasted money.

However, Phil pulled me out of the funk. A few days later, I went into a meeting at work and there he was. He made a special trip to my workplace to present to me my Bear plaque and buckle. He made a big deal about it and fully embarrassed me in front of my co-workers. On his way out, he smiled at me, and said "Gotcha." I came back out of retirement. On the next Saturday I was on top of Mount Timpanogos for the 9th time. During that October, I made eight trips to the summit, several with Phil who kept me going and assured me that I was a good ultrarunner.



Phil presenting me my awards

Night Running



As of 2016, I estimate that I have run about 18,000 miles during the night or early morning before the sun had risen. Once I started to learn how to run, I quickly discovered the unique experience of running safely during the night on trails.

My first experience was in 2002 on Mount Timpanogos. [My first trip](#) up, that started about an hour before the sun rose. It seemed like a strange experience going up in the dark but there were so many other hikers doing the same thing so I didn't feel uncomfortable. I did miss a switchback and made a usual rookie mistake of trying to climb a steep slope near a Scout Falls, but I got myself back on track, feeling quite foolish. [Two weeks later](#) I was more daring and went up again, an hour earlier and went much faster. I began to enjoy the challenge of chasing hiker lights ahead of me and it became a favorite game to push hard up the mountain racing after those ahead.

A few weeks later, I advanced to running up the highest peak in Utah, [Kings Peak](#), in the dark. I had been up on the mountain a couple times before so felt confident. I started the trip at 3:30 a.m. and for the first time felt both excitement and an eerie feeling running alone in the dark on remote trails. I was still such a rookie, running in cotton, not being warm enough, and not understanding the early signs for hypothermia. But when I watched the sun rise in the High Uinta Wilderness, I was hooked on early morning running.

In October, 2002, I experienced my first truly long run, 42 miles in spectacular [Paria Canyon](#). I ran with my brother-in-law Ed and experienced the joy running in a remote, wonderful desert canyon. We stopped for the night, but didn't sleep well, so continued our journey before the sun rose. But progress was very frustrating with just a poor, cheap, headlamp. For all the river crossings, our lights could not detect how deep the water was. After going through the most technical part of the trip during the dark, we were worn out and agreed to stop and wait for the light.

Lighting

During 2003, my rookie frustrations with poor lighting continued. In September poor lighting caused me to abort my first attempt to run the [Uinta Highline trail solo](#). I ended up wandering around in Yellowstone basin with a cheap dim headlamp without replacement batteries. I didn't learn very well because on another night I again ended up with a dim light as I tried to run down Mount Timpanogos in the early morning. Tripping was frequent and my pace was frustrating slow. I'm amazed how long it took me to figure out that a cheap Walmart headlamp just wouldn't work for night trail running.

Finally in 2004, I discovered ultrarunning. That September, during the middle of a night I hiked up to the Wasatch 100 course to pace a friend for a few miles near Poleline Pass. I ran the course backward to meet him. As I did, I observed that many of the frontrunners used high-powered green handheld flashlights. They looked amazing coming toward me and I wondered where they got them, and why they used them instead of headlamps. That thought would stick with me for the coming months. I eventually bought one of those bright diver's lights with green LEDs, probably the best running investment I ever made.

My first 100-mile finish was at the [2005 Rocky Raccoon 100](#) in Texas. I used for the first time my handheld green light in a race. Right from the start I was amazed how much easier it was to run fast in the dark, even over the numerous roots on the course. The green light was easier on my eyes, didn't wash out the trail with bright white light, and produced better depth perception. Most important of all, the angle of

a handheld light is lower and produces shadows to be seen from rocks and roots. I successfully finished my first 100-miler and would use my green light for tens of thousands of miles in the future. The light was so very durable. I crashed with it and dropped it hundreds of times and never broke. The batteries would last for more than 24 hours. I quickly became used to running with it in my hand along with a handheld bottle.

A couple months later, I ran my first tough Zane Grey 50 in Arizona. For the predawn start, instead of bringing my light, I used a headlamp, and within the first five minutes, I tripped, fell, bruised my ribs, and had bad pain the rest of the day. I learned my lesson. In future races for the predawn starts without my handheld light, I always used a headlamp in my hand. That would allow me to see the rocks better and avoid the tripping.

One of my running pet peeves is running behind someone with one of those flashing red lights on the back of their head on the trails. That is fine on the roads with cars, but leave it home when your run trails to avoid blinding those behind you.

Night Adventure Runs – the early years

Back in 2004, I experienced night running at a new level. I traveled to southern Utah and with a friend and ran in [Buckskin Gulch](#) at night. Buckskin Gulch is twelve sinuous miles of relentlessly narrow slot canyon that at times is between 5 and 10 feet in width. Running it at night gives you the feeling of running in a cave. This was one of my most amazing night runs ever. Years later I would return and run 25 miles of neighboring Paria Canyon in the dark which presented a very challenging experience with its nearly 400 river crossings.



Wading in the Paria River



In May 2005, I ran my [first double crossing \(R2R2R\) of the Grand Canyon](#). I started my adventure in the dark at 1:30 a.m. Back then, there wasn't a lot of information published on this amazing run so it all was an astonishing discovery for me. I can still remember the remarkable feeling as I was dancing down the Bright Angel trail in the dark with my green flashlight. I descended quickly down the famous canyon for the first time, something I dreamed about since I was a little boy. The lights from the South Rim above rose higher and higher. I loved running by the campers quietly at Indian Garden. As I descended further, the roar of the rapids from the Colorado River met my ears and I later ran across that historic river in the dark on the Silver Bridge. It was very cool to run through Phantom Ranch for the first time as a few workers were stirring and preparing the camp for the morning. Running through The Box in the dark was exhilarating! I fell in love with the canyon at night. Dawn arrived and I experienced the unfolding beauty of the canyon for the first time in the morning sun.

I would have many more experiences running in the Grand Canyon at night. In November, 2006, I already was running my [9th double crossing](#). I came to run the entire night by the full moon and started at 7:30 p.m. from the north rim. The canyon looked amazing in the bright moonlight. The tops of the cliffs reflected brightly and the lower portions displayed an amazing combination of shadows and light. The moonlight cast some marvelous bright reflections on rocks and pools of water. I returned and finished at

10:00 a.m. As of 2016, I have spent seven entire nights running in the Grand Canyon, many of those down in the inner canyon on the Tonto Trail.

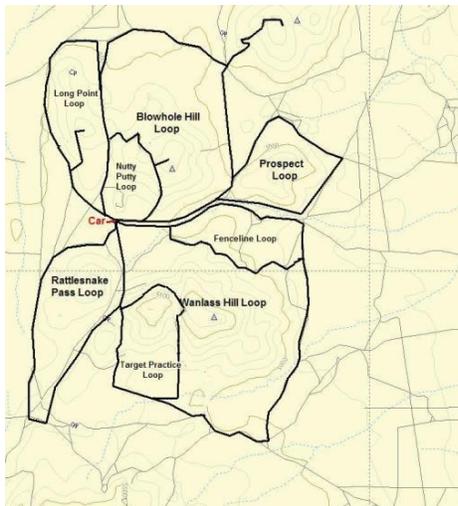
In 2007 I succeeded in running the [Uinta Highline Trail end-to-end](#) with Matt Watts. I entered this adventure knowing that navigating at night would be very difficult. Little did I know! This very remote trail is marked by large cairns at times across wide open meadows. At night it is pretty impossible to see the cairns which are widely spread apart. We had to rely on waypoints that I had stored in my GPS. This generally helped keep us on the trail, but for much of the night we were doing route-finding. As dawn approached we were totally off the trail climbing over hundreds of deadfall, trying to make our way down into a canyon. This by far was my most difficult time navigating at night. I would return in 2010 to run the [Highline Trail again](#), this time solo. Even though I had been on the trail a couple times before, the navigation at night was again difficult and frustrating. But something about the challenge of it all was invigorating.



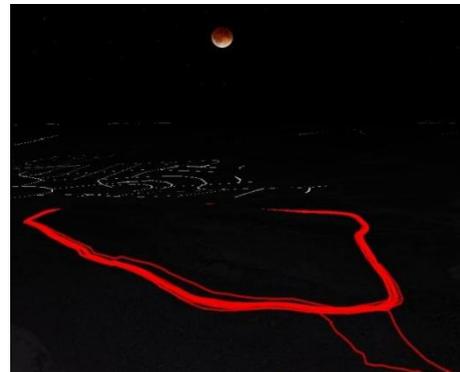
Training runs at night

Generally, I only run at night on a trail that I've run on before during the day. As my confidence increased, I started to do most of my training in the wee hours of the morning. On many mornings my green light could be seen in the foothills above my home. In 2006, I started to do repeats of Mount Timpanogos and ran all through the night on the mountain several times.

I started to learn how to feel the trail with my feet. I recall one night in [2006 running on the overgrown Desolation Trail](#) which forced me to run without seeing my feet. It turned out to be great training and I learned the importance of trusting your feet and being able to react quickly with good balance. During July 2006, I ran three dusk to dawn runs.



Some mornings I would get up very early and run one-mile loops near my home to get in a marathon before work. One such run was very memorable when I ran loops while watching a lunar eclipse. I've done other runs watching meteor showers.



In 2007, I decided to create my own 50-mile run during the night by running various loops about 20 miles south of my home in [the area around Nutty Putty Cave](#). I had great fun planning for this run. I mapped out and named the various loops that I would run, each time returning to my car using it as an aid station. As I was running in the dark, a guy drove up, probably heading to the cave, and called out of his car window, "Dude, why are you running in the middle of nowhere?"

With each year, my training miles increased. By 2008, I began doing routine 10-15 mile runs multiple times per week before work in the hills to west in what is now called Hidden Hollow. I ran regular loops on the ridges and at time extended my run out to Eagle Mountain, seven miles to the west. I would at times leave the house at 3:00 a.m. or earlier and listen to sport radio each morning for a few hours. I would return home as the sun was rising.

Running at night does come with risks. One early morning in the dark on these trails in December 2008, I jumped down off a rock and rolled my ankle pretty badly. I seemed to recover but a few months later during a 50-mile race the ankle really flared up and later in the week I could hardly walk. For about five years or more I suffered from periodic pain from the peroneal tendon which always reminded me of that early morning injury in the dark.

When I start a very remote run at about 2:00 a.m., even after many years of experience, I still feel a lonely uneasy feeling as I start out into the dark night. But within a mile, I feel at home, enjoy the peace and quiet, and look forward to running many miles before sunrise.

100-milers at night

With all of the night training, I started to have more success in running 100-milers, especially during the night. During the races I would look forward to dusk and the cooler night temperatures. I began to recognize that I had good skill running at night and looked forward to passing runners going slowly in the dark. At [2007 Leadville 100](#), where I finished in 26:15, I remember a guy saying to me as I passed him and his pacer quickly, “Oh sure, we could run that fast if we had a green light too!”



Start of Bear 100

Out in the west desert in Utah is an amazing place to run, especially with others because you can see their lights for miles. At the [2009 Pony Express Trail 100](#), after recovering from a hot afternoon, the cooler evening air revived me. I found myself in second place with Ed “the Jester” Ettinghausen several miles ahead. I then participated in my most fun chase ever during a 100-mile race. With the long straight open landscape, it was very easy to spot your competition ahead or behind because of your light and the lights of the crew cars. I plotted with my crew chief how we could sneak up and catch Ed. I ran for the next ten miles without a light. Usually the crew car pulls ahead about three miles and waits for the runner which is a clue if a runner is catching up. I had my crew hang behind me so it looked like I was still way back. With 18 miles to go, I reached the top of a pass and could see that Ed was only a quarter mile ahead. I ran quickly down the road without my light on and as I reached him, turned the bright light on, surprising him. “Is that you Davy?” he asked. I laughed, “yes.” He pointed ahead, “The win is now all yours.” I continued on for the win in 20:53, 37 minutes ahead of Ed. We still laugh about that night.

At [2011 Cascade Crest 100](#), I really learned how to push the pace at night. I was struggling with drowsiness on a dirt road climb about mile 55 near midnight. Eventually I had to lie down by the side of the road a couple times to rest my eyes and watched runners pass me. I eventually stumbled back on my feet, at first weaving around, but then found my balance and could run again. I turned on my music and a perfect song with a beat came on. I forced myself to run hard uphill with that beat, singing along, and it quickly woke me up. I only stopped to walk when the song was over, and then played it again. I did this for a full hour, passing runner after runner. I would use this night trick over and over again in future 100-milers.



Drowsiness at night during 100s is always a constant battle. For me, lying down for a quick cat nap just 3-5 minutes can put new life in me for at least an hour. The problem with doing this is that the other runners passing by wonder if I'm having trouble and make me respond while I'm trying to sleep. At [2007 Vermont 100](#), I heard two runners whisper, "Should we check his pulse?" I have learned that the best thing to do is go off the trail and hide while I cat nap.

Challenges at night

Running at night is not always easy and can bring challenges and dangers. I recall while running The Bear 100, I heard that some lost runners had to wait out the night up on a ridge until the morning because they were hopelessly lost. I've never been that seriously lost, but at [2007 Plain 100](#), a self-supported race without a marked course, I became lost in a campground doing circles. It was so frustrating, but I finally backtracked enough to figure things out. Unfortunately I had laid down so many footprints on those wrong trails that later on my buddy Tom Jackson came through, saw the footprints and became hopelessly lost until he missed the cutoff.



Summit mailbox register on North Timpanogos

In 2013 I [submitted the three highest peaks in the Wasatch Mountains in one day](#). I ran the entire ridge on top of Mount Timpanogos for the first time, and did it during the night. To add to the challenge, I ran up there in the fog. It was so thick that I was constantly worried about running off a cliff and had to be very careful. Once I reached North Timpanogos, my sense of direction was totally shot. I couldn't figure out which way I needed to return from the peak but eventually figured it out. On South Timpanogos it was even worse. I descended down the wrong way in the fog and needed to climb back up to the top of the peak again to get my bearings. I feared I would be up there for hours, but eventually listened carefully for car traffic far down in the valley below and figured out the right way to go.

The morning before in the dark, I was on my way up Mount Nebo in, the highest peak in the Wasatch Mountain. It had been years since I had been on the trail and I arrived to the hairiest part in the dark with steep cliffs on either side of the ridge. Using a usually safe method, I followed indicators where boot traffic had gone before, but I ended up on a very precarious talus slope, in a rather dangerous situation. I inched my way up and got out of trouble, but it taught me that you can't always trust the trail of those who have gone before. I've learned that it is better to trust the trail of a deer, than the faint trail of a man. Many times when I'm trying to find a safe way around a mountain I'll tell myself, "trust the deer."

Becoming too cold at night can be a great danger while running at night. I realize that if I keep moving, I'll be fine, but worry that if I can't, I'm would be in danger of hypothermia. My most challenging times have been trying to do long runs in the winter at night. In 2012, I ran 82 miles, [all the way around Utah Lake](#). My run started at 2 a.m. in the bitter cold and began with a long 30-mile road run before reaching the next town. I recall almost turning back several times, suffering too much in the cold. I

remember telling myself, “OK, just one more mile. If I don’t feel better, I’ll turn back.” I did feel better, continued on and finished that run. I’ve had several other similar runs like that.

If you combine the night, with the cold, and with rain, that can really be hard. At Grand Mesa 100, it was just too much rain and my clothing was not adequate. I had to quit at about midnight and it would rain steady for the next nine hours. Rain usually falls on the [Salt Flats 100](#) and it did so terribly in 2014. I suffered for a long ten-mile stretch during the cold night and discovered my jacket was not waterproof. I had my best race there going, but the cold, wet night halted me. When I reached an aid station at 2:30 a.m. with only ten miles to go, I plead with the people there to let me sit in a warm truck to recover. I sat there for an hour, shivering and drying out enough to continue on and to the finish.

Pacers during a 100-miler can be great company at night during a 100-miler. However, I rarely use them. As of 2016, I’ve only had pacers with me in about seven of my 79 finishes. For me, I enjoy the peace during the night and the challenge of running through the night alone.

Having a light at night is pretty much required. At [Coldwater Rumble 100 in 2015](#), I forgot to take a headlamp with me when I left an aid station during the late afternoon. I eventually was left out in the dark, stumbling around, trying to make it to the next aid station where I begged for a light. They didn’t have one for me to use so I resorted to following a slow runner for the next miles until I reached my light. This does happen a lot in races, but should not happen to someone experienced.

Wild Animals

I’m always asked if I fear running into wild animals while I run at night. The answer is no, I rarely think about them at all. I see more animals during the day than at night. I have had a few brushes with them at night that skipped a heartbeat. While running on Mount Timpanogos, it is common to come upon a porcupine at night. More than once I’ve had to come to a screeching halt, almost running right into one of those prickly beasts. The just waddle away. Running into moose at night on Timpanogos also occurs. In those cases, I’m very cautious and wait for it to leave the trail.



Early in my running experience at night on the mountain behind my house, I kept getting spooked by glowing eyes on the trail. As I would come closer it would take off flying and at first I thought they were bats. But they were birds. They would take flight, got up the trail another hundred feet, land, reflect their eyes back at me, and then fly again. This freaked me out for a while but now is a common thing to see.

While running in the Grand Canyon at night, I ran through a marshy section above The Box (this section now has boardwalks), and rounded a corner. I ran right into a large beaver who wasn’t very happy about me being there. It certainly startled me. I thought it was very cool to meet a Grand Canyon beaver up close and personal.



The Grand Canyon beaver

Moths are about the worst thing to run through at night. One year they were terrible in the Wasatch Mountains and they would flock to your lights, get in your face, and crawl on you. The solution is to avoid a headlamp. By using my handheld light they would mostly avoid my head.

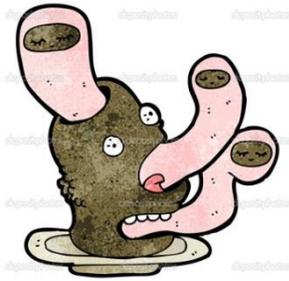
Skunks are what I truly fear at night. In 2004, trying to convince myself that I could finish a 100-miler, I attempted a long run going from [Spanish Fork Canyon to Provo Canyon and beyond](#). I stopped during the night to sleep for a couple hours. At 1:30 a.m. I woke

from a noise near my campfire. I yelled, “Hey”, go up and saw a large skunk sniffing around my stuff. I did my best to coax it away and it finally crawled off into the brush. I packed up and started to leave. That crazy skunk started to come after me. I ran away scared and quickly came upon another. I frequently run into them on the Jordan River Parkway paved trail near Lehi. Because of that, I now just avoid running that trail at night.

My freakiest encounter with animals at night occurred in 2013, when I ran the Kat’cina Mosa 100K course solo and self-supported at night. Dusk arrived near Little Valley and ahead of me about 30 yards came a big black bear running across the road. I cautiously continued, but constantly kept looking behind me as I pushed the pace hard to get out of that area. In about another mile, I heard moaning noises. It turned out to be a massive sheep herd. The herd covered about a half mile and they weren’t happy to see my green light. Soon dogs barked. “Great!” I thought, “now they are going to chase me.” The barking stopped but soon I felt nudging behind me. The bear! I jumped out of my skin! No, it wasn’t the bear, it was the dogs trying to herd me. They persisted and kept nudging my pocket. It finally dawned on me! I had bacon in my pocket. I learned a new lesson, beware when running with bacon in your pocket at night.



Hallucinations



With sleep deprivation, hallucinations can afflict me while running late at night. This affected me the worst down in the Grand Canyon after being awake for about 48 hours during my quad crossing. As dusk approached, the rock formations started turning into houses, water tanks, and even people. I was convinced that they are there and puzzled that I had never noticed them before. It finally got so bad that I forced myself not to look up, but to just stare at my feet on the trail because it is so disturbing. Many times my mind detaches itself from my body. On the Uinta Highline Trail, I had thoughts like, “We need to make him eat something” go through my mind. My mind started having a dialogue about the best things to do for the body that is trying to keep moving. It’s like I’m two beings, a mind suggesting actions, and a body that it takes care of. When it happens, it freaks me out and I finally wake up enough to yell out loud, “stop it!” Another time in the Grand Canyon in a sleepy fog at night, my mind was telling me that the steep trail without switchbacks that I was going up, was constructed by a friend purposely to torment me.

Run at Night

As I gained experience and tossed away my fears, I discovered that running at night increased my senses and awareness around me. The night sounds of insects, wind, trees, and creeks became music to my ears. Away from civilization the complete silence at night with brilliant stars above seems to be a totally different world to me.

Navigation at night for me has never been a major issue. Being familiar with the location of the stars and planets certainly helps to keep me on course. Pre-run planning helps me know the locations of mountains and canyons. For many of my early years, I only ran at night on familiar trails, but with more experience I have ventured into discovering new trails, even at night. However, I’m careful to plan on avoiding difficult unknown trails before sunrise.

Why don't I usually run with friends at night? I like the peace alone, I like to run at my own pace, and I don't like to worry about other runners with me. In 2010, one morning I took two friends on a creative 50-mile run in the wide-open Cedar Valley, near Eagle Mountain and I lost one of my friends. He was finally found, but we teased him terribly and I wrote the following story to mock him.

Yesterday morning I went on a long early-morning run with two friends in a remote valley near a couple small towns. The valley is wide-open, very flat with no trees, 11 miles long, 7 miles wide. We parked in the middle of the valley and then ran some loops in order to do some big mileage. One of the loops stopped off at a historic state park with a nice heated bathroom. As we returned, one of my friends got lost and never paid attention where we had parked our cars. It was still dark when he made his way to one of the small towns. Below is what is believed to be the actual conversation he had when flagging down a car for help.

"Excuse me sir, could I get a ride?" "Sure, where do you need to go?" "I need to go to my car." "Where is it?" "I can't remember where I parked it." "Huh, there isn't a parking lot here." "Well, I parked it somewhere in this valley." "Huh, when?" "Oh about 3:30 a.m. I can't remember where I parked it." "Oh, Ok, have you been drinking?" "No, really, I can't remember, it is somewhere within 3-4 miles of here." "Why did you leave your car, was it out of gas?" "No, I was running with two guys and I didn't know where we were going." "Two guys? Where are they?" "I don't know, but one of them had a green light." "Oh, I understand now, was his skin green too? I'll make a call to someone that can really help you. You need a long rest."

"OK, let me get this straight, you were following a guy with a green light." "Uh, huh, and his name was Davy Crockett." "Oh....ya, right, and you didn't know where you were going?" "Well, the other guy had the laminated map and directions." "Laminated?" "That's right." "Were they green to?" "I'm not sure, maybe." "Do you remember at all where you went?" "Well, there was this heated bathroom." "Out in the middle of the valley?" "I think so." "How far away was the heated can?" "About six miles from the car." "So you ran out to a heated toilet in the middle of the night and then got lost?" "Well, I was following the guy with the green light but he disappeared?" "Disappeared?" "Yes." "Into a flying saucer by chance?"

"OK, I think I'm understanding now. Daniel Boone with a green light disappeared after you visited a heated toilet." "Uh, his name was Davy." "Ya, whatever, Davy, Daniel. You left your car to run six miles in the dark to a heated toilet. Where were you going next?" "Back to the car." "Huh? Why didn't you just drive to the heated toilet." "Actually it was a heated bathroom." "Whatever, couldn't you have just 'beamed' over to the heated toilet seat?" "Uh, sir, are you going to help me find my car or not?" "Sure, just give me the laminated map."

"OK, I'll help you find your car, but I still can't understand why you were wandering around in the middle of nowhere during the night." "Well, my friend wanted to run 50 miles." "The guy with the green light who disappeared into the saucer?" "No, the guy with the laminated map." "Why would anyone want to run 50 miles in the dark, were you trying to stop him?" "No, just trying to keep up." "50 miles? That is crazy, no one can do that." "The other guy runs 100 miles." "Huh, Daniel Boone with the green light?" "Uh, ya, that guy, he does it all the time." "Dude, you need help. You claim you were wandering around in the night, chasing green lights, heading to heated toilets, trying to run 100 miles, and then you get lost and can't remember where you parked your car in the first place? Man, if this doesn't beat all. And I thought I was just going to have a normal day driving into work."

Running at night can be great fun. Venture out in the night but do it safely. Before trying to run a 100-miler, you should have dozens of hours of experience running at night.

Running 1,000 miles in the Grand Canyon



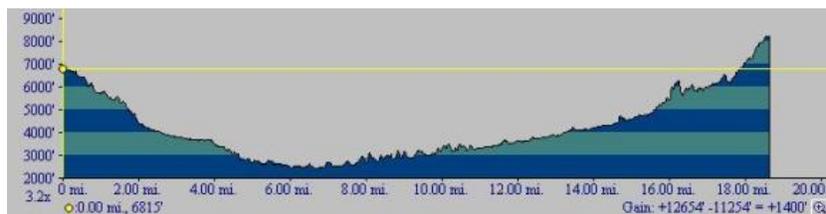
Note: *I write this section with some trepidation. The number of Rim-to-Rim-to-Rim (R2R2R) runs have exploded in the past few years and I observe on the Internet large groups being formed to run in the Grand Canyon. Ill-prepared and naïve R2R2R runners are experiencing serious problems in the canyon and I just hope anyone reading my adventures, and wish to do the same, will be very careful. Some runners have had to be airlifted and others finishing have been hospitalized afterwards. The main culprit is the heat.*

I offer these recommendations and reminders: 1. Don't organize large groups to run R2R2Rs. Stay small (four or less). 2. Don't include strangers in your group. Don't get into the tour-guide business. (Permits are now required in this case.) Be very familiar with those you bring and their abilities. 3. Stick to the safer months for R2R2Rs, April, October, and November. Remember that the inner canyon can be 20-30 degrees warmer than temperatures at the rim. 4. Don't attempt an R2R2R if you are not in good running condition. At a minimum you should be in good marathon shape, able to finish a 4:00 marathon easily. You should also have very good hill training. If you do not meet these requirements, you may still make it fine, but it could take more than 17 hours of hiking. 6. Remember that the inner canyon is not Disneyland, it is for advanced long-distance runners/hikers.

Why do I run mostly solo? Isn't that dangerous? When I started running the Grand Canyon, there were far fewer ultrarunners and thus hard to find anyone willing and able to do such an adventure. In later years with good experience, familiarity of the trails, and understanding what times of years to run, the risks decreased for me. If I bring someone with me who hasn't run in the Grand Canyon before, the risks go up because I become responsible for that person who is unfamiliar with the trail and conditions. I would rather not put another person in any danger, especially since I really don't know their capabilities. So, I usually run alone.

My first R2R2R

When I was a boy, my family visited the Grand Canyon in the early 1970s. I was fascinated with it and begged my parents to let us hike down into the canyon. Wisely they didn't give in, but that desire stayed with me for years. In 2005 very few runners had run a R2R2R, but my friend Todd Holmes had. He encouraged me to do it, that it was a truly epic run. I was finally in shape to do it and made plans for an early May trip. Todd cautioned me that it was likely too late, too hot to do it, but a cold front came in and it rained pretty hard the evening before. My run would be solo and started at 1:30 a.m. from the South Rim on the Bright Angel trail. Since I had never been on the trail before, it was truly an adventure and I had to trust the directions that I brought with me.



Elevation profile rim to rim

As I started to descend steeply down the canyon, I felt a rush of excitement. I was having a blast! I was cruising down into the most famous canyon in the world, all alone in the dark. I was astonished how fast I lost elevation. I could see a few lights from the lodges on the rim high above me. No one else was on the trail.

I crossed the Colorado River on the Silver Bridge in the dark and it was awesome to hear the power of the river below. Running through Phantom Ranch for the first time was fascinating; a little village at the bottom of the canyon and everyone was asleep.

A sign worried me as I started running on the North Kaibab trail. It strongly discouraged hikers from going up the trail because of the significant runoff going on. That season the snow had been deeper than it had been for years. I knew that a couple weeks ago a small group went up and the Wall Creek crossing was thigh deep and very scary. I was nervous but continued on. I would turn back if it was dangerous. Dawn arrived and the canyon came alive.



Crossing Silver Bridge in the dark



Roaring Spring

At this writing I have been up or down the North Kaibab trail 30 times but this, my first time, was the most memorable because I was experiencing the beauty for the first time. I was relieved that Wall Creek was only calf-deep and I went through it fine. Roaring Spring was truly roaring. The heavy runoff caused water falls to be pouring out of the side of the mountain from everywhere. I would never again see it roar like that.

As I reached the top of the rim, there were snow banks about three feet deep and there I was in shorts. I didn't hang around long and started my return trip. The trip back was tough but I finished in the afternoon with a time of 14:43 feeling great. I had found my all-time favorite place to run, the Grand Canyon.



Deep snow at the North Rim

I wrote up my experience and published it on the Internet and as far as I could tell was perhaps the first R2R2R report to be published in that much detail. My report received a ton of traffic, and for years was the top article found with Google on the subject. I received some negative emails about it. I recall one guy from Flagstaff,

Arizona, pretty upset that I had written about it, perhaps because I “let out the secret.” [Read the details of this run.](#)

In the years to come, more and more runners would run R2R2Rs each year. By 2013, dozens can be found running down and up the corridor trails each weekend in the spring and fall. Unfortunately, many of these runners have a lack of respect for the canyon and others on the trails. Backpackers who have hiked the canyon for years have grown to despise ultrarunners and see it as a real problem that they wish would be banned. More trash is appearing on the trail. Because of the actions of a few careless runners, it wouldn't surprise me if the NPS bans this activity someday soon.

Other problems arise when runners ignore warnings to never run R2R2Rs from mid-May on into the summer. I've been asked a lot for advice. I ask, “When are you running?” “June.” My reply is always, “don't do it!” I'm ignored at times and the runners usually regret it. It is never a fun experience running a R2R2R in temperatures of more than 100 degrees. And these are usually runners who have no experience running in the desert west.

Many more R2R2Rs

The Grand Canyon kept calling me back. Later that fall I returned twice, running R2R2Rs this time starting at the North Rim. One trip was with my brother who was also starting to take up ultra-distance running. He had a rough time on the return trip, but he made it back up slowly. [Read details of this run.](#)



My brother Bob, making his way back up to the North Rim

A few weeks later I was back again for my third R2R2R and accomplished it in 13:45 and for the first time saw a couple other R2R2R runners. I would get a kick out the reaction of the hikers. As I ran back down, a guy asked me what was wrong, “Did you leave your wallet at the bottom?” I laughed. That is now my favorite response to people when they ask me why I am going back down. [Read details of this run.](#)

I was truly hooked on running the canyon. In 2006, I ran seven R2R2Rs including a [quad, R2R2R2R2R](#), to be just one of five runners to accomplish that feat up to that time. On that trip, I ran extra miles on the rim and on the Tonto trail to complete a 100-mile run, perhaps the first person to do that in less than two days. One of my R2R2Rs was “[by the light of the silvery moon.](#)” I ran all night to a full moon. That was an unforgettable experience to see the canyon in that amazing light. It was incredible to hear desert bighorn sheep crying out as they stood on the walls of sheer cliffs. Their eyes would reflect from my flashlight.

On one trip, I almost ran right into a beaver in the marsh area below Ribbon Falls. On another trip that year, as I was running down from the South Rim to start my run, I laughed when I ran into buddy Phil Lowry coming up finishing his R2R2R. Neither of us knew the other would be there.

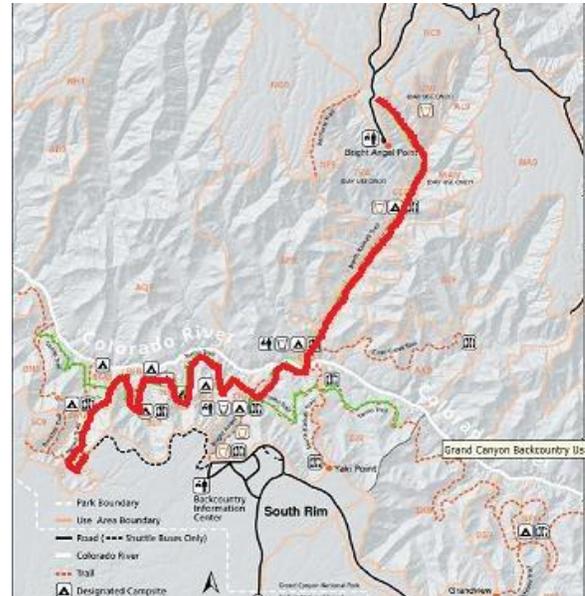


Grand Canyon beaver

[More R2R2Rs \(15 as of 2016\)](#)

Running ultra long R2R2Rs using the Tonto Trail

After nine R2R2Rs, I had gained enough experience in the canyon that I was ready to start exploring the backcountry trails, away from the mules and day hikers. I decided to do a first, an R2R2R from the North Rim to Hermits Rest and back. A double crossing from North Kaibab to Hermits Rest and back is about 77 miles. About 39 of those miles are on “unmaintained” backcountry trails outside the heavily traveled corridor trails. The Tonto Trail and Hermit Trail are much more remote and rough. The risks are higher for a solo adventure like this. I understood the dangers well. But with Thanksgiving weekend, I ran into several backpackers on the Tonto Trail so I was not alone. This R2R2R required filtering water in creeks and springs, and I had to carry all of my food.



red rock is gorgeous as the sun starts to cast light this way. Looking down is an amazing sight! The gorge, the cliffs with water stains, the contrast of green and red. This is amazing!”

I experienced my first dawn away from the busy trails and it was spectacular. I commented into my audio recorder, “I’m nearing Horn Creek. Boy, running on this Tonto Trail is just like heaven! It is so good to get away from the corridor trails with their mule stuff. This trail is soft and technical. There is a lot of brush on the side, but because I have my long pants on, it isn’t a problem. It gives you a desolate feeling. There is nothing here. The Tonto Trail weaves in and out of drainages and rolls up and down. The

As Granite Rapids came into view, I pulled out my camera to set up for a picture. To my delight, a desert bighorn sheep appeared on the trail ahead. It didn't fear me at all and started to approach me. It circled around me and came into position with the river in the background. I snapped the amazing picture above. Wow! I thanked the sheep for the great photo and it pranced away on the ridge.



In the afternoon I saw plenty of backpackers as I approached the Hermit trail. I received very curious looks so I would stop and explain what I was doing. The Hermit Trail was an interesting experience. I can't say that I really enjoyed it. It was a lot of work. The trail was very rugged and unmaintained. There was plenty of boulder hopping and route-

finding, looking for the next cairn. Some sections were nice, but there wasn't much running happening. I eventually made it to the top, Hermit's Rest and I rested for a while in the little lodge there.

Darkness fell by the time I reached the Tonto Trail again. The return trip was great fun but I did lose the trail for some time near Salt Creek that took a while to figure out. On this trip I did do 10 extra miles doing out and backs on other trails, but I finally returned back to the North Rim after an 34-hour adventure. It was cool to be the first person to accomplish this type of crossing. [Read details of this run.](#)



Plateau Point at night

Other very long distance R2R2Rs would follow on Thanksgiving weekends of the following years. Next up was a double crossing from the north rim to Grandview Point and back. After reaching the Tonto Trail, I headed upriver to the east, toward the Grandview Trail.

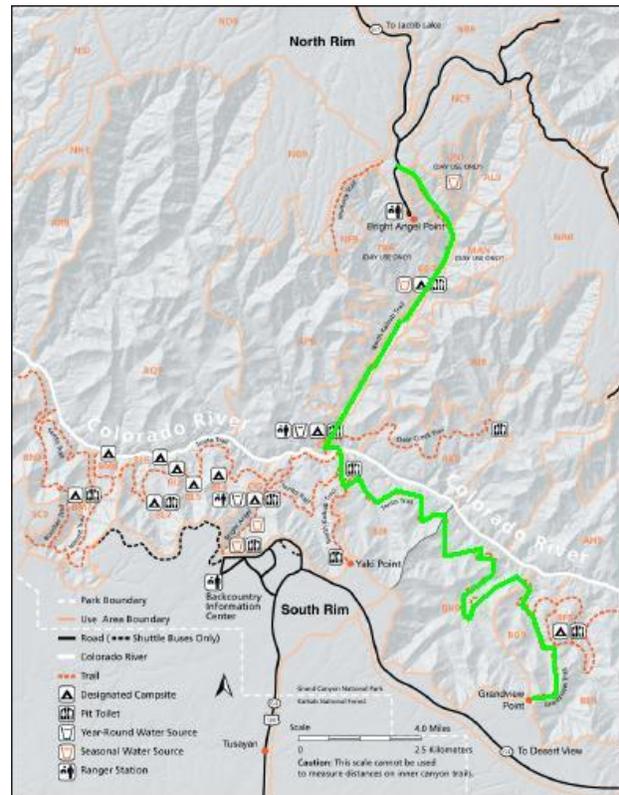
My Path to Ultrarunning – Davy Crockett

For this adventure, I came well prepared and even brought a satellite phone for any emergencies. The run was incredible and I enjoyed exploring new portions of the canyon that I had not yet seen. As I ran through Cremation Canyon I thought of the marathon runner, Margaret Bradley who died there several years earlier when she was running 27 miles from Grandview Point on the Tonto and then up South Kaibab trail. She ran in July and only brought two water bottles. At Cremation Canyon, probably in dehydration distress, instead of doing the uphill to reach South Kaibab trail where she could have obtained help, she tried to make it down to the river for water and died. Her body was found two days later.

I was running in the cool of November and springs were flowing. I came upon a backpacker near Lonetree Canyon. She said I was the first person she had seen in two days. I reached Grandview Point at dusk and ran the return trip through the night, arriving back at Phantom Ranch, at dawn. The climb back up to the North



Rim was long and slow as usual, but my 83 mile adventure was complete in 34 hours. [Read details of this run.](#)



A couple years later I returned and repeated this trip, this time taking the time to take pictures and record audio so I could make a [video record](#) of the adventure. It again took me about 34 hours. My bad knee swelled up a little and gave me trouble on the return trip.

On another Thanksgiving weekend, I tried to repeat the R2R2R to Hermits Rest, but this time head up the rugged Boucher Trail. Friends at home tracked my progress from my SPOT tracker and sent me text messages on my rented satellite phone. But once I reached Boucher Creek, I was way behind schedule and decided to head back rather than up to the rim.

Before turning around I ate my dinner with a backpacker. He could not understand where I had come from and kept asking if I took a shuttle and if not, how did I get across the river? After resting and eating, I bid



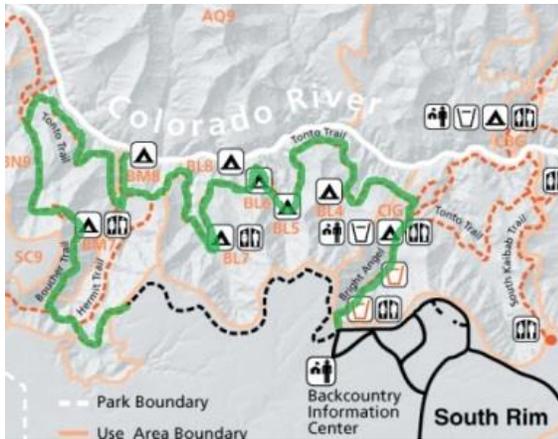
Running down into Boucher Creek

goodbye and then went to talk with his buddies. They invited me to camp with them, but I explained that I was going on. They were stunned as I explained that I had come about 40 miles since the early morning and was now turning around to head back. I waved goodbye and they all watched me climb quickly out of Boucher Canyon.

The run through the night by the moon was amazing. At 1:00 a.m., I recorded a very, very tired, funny message. [Listen to the audio recording.](#) While running back up to the North Rim, I stopped near Cottonwood Creek to call into the KSL outdoors show, a radio station in Salt Lake City, and had a fun interview. Continuing on, I slowly reached the top. That turned out to be a 78-mile adventure that took about 33 hours. [Read details of this run.](#)



Moon over the Grand Canyon



For Thanksgiving weekend 2010, as I neared the North Rim, the temperature at the national park entrance was -20 F. I turned around at that point, feeling it was too dangerous to finish a long R2R2R in dangerous temperatures, so I drove around to the South Rim where it was warmer and instead ran down Bright Angel, took the Tonto trail all the way to the Boucher Trail and ascended to Hermits Rest. I loved climbing the Boucher Trail. I reached Hermits Rest at dusk and took the last shuttle back to Grand Canyon village. This

all-day 39-mile adventure took me 12 hours. [Details of this run.](#)

Running the Tonto Trail end to end

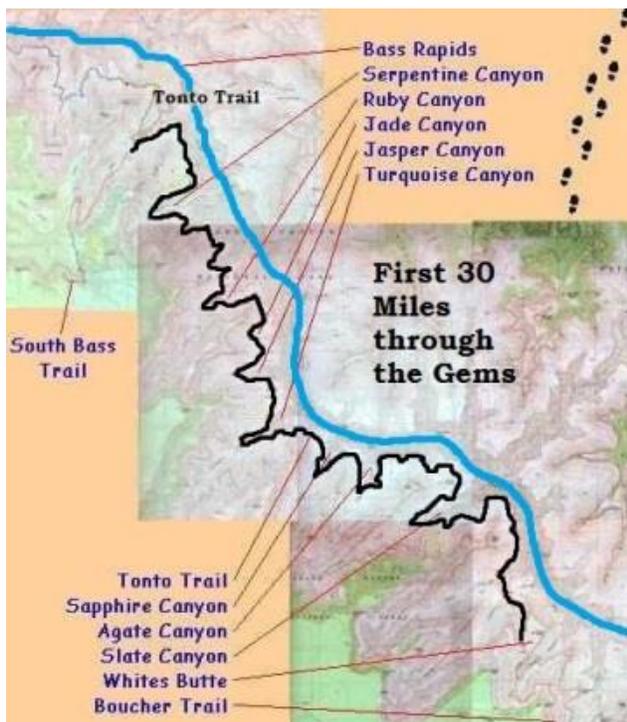
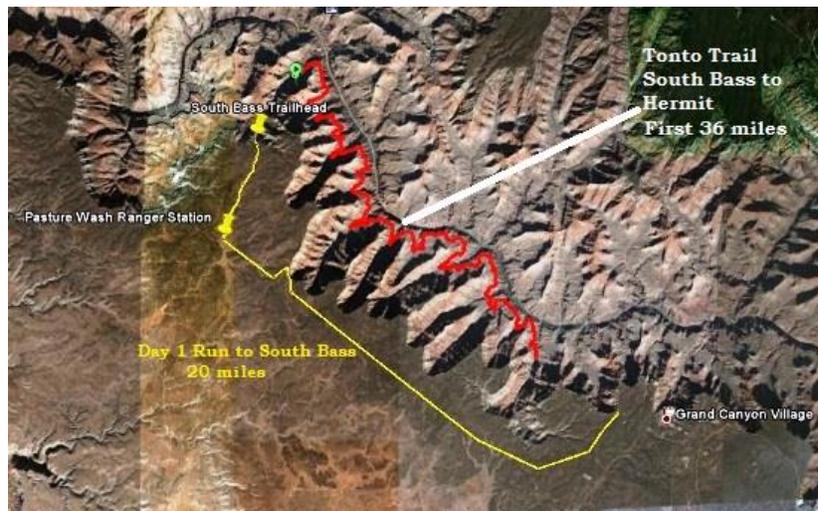
My greatest Grand Canyon adventure as of 2016 was my attempt to run most of the Tonto Trail end-to-end. I had dreamed of running the length of Grand Canyon National Park. The Tonto Trail goes from Garnet Canyon on the West, to Red Canyon (Hance Rapids) on the East. Trails continue on either side but on each end they become remote “routes” instead of established trails. To avoid doing any out-and-backs, I decided to start my run where the South Bass Trail (coming down from the rim) intersects with the Tonto Trail. I would then head east (up-river). I thought that no one had ever attempted this run, but just one year earlier, elite runners, Scott Jurek and Joe Grant accomplished it.

What dangers are there running the Tonto Trail?

- Falling off cliffs. There are only a few short sections that exposed near huge cliffs. They don’t last very long. There is less exposure on the Tonto than on the corridor trails used by R2R2R runners. So falling off some cliff at night really isn’t much of a worry.
- Getting Lost. Getting lost for hours really isn’t possible because the trail stays on the Tonto Platform above the river. But, you certainly can lose the trail for many minutes which can be very frustrating. Skill needs to be developed how to find the trail by making circles or other such techniques.

- Getting injured. This is really the biggest thing I worry about. If I busted an ankle on the trail, it would be many hours or maybe a day or two before help would arrive.
- Running out of water. You don't want to do this on the exposed Tonto Trail. You need to know where the water sources are. Once heat stroke starts setting in, hikers on the trail do stupid things like trying to go down canyons to reach the Colorado River for water. They end up getting stuck on a cliff and die.
- Exhaustion. This is the other realistic danger. 100-mile race fitness can teach you what to do. Along the way there are bail-out points to climb out of the canyon. Knowing when to bail out is the key. For my run I would be passing by five exit point opportunities to climb out of the canyon.
- Snakes. I have yet to run into a snake in the Grand Canyon.

The right time of year to accomplish this run is in April. The temperatures are cool and most of the seasonal springs are running that may not be running during the cool Fall months. I ran on April 15, after a big snow storm a week earlier. To get to South Bass Trail requires a long shuttle of vehicles. Since I was alone, I ran 20 miles on the rim the first day and camped for the night in South Bass Canyon near the Tonto Trail (with a back country permit).



The next morning before dawn, I started my run on the Tonto Trail. I had never run this first 30-mile section before through the “Gems.” Its contour was the same as other sections of the Tonto but there was one huge difference. The trail was much, much fainter. It just doesn't receive much boot traffic. I had to pay careful attention in order to not lose the trail and as usual my pace was slow on the weaving trail.

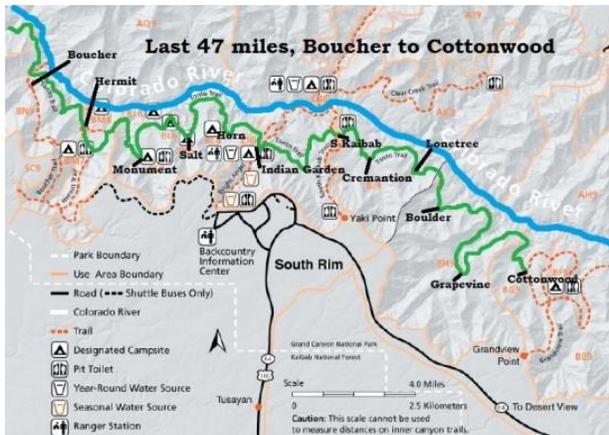
Another thing that really slowed me down is the beauty of the canyon. One would be stupid to keep their head down looking at the trail. This is probably a once-in-a-lifetime experience, so I made sure I took in the sights along the way. This meant that I had to stop to take pictures, take some detours to peer down to the river. I only ran into two people during this first long stretch of trail.

I reached Boucher Canyon in the afternoon at 3:50 p.m. Now I was on familiar trail and it was much easier to follow. I also ran into many more backpackers, some who were stunned to learn I had started that morning at South Bass. Dusk arrived at Monument Creek. I had traveled 40 miles during the day. I hoped to at least go 30 more miles during the night.



Near Boucher Canyon

The night was cooler and peaceful with nearly a full moon lighting up the canyon. Morning came as I approached Grapevine Canyon. I had run only about 65 difficult miles during the first 24 hours. As the morning lit up the canyon, I took stock,



realizing I was way behind schedule and low on food. I decided to cut my run about 10-15 miles short and head up the Grandview Trail. At Grapevine I ran into backpackers breaking camp and they were very kind and friendly to me. They were very knowledgeable about the canyon, knew where I had started, and were very impressed. After a long lonely night, it was nice to talk to friendly people.



Morning between Boulder and Grapevine Canyon

The final climb out of the canyon was long and hard, but I made it. My total run, including the run on the rim was 110 miles. I hitched-hiked back to Grand Canyon Village, tired but very satisfied about my accomplishment. [Read the details of this run.](#)

In 2015, I ran a new 100-miler held on the North Rim of the Grand Canyon. It is common to feel some disappointment at the views on the North Rim as compared to the South Rim. But the Grand Canyon 100 took us to spectacular viewpoints outside the park, that tourists miss and opened my eyes to a section of the canyon I had never seen before. I struggled with altitude and had to stop and rest during the night but still finished in 28:38



List of Grand Canyon runs

Date	Adventure	miles
May 5, 2005	South Rim R2R2R solo (cold front)	48
Oct 21, 2005	North Rim R2R2R with brother Bob	48
Nov 2, 2005	North Rim R2R2R solo	48
Apr 21, 2006	South Rim R2R2R solo	48
May 12, 2006	South Rim R2R2R (too hot) solo	48
May 29, 2006	North Rim R2R2R (cold front) solo	48
Oct 12-13, 2006	R2R2R2R2R plus extra miles solo	100
Nov 3-4, 2006	Moonlight R2R2R solo	48
Nov 24-25, 2006	R2R2R – North Rim to Hermits Rest solo	87
Oct 12-13, 2006	R2R2R – North Rim to Grandview solo	83
Nov 23-24, 2007	North Rim to Boucher Creek and back solo	78
Nov 21, 2009	North Rim R2R2R with three others	48
Nov 26, 2009	R2R2R – North Rim to Hermits Rest solo	83
Nov 26, 2010	Bright Angel to Boucher to Hermits Rest solo	39
Apr 15-17, 2010	Rim run, South Bass to Grandview solo	110
Nov 29, 2013	North Rim R2R2R in inversion solo	46
May 16, 2015	Grand Canyon 100	100
Nov 20, 2015	North Rim to South Kaibab R2R2	46
Total		1156

Lessons Learned from DNFs



The DNF “Did Not Finish” is usually experienced by every ultrarunner. During my first 14 months of ultrarunning, I experienced three DNFs out of my first five 100-mile attempts. For me, my best lessons learned have come after experiencing a DNF. As of early 2016 I’ve now experienced ten 100-miler DNFs out of the 89 100-milers that I have started. Some races credit you a finish of 100K if you don’t reach 100-miles, I guess to make you feel better, like a participation award. I still consider those as DNFs. Two of my DNFs gave me 100k buckles.

I recall one year when I was directing my Pony Express Trail 50 and 100 races that a runner was very upset that I would not credit him with a 50-mile finish even though he was in the 100-mile race and quit at 50-miles. This runner said he had never had a DNF and didn’t want to stain his record. I wouldn’t list him in the 50-mile results because those were the rules. I am sure to this day, he doesn’t consider that a DNF, which to him is a failure.

I believe runners should embrace DNFs. Instead of considering them as failures, they should analyze the experience and find helpful lessons to be learned from them. My DNFs have taught me important lessons both about myself and about my running. They have given me the resolve to firmly make improvements for successive races. They encourage me to train harder and to find increased mental toughness.

My first few DNFs were simply due to a lack of experience. I encountered problems that I had never experienced before, didn’t know how to solve them, and eventually came up short. In a previous chapter I covered my first 100-miler attempt, the 2004 Bear 100, which I DNFed at mile 87. There were several causes: Fluid retention during the night (lack of sodium), bonking (lack of carbohydrates), and slow pace (lack of carbohydrates.) Clearly my biggest lesson to be learned was that of proper fueling.



My next DNF was at the 2005 Vermont 100. I DNFed around mile 80, even though I was still ahead of the cutoff time. My first mistake was that I ran it before fully recovering from a recent internal surgery. The stress on my system became fully evident after the race. But the big impact was heat and humidity. This was the first hot race that I had run in. I still did not take in enough sodium and the heat really took its toll on my body. I bonked again, like I did at The Bear 100 and lost all my motivation. I flagged down a car heading to the finish. Recovery was very tough and I made a stupid mistake trying to fly all the way home from the east coast without a day to recover. I’ve never had a rougher recovery. On the flight home I really started to bonk and crash. It was painful. I eventually pulled out of it but I learned a lot about my problems with heat and going through proper recovery.

I bit off more than I could chew, attempting the 2005 Leadville 100. I had a great experience leading up to the race, boarding with elite runners including Joe Kulak and Todd Holmes. I soaked up all their conversations, just glad to be rubbing shoulders with them. But just a half mile into the race, the altitude slammed me hard, forcing me to slow down significantly. Clearly I had not prepared enough for a high altitude race. I later experienced congestion, coughing, and swelling in my throat. My race really fell apart

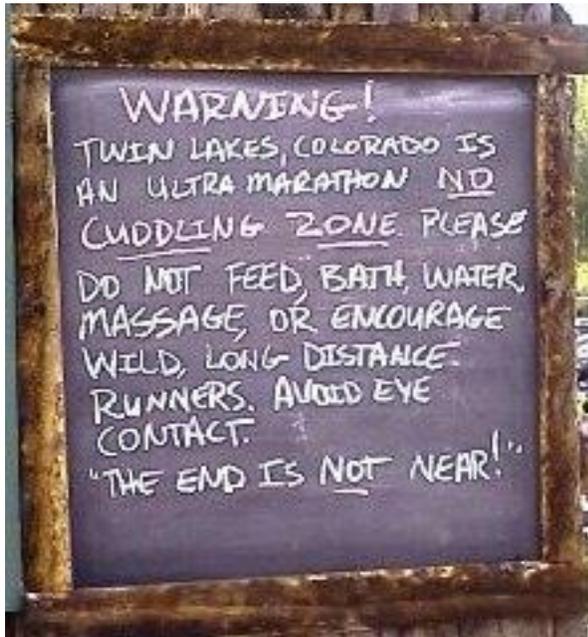
once I noticed bad swelling in my hands and I couldn't get my ring off a swollen finger. I worried, slowed down, and concluded that something was wrong and that I needed to stop. I convinced myself that it would be dangerous going up and over Hope Pass again. Once I reached the halfway point at Winfield, the volunteers helped me get the ring off and I realized how great I still felt, so I continued on. But my slow paced had doomed me. I was now the last runner to successfully leave Winfield by the cutoff time. I ran up fast over Hope Pass, but by the time I returned back to Twin Lakes, I had missed the time cutoff by a few minutes and wasn't allowed to go on.

I learned about altitude and the effects on my body. I also learned that I shouldn't worry about silly things that can be solved. Finally I learned that you shouldn't mentally quit and slow down – you may regret it if you change your mind.

[2006 H.U.R.T 100](#) in Hawaii wasn't much of a DNF. I took my wife out there for a vacation and I didn't want to have the race ruin our vacation, so I quit when it felt right. By about mile 70 I again bonked hard and when I reached the next aid station my bad knee was experiencing swelling. Quitting was the right thing in that case and I enjoyed the rest of our vacation. I had again entered a race that I wasn't really ready for yet and would have missed cutoffs anyway. That DNF did not bother me.



Beat up at H.U.R.T 100



But the DNF that bugged me the most was, [2008 Leadville 100](#). I entered the race with 17 consecutive 100-mile finishes without a DNF. A year earlier, I had a great race at the [2007 Leadville 100](#) and finished in 60th place. I was confident that I could get that sub-25-hour buckle. My race was good and on the return to Twin Lakes at about mile 60 I was on schedule and 20 minutes faster than the previous year. But then the cold rain started. I experienced several problems and once I reached Fish Hatchery, mile 76.5, I quit.

My biggest mistake was that I had my heart set on the sub-25-hour buckle and once it slipped away, I lost my motivation. I was hours ahead of cutoffs, with only 23.5 miles left and I quit. Over the years I've watched many elite runners quit races because they were having bad days. "I'll save it for another day," they say. To me this is mental weakness and I had succumbed to such thoughts. If I didn't want to finish, I shouldn't have entered the race in the first place. I had lots of excuses. I was cold. My hip hurt. I wasn't having fun anymore. I didn't have a pacer to help me face the snowy pass ahead. I quit. By the next day I was really kicking myself. I vowed that I would never quit a 100-mile race again for such lame excuses. I would only quit if I was truly injured or if the cutoff time forced me to quit.

I learned my lesson and became much more mentally strong. From that point on, I finished 32 consecutive 100-miles without a DNF. I used my Leadville 100 DNF as a rallying thought. When things would get rough and I would start thinking about quitting, I would remember how I felt the day after that DNF. I've always been thankful for that DNF because it taught me so much about myself. Lessons learned that day could be applied to many other areas of my life.

During this period of success, one of my roughest races was the [2009 Bighorn 100](#). I had poor fitting shoes that really tore my feet apart. Adding to that problem, my stomach shut down during the night and I suffered pretty badly. At one aid station a volunteer said, "I have seen at least a couple runners who have looked worse than you." I mentally quit the race twice. I slowed way down, ready to quit at the next aid station. But both times, I sat there, watched the other runners come and go, remembered the Leadville feeling, and reminded myself that I had a good streak going. Both times, I solved my problems and pushed on. My finish time was bad, one of my worst ever, but I was proud that I worked through terrible lows and didn't quit.

But I did finally quit at 2012 Javelina Jundred. It had been a very rough year. I had been sidelined for six months with a massive stress fracture in my tibia. But I came back and finished two other 100s that fall. At Javelina, the heat slammed me. I was well ahead of cutoffs but realized that I would not finish before dawn and just couldn't face the thought of running through another hot morning. I wasn't having any fun and felt sick, so I quit. With all I had faced that year, I felt content about that DNF and have never felt bad about it. There were no lessons learned other than, sometimes I deserve a break.

In 2013 I DNFed Grand Mesa 100. I had a good race going and then the rain came. It poured for nine solid hours. Only a handful of tough, prepared runners finished. I was not prepared and didn't have the clothes needed. I did beg a jacket from a crew, but that wasn't enough to combat the elements and after experiencing hypothermia, I knew it was time to quit around mile 75. It was the safe thing to do and I learned that I should have been much better prepared. I did return in 2014 and finished the race.

In 2015 I finished a personal record 11 100-mile races. But now at an older age, mentally it was becoming much tougher to avoid the DNF. At Antelope Canyon, at mile 90 cold rain was coming down, my drop bag was in a puddle with all the clothes soaked, and I quit. I felt great about my decision for 24 hours but then reality kicked in and I kicked myself. How could I quit with just ten miles to go and plenty of time to finish and plenty of energy? I wondered if I had lost my drive. That race woke me up again and in the next races when I considered quitting, I remembered the feeling. Still, I quit 2015 Wasatch at mile 75 with plenty of time to finish, but I was very ill from the heat, and would be ill for days to follow. It was smart to quit that race, a course that I've lost interest in running. As of early 2016, I have finished 13 out of the last 14, with eight straight finishes without a DNF. I again reached a point where I wasn't thinking about quitting during the tough points of a race.

Are there any good reasons to DNF? Yes. My list includes:

1. Injury. This needs to be a true injury that you shouldn't run through. Pain and discomfort isn't necessarily injury. You can tell the difference. I once ran an entire 100-miler with a stress fracture, and my tibia continued to fracture the entire time. I knew something was wrong but I was too stubborn to quit. I should have. It cost me six months of running. (But I did get that 500-mile jacket.)
2. Not making cutoff times. If you don't make the time, you don't have a choice. The race officials might still let you go on. Plead with them. But if they make you stop, you stop. Next time, don't go so slowly.

3. Dangerous conditions. If weather conditions are too dangerous for you, do the smart thing and quit. Normally race officials will stop a race that becomes dangerous, but perhaps you just haven't brought the right clothes to face the weather. Next time, be more prepared.

4. Serious illness such as kidney problems, serious dehydration, bad hypothermia. Don't be stupid. Don't endanger your health.

Are there bad reasons to DNF? Yes, many. My list includes:

1. Blisters. Fixing feet is easy. You need to learn how to fix feet and have the items you need to fix them. I don't usually get blisters, but in some races my feet have been a blistered mess, but I still finish.

2. I wasn't going to meet my desired goal or placing. "Not my day." "I'll save it for another day." If you aren't going to finish, you should not have started.

3. Tired. Resting and snoozing is for after getting to the finish line.

4. I broke my hand. This happened to me at about mile 30 at Bighorn 100 one year. No big deal, I don't run on my hands. I finished. Another time I broke a rib. It hurt big-time, but I finished the race.

5. Stomach problems. That is miserable, but it can be solved. Learn how to jump-start your stomach again. I've gone through entire nights with terrible stomach problems, but eventually solved the problem and finished.

6. Throwing up. Learn how to throw up without missing a stride. This is no reason to stop.

7. Too cold. Run faster, put on more clothes.

8. Sore muscles. Everyone gets sore. Unless it is a serious muscle pull, you may be surprised in a couple hours it works itself out. I've never quit because of a sore muscle.

9. Too sleepy. Take a short cat nap. Run faster. Listen to music. Find another runner to talk to.

10. Too hot. Be careful. Bring your body temperature down. Make sure you are alert again and continue on with some company.

11. Bad hair day. Excuses can be many when times get tough.

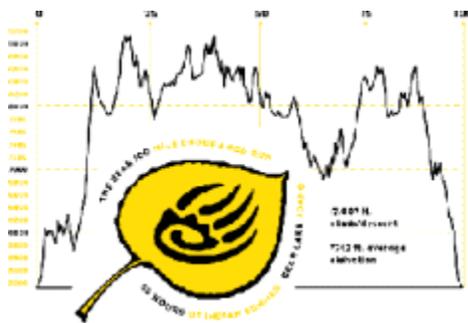
Streaking The Bear



“There are a bunch of dern fools running a 100-mile race in the mountains.” — *Overheard in a convenient store in Preston, Idaho, 2006.*

It is 1:30 a.m., at about mile 73 of the 2007 Bear 100, on the 5th climb of the famed Bear “roller coaster,” in the mountains above Preston, Idaho. I’m lying down on the side of the trail, breathing hard, out of gas. My first-time pacer brother, Bob, is leaning over me, “Should I get help?” “No”, is my quick reply. “This is just a bad bonk, part of this crazy sport.” Earlier, Bob was talking about the possibility of trying a 100-miler of his own. Now, looking down at my agony, he’s having lots of second thoughts about that crazy idea. Bob drapes a jacket over me and wonders if I’m going to croak. After five minutes, I feel a little better, and struggle back to my feet. I eat and drink and do the only thing I know how to do at that point – push forward. I throw up several times and I hear Bob exclaim, “Oh boy!” I grin to myself and push forward even harder, feeling a little better. In another mile Bob starts to complement my strong pace. I was back in the race.

The Bear 100 has a special place in my heart because it was the first 100-mile race that I attempted. The original course was run near Preston, Idaho (Gosh, yes, Napoleon Dynamite territory) in the mountains west of Bear Lake. It was the brain child of Leland Barker who wanted to introduce another 100-mile race to the mountain west because the Wasatch Front 100 was getting harder to get into. He first had the vision of an end-to-end course from Logan, Utah to Bear Lake, but because of difficulty with permits, he created a beautiful, challenging loop course.



This low-key race is held each year toward the end of September when the fall colors are usually stunning. I had another connection to the race location; Preston, Idaho was the town where my grandfather grew up. His family would go on family outings in the canyons where The Bear was run. For me, running the Bear was returning home.

1999 was the first running of The Bear. Phil Lowry helped as assistant race director and Errol “Rocket” Jones coordinated the aid stations. I ran the race for the first time in 2004. Those early years were more like adventure runs. Leland, the race director, would get a head start on the field by a couple hours and mark sections of the course as he ran. We became familiar with what we called, “Leland poop” which were small pieces of flagging that he would just throw down on the trail. Runners got lost frequently, but to me that was part of the intriguing challenge.

By 2003, The Bear 100 was part of the “Rocky Mountain Slam,” which consisted of finishing four 100-mile races in the same calendar year, Hardrock plus three of four other mountain races, Bighorn, Leadville, Wasatch, or The Bear. Leland would create incredible hand-carved trophies for the finishers of “the Slam.”



“Streaking the Bear” became an established feature of the race. To earn the coveted “Streaker” jacket you needed to finish The Bear in five consecutive years. To this day there have only been a handful of runners who have accomplished this. It seemed impossible to me to achieve, but after successfully finishing a couple times, I had my eye on that accomplishment.

[2004 Bear 100](#)

This was my first 100-mile attempt. I didn’t have enough experience and training. I also had an injured knee. I ended up DNFing at mile 87. The details are covered in [chapter 7](#). I left that experience believing it was impossible for me to every finish The Bear. But even with all my suffering that first year, I fell in love with the course, the fall colors, and even the challenging climbs. After recovering a few days, I knew I would return.

[2005 Bear 100](#)

I finished The Bear for the first time in 2005, but the race was full of stress and worry, leaving me unfulfilled. The details are covered in [chapter 8](#). I finished in 32:23 in 29th place.

Watch the long film, “Dancing the Bear,” produced about the 2004 and 2005 Bear 100. I appear in it at least three times.

[2006 Bear 100](#)

2006 turned out to be an epic year for The Bear. Early season snow blanketed the course, but to the credit of Phil Lowry, an alternate snow course was created to allow aid stations to be located at a lower elevation. Runners still climbed high in the snow at some points. This year’s race became affectionately known as “The Snow Bear” or “The Polar Bear.” I ran this race after finishing Wasatch 100 for the first time, just 12 days earlier. At the start, heavy snow was falling. Only 44 runners showed up to start that year. Many chose to stay home but missed an experience of a lifetime.



I soon understood how challenging this was going to be. Not only was the trail covered in snow, but the bushes and trees were heavy with snow too. Their branches were pushed down across the trail and we had to continually push aside the branches and get a face full of snow in the process. I watched one runner hit a heavy branch with his head causing a big load of snow to fall on his back. Looking for course flag markings was a challenge because we had to concentrate hard on our footing, following the snow tracks of the runners ahead. Many of the flags started to be buried in the snow.



Snowy trail in the morning



The sun finally appeared in the early afternoon and this caused the snow in the trees to start melting very fast, making an amazing roar in the forest sections. The trails became very wet and muddy, but I was having a blast.



Guardian Snow Angel

I had fallen back a few miles from Phil Lowry but evidence of that he passed that way was seen by a snow angel, complete with a fanny pack. The race progressed well for me but the night temperature fell to 12 degrees F. During the night, I would pass several runners taking snoozes in the snow by the side of the trail which seemed dangerous to me. At one aid station the grapes were frozen solid. My buddy Brad crewed me during the night and he recalled, “One runner was sitting there with a clear case of hypothermia. He was shivering and very cold. The volunteers set up one big propane heater and another electric heater behind him with the fire in front of him. They used rags dipped in hot water to warm and clean his feet. I was impressed with their level of concern and care.”

Morning arrived and I pushed the pace with Brad at my side as I ran the final miles. I reached the finish in 30:35, in 19th place, my most memorable Bear 100 finish.

[2007 Bear 100](#)

My goal in 2007 was to finally break 30 hours and get the Grizzly Bear buckle. I had now finished 12 previous 100s, believing that I finally had enough experience to run well. I recruited my brother Bob to

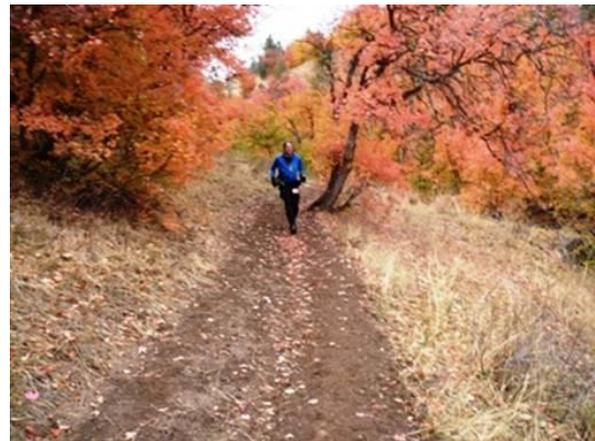
pace me for about 37 miles. He had recently also become interested in ultrarunning. This would be his first experience at a 100-miler.

I arrived at Paris Canyon, mile 53, in 26th place where I was greeted by Bob, eager to get running with me. I left that location running with my friend, Tom Jackson. Bob was full of energy and quickly disappeared up the trail. He obviously understood that he needed to scout the trail ahead for us. The sun went down and near the top we turned our lights on. Bob was having fun catching other runners and then waiting for us. Tom mentioned, “You have a racer pacer!” Bob witnessed both my high points and low points, truly giving him a true taste of how grueling running 100 miles can be.



Arriving at Paris Canyon. Bob ready to pace.

The last half of the race went surprisingly well for me. Near the final miles, I pushed my way through a masochist section that Leland invented referred to as “Leland’s Ledge” or “Devil’s Den.” Sections seemed more like a bushwhack than a trail, but it was a great challenge to try to move quickly through. With just a mile to go the skies opened up and it started to rain, giving me further motivation to finish strong. I came across the finish line in 28:13 in 23rd place out of 62 starters. I was thrilled. I had now finished The Bear three years in a row, and also earned the sub-30 Grizzly buckle.



Beautiful colors with one mile to go

2008 Bear 100



The Bear grew up. Leland Barker’s dream of a point-to-point course from Logan, Utah to Bear Lake in Idaho became a reality. A brand new course was introduced with only about five miles in common. I had now finished 19 100-milers and was starting to feel like a 100-mile veteran.

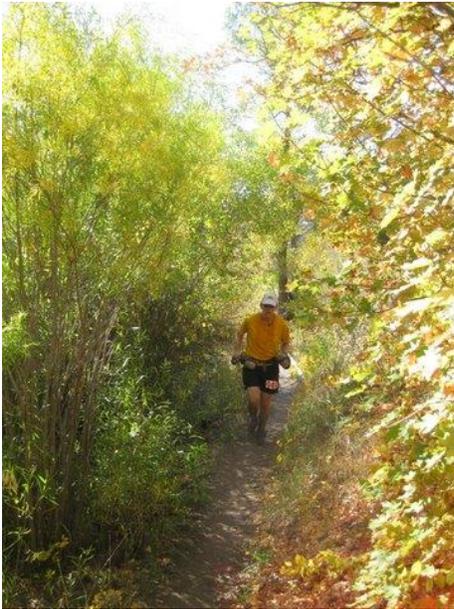
The new course was tougher, with longer, rougher climbs. But it also was much more crew friendly and no longer required long hours of driving on dirt roads. I ran this race after finishing the tough Plain 100 only 13 days earlier. This year,



76 starters

along with my trusty crew Brad and Geri, my crazy roommate from college, Steve joined in on the crewing fun. My brother Bob, also came back to pace me again.

The new course was spectacular. I especially enjoyed the single-track sections. When I hit one section I started to fly! I caught up with many who passed me earlier. Some would say, “Its Davy!” I even started letting out whoops of joy. It was very fun running fast in the forest.



On the longest, toughest climb of the afternoon up to Tony Grove (mile 52), Bob ran with me. I was feeling great and decided to really push the pace hard. At times I experimented to see if I could even push it into a higher gear as we were running hard up the steep trail. After rising up more than 3,000 feet, Bob finally said something like, “Holy Smokes, you have amazing leg muscles.” I grinned, knowing that I was working him very hard.



The night was full of highs and lows. I didn't dress warm enough and paid for it by getting very sleepy at times. I had terrible foot pain for the final 40 miles. The cause, which I didn't figure out until I finished were two sets of insoles in the shoes I changed into. I just couldn't understand why my toes were being crushed so badly. That year runners got lost for a while during the night on sections of the course that weren't marked well, but I managed to figure things out.



Feeling good at mile 62



Bear Lake comes into view

The final miles were rough. My feet were in terrible shape and the pain was killing me, but I pushed on ahead and finally Bear Lake came into view. Some volunteers had described the final descent as “a trail that needed a fireman's net to catch the runners.” Sure enough, the descent was incredibly steep. It was very tough on the feet but I was glad to get the descent over with as quickly as possible. We came out of the forest and were now exposed by hot sunlight for the rest of the course.

During my slow descent a couple fast moving runners passed me. They were doing great. I wished that I could keep up. I pushed hard for the final miles and finished in 30:51, my 4th Bear 100 finish. I couldn't help but think that if I had only finished that first time in 2004, I would be a Bear Streaker. That would have to wait for the following year.

2009 Bear 100



Finishing

I came back determined to run the new course fast this year and to earn that “Bear Streaker” award. I now was a true veteran ultrarunner with 26 100-mile finishes on my record. Two weeks earlier I had a good run at the Wasatch 100 and my recovery had gone well. I was ready to attack the course again. I pushed the pace hard early on but after about 12 miles took a very nasty fall that took the wind out of my sails. This was a great disappointment but I did my best to keep the pace up despite a painful leg.

The pain calmed down and by the time I reached mile 45 I was more than an hour ahead of my last year's pace, in 23rd place. At Tony Grove (mile 51.8) I picked up my pacer, a very experienced elite runner, Jon Allen, who was starting into ultrarunner. In the past I had some poor experiences using pacers other than my backpacking buddies.

For me, pacers distract me, more than help me. I worry about them. I slow down for them. But when I use my close buddies, they know me well, and know the mind tricks to play with me to get me to go faster. I didn't know Jon well, but he was a very experienced runner and could do anything I threw his way. When we topped over a ridge, I suggested that Jon take the lead and run fast. I would then draft behind him step, for step, and see how long we could keep that going. Jon wrote, “Davy decided to really push himself on the decent into White Pine. He had me run ahead and we absolutely blasted down the trail. We were cruising and blew by several people, including the first place woman. He had fallen earlier and banged his quad, and it really pained him on descents, but he did awesome at ignoring it.” Jon observed quickly that I would slow down on dirt roads but loved running fast on single-track trails, so he encouraged me. Our oft-repeated mantra was “Don't be lazy.” Jon's pacing shift was over after 25 miles and I hated to see him go. I learned a ton about the value of having an experienced runner as pacer.

The rest of the night was a struggle because of all my pains but I pushed in on. Before the huge final descent, a fast runner passed me like I was standing still. He would go on to break 28 hours. As I went along, I adjusted my finishing goal. I realized even breaking 28 hours would be too painful, so I decided that I would just try to beat my Wasatch 100 time from two weeks ago 28:33. I pushed hard and crossed the finish line in 28:21:15, in 24th place.



Another Bear finish



Receiving my jacket

At the awards ceremony, Larry Hall and I were awarded our jackets for “Streaking the Bear” – finishing five consecutive Bear 100s. When I thought about it, I was amazed, because when I DNFed my first Bear in 2004, I sat near the finish line in total dejection, telling my wife that this race was far beyond my abilities. I was convinced that I needed to give up the hope of ever finishing this race. But I faced the challenge and proved that I could indeed finish this race over and over again. I officially became a “Bear Streaker.”

2010 Bear 100

I didn’t stop at finishing five straight, I went on to finish six straight Bear 100s. Things came together much better that year and I crushed my personal best, [finishing in 26:30:45](#), in 27th place out of a big field of 170 runners.

2012 Bear 100

The streak ended. In 2011 after running The Bear 100 for seven straight years, I decided to go do something else and ran Virgil Crest 100 in New York, near the place I lived for nine years. But I again returned to run The Bear in 2012. It had been a year of recovery from a massive injury, so I took it easy and just had as much fun as I could. My brother Bob and son Kevin paced me. Stomach problems during the night really slowed me down but I pulled it together enough for a slow finish of 31:46:05 in 102nd place. But with all my challenges that year, I was just delighted to be back running again.

2014 Bear 100

I again returned to The Bear in 2014, but it didn’t go well. I had a very good race going, but by about mile 75 a terrible storm came in that lasted for hours. I wore the wrong shoes for the mud and after slipping and sliding for an hour decided it was wise to quit. Many tougher runners continued and finished, but I wasn’t willing to risk injury on a race that I’ve finished so many times before.

When people ask me what my favorite 100-mile race is, I usually include The Bear 100 in my top two or three. I love it for the fall colors, the cool temperatures, the challenging climbs, having many local friends in the race, and because it was my first 100 attempted. The memories always come back, both the good and bad. The Bear 100 is now an important part of my life.



Dabbling in Road Races



After just a year of true running, I discovered that many ultrarunners took winter months off. During the winter of 2005-06, I didn't want to lose the fitness that I had so far achieved, so I looked for ways to continue to get outdoors and started running in the lowlands. I discovered dirt roads that ran next to canals and I enjoyed increasing my foot speed on the flats. I started running up the mountain behind my home, Lake Mountain, which had a road that went to the top. It could be run even in the winter with snow on the road. I also ran some on the treadmill but hated it.

I had not run a road race in nearly 30 years. My path to ultrarunning did not come from road racing which is the normal path. I came through long distance hiking and never before had a desire to run any road races, marathons or otherwise.

That winter I saw a small 10K was being held at BYU and decided to give it a try. I did no special training and was just curious what I could do. I think the course was probably short of the 10K distance, but I ran the first 10K in my life in 45:17 and finished in 7th place, winning my age group. I was somewhat surprised because I beat so many young college kids. Could an ultrarunner also do well at these short distances that I used to consider very long distances?

A couple months later I participated in the Salt Lake Track Club's Winter Series races at historic Saltair on shore of the Great Salt Lake. The track club conducted races two weeks apart. Each race was progressively longer (5K, 10K, 15K) to help get runners in shape for the Salt Lake City marathon held later in the spring. I signed up.



I recall my curious reaction watching everyone before the start of my first 5K in 30 years. It was totally different than the start of an ultra. So many people were running around getting warmed up and doing lots of stretching. It seemed odd to me. I just watched, but it definitely was a different running culture. These races simply did an out and back on a frontage road next to the freeway on the lake shore, so it was totally flat. I finished the 5K in 21:53, in 59th place out of 273 runners (5th in age group), the 10K in 46:18 in 60th place out of 235 runners (6th in age group), and the 15K in 1:10:23, in 60th place out 203 runners (7th in age group). I think I performed well against many serious road runners, finishing very close to guys who had run their entire lives.

Something that seemed odd to me was that after finishing, the elite runners would run the course backwards while everyone else were still killing themselves trying to finish. It seemed like these guys were showing off, running a victory lap. (I now realize that they were doing a cool-down run. We don't do cool-down runs in ultras), but it was quite different from ultras, where the victors many times stay by the finish line to congratulate the other finishers.

Next, I tried a large 10K at BYU with 403 runners, mostly young students. On this hilly course I finished in 47:10 in 79th place, and was thrilled that I placed 2nd in my age group and received an award. Memories of my first 5K on these same roads 30 years ago came into my mind. On July 4th, again at BYU in the Freedom Run, I ran in another 10K with 740 runners. I finished in 46:04 and again finished in 2nd in my age group, receiving a trophy. What really surprised me was that without any special road training, I could run these short road races and compete well with others my age who spent all their time training to run marathons on roads.



It was time to try running a marathon. At the spur of a moment, I decided to run the 2006 Deseret News Marathon that my brother was running. At the start I really felt like a rookie. There were 548 runners gathered at the start, far more than the 50-100 I was used to seeing at the start of my ultras. I enjoyed riding the bus to start and listening to excited runners chat. I just followed everyone, having no idea what to expect. One thing I couldn't understand was why runners would want to stand around smoking barrels, breathing in smoke. But it seemed like the only way to stay warm (In the future I would just go run 3-5 miles in the hills until the start).

Off we went. I started pretty fast and then settled into a pace. On a long hill, my brother almost caught up to me, but then I disappeared over the top. It was a unique experience and I finished my first marathon in 3:44, in 108th place, 12th in my age group. To me, it was just an interesting experience to see what I could do without any road training, but it was not very exciting. I would much rather be running on the trails. I recovered very fast and five days later ran well in a very tough 50K.

It would be another year until my next road race, a return to the Freedom 10K where I broke my PR, finishing in 44:45, 83rd out of 904 runners. Despite getting older, I was still getting faster. In 2008, I won my age group at the Rex Lee 10K at BYU with another PR 44:12. I also tried another marathon on a whim, the inaugural, Utah Valley marathon. It had just been two weeks since I had won the 2007 Moab 100, but I wanted a fast training run. I cramped up at mile 22 and had to walk much of the final miles but still finished in a PR of 3:34. My interest was piqued. I started to wonder how well I could do if I really tried to train a little for roads.



On the Internet, I joined a site called fastrunningblog.com which included many local road runners. (My training blog is at <http://crockett.fastrunningblog.com>.) I started using that site to blog the details of my training and to keep track of my running miles. It was a nice way to motivate me to increase my monthly miles. For a couple years, I was the only ultrarunner on the site and so was an odd ball to the others who were curious about the type of running I did. I posted my race reports both on roads and trails and made many new friends, some who even started to try ultrarunning. On many weeks and months I had the top number of miles run among all those on the blog site.

But I also noticed a strange attitude among some of the elites. One guy, who hosted the site actually stated that ultrarunning was not true running and he tried to discourage others from doing it. He called it bushwhacking. He believed that only Olympic-style track running or marathon running was true running. I had some nice debates with him. But I did open the eyes of many other runners to the possibilities of getting off the roads and stop chasing what I call, "marathon minutes." I had learned long ago that if my

running motivation was to only decrease minutes for a distance, that I would eventually get burned out. I noticed that this was happening among these runners who would come away very discouraged from a race if they didn't meet their time goal. On the other hand, I continued to experience great joy running my ultras on the trails with whatever time I finished in.

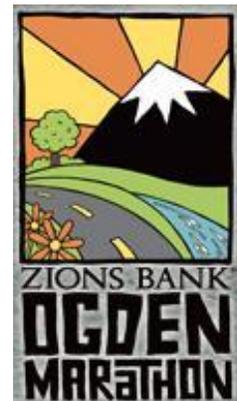
After I turned 50 in 2008, I was now in an older age group for these road races. Even though I was running far more 100-mile races that year, I also knew that I could probably place very well in my new age group in the short races. Sure enough, I would show up to 5Ks or 10Ks and usually come home with a blue ribbon. Once, I went up to Logan to run the 1st Dam 10K. I won my age group and afterwards a couple of local guys came up wondering who the guy was that took away the victory ribbon that they had counted on one of them winning. In fun, they accused me of coming up to Logan just to steal away the victory. All this was great for the ego, especially since I had just finished a 100-miler a couple weeks earlier.

The 5K at the 2009 Salt Lake Track Club Winter Series was the Road Runners of America Utah State Championships. I finished with a PR of 20:23, in 31st place out of 210 runners and was the Utah State Grand Masters 5K Champion. I still chuckle about that one and admire the plaque I received.



That year I also was the Grand Masters champion in the 100-mile National Championship at Tahoe Rim 100, finishing in 25:43, receiving a bunch of awards. So that year for the 50+ age group I was both the state champion for the 5K and the national champion for 100-miles. That crazy combination of awards was pleasing to me, considering that as a youth I couldn't win anything.

Feeling more confident on the roads, it was again time to try to run a marathon, and to take it a little more seriously. I entered the 2009 Ogden Marathon and prepared for it by doing some tempo run training. I discovered that this type of training transferred very well to improving my 100-mile foot speed. I finished well, in 3:24:49, a Boston qualifying time. My brother, Bob, also qualified for Boston and running it was on his bucket list, so we decided to go out and run it in 2010.



Running Boston was quite the experience, truly an urban adventure run. To salute my ultramarathon roots, I ran with my gaiters. I was in the first wave of 14,000 runners, toward the back and Bob was in the second wave of another 10,000 runners. The crowds were amazing. It wasn't my kind of race, but certainly the spectacle was something I enjoyed experiencing.



Walking to the start



When the race started, it took me about 10 minutes to make it over the start line. We first walked slowly but eventually I was able to find room to run. I soon discovered that if I ran far to the left, there was sort of a passing lane if I jumped off the road and ran on a shoulder of grass or dirt. I could really accelerate on the dirt. The only problem with running there, is that other

runners immediately started tossing clothes and other items. Some almost hit me in the face.

Looking ahead, was a sight to see! I had never seen anything like it, nor will I probably see it again. There was a massive sea of thousands of runners totally filling the road far ahead, moving and bouncing. I noticed another runner taking the dirt route and when I passed him, he asked me if I was an ultrarunner. He was Roger, with a full beard, from Colorado and had run Leadville, Wasatch, and others races I had run. I introduced myself and he was excited to meet me because he was a faithful reader of my blog.



My pace was good. Mile one pace was 6:53 (amazing considering the huge crowd), Mile 2 and 3 was about 6:51 each. I reached the 5K mark at 21:11 — A nice fast start. I looked around at the bibs and I was now running mostly with 8-9000 range bibs. I had started with the 10,000 range bibs. I didn't see any other bibs near my range. It was still very packed on the two-lane road. A girl running behind me clipped my heel and she fell down. I felt very bad, but she said she was Ok. I hoped her race wasn't ruined.



I was about the only one who carried a hand-held water bottle, but it helped me bypass several of the aid stations. Runners would slow down and I would try to stay in the center, but then would have to hop over tons of cups. It was almost like a river crossing at some of those stations, as Gatorade and water flowed from runners tossing full cups.

By the 10k mark, I was running in the 6-7000 range bibs. I had probably passed at least 3,000 runners already. I reached 10K at 43:12. Wow! That was only four seconds off my 10K PR. My strategy was to try to get up with the 6000 range bibs, hang with their pace and when I started slowing down, they could help me keep my pace up. By the 10-mile mark, I was pretty much keeping pace with the other runners around me. I saw the same runners over and over again.

Passing runners was still a major chore. At times it required zig-zagging and I knew I was adding additional distance, but I just couldn't get around them by going straight. It reminding me of the 400+ river crossings I made the previous weekend during a Paria River adventure. My pace had slowed to about 7:30. The village of Natick was fascinating to run through this its huge historic churches. The crowds were still cheering like crazy, more than 100,000 lining the entire course.

As I neared Wellesley College, I could hear a high-pitched roar. This was an all-girl's college. They were out in force and screaming like crazy. There were dozens of signs asking for kisses from the runners. I wondered how many would stop. The screams became so intense that I had to plug in my ear phones tighter to try to drain out the roar with my music.



Miles 20 and 21 were the “big” climbs including up Heartbreak hill. My miles slowed way down to about 8:53.

From there, I just tried to hang on. The noise was now deafening. Sometimes I enjoyed hearing the roar, but other times I kicked in the music and even sang out loud, trying to find a faster rhythm. I was now in the city of Boston. I knew the finish was getting closer and closer. Hang on! Hang on! I was passing runner after runner, some moving pretty slowly. But I really wasn't running very fast any more at about an 8:30 pace. After the final corner, the finish line came into view. I again looked at my watch and did my best version of a “sprint.” The crowd roared. I removed the ear phones to soak up the experience.



Finally the finish line arrived. I finished the Boston Marathon in 3:24:15. I had broken my PR by 34 seconds. I certainly didn't crush it, but I was pleased how I did it on a tougher course, dodging thousands along the way. I had finished in 5357th place so I must have passed nearly 5,000 very talented runners along the way. I also finished in 345th place in my age group (1,894 starters). I came in 39th place among all the runners from Utah (242 starters). My half marathon pace was at a speedy 7:11 pace, but my second half marathon was a slow 8:40 pace. I knew I could do better.

Bob finished in 3:57:51. Oddly, I was full of energy at the finish. I had never cramped up. As I tested my legs, they were hardly sore at all. I wasn't walking funny like most of the other runners. Running the Boston marathon was truly an experience of a lifetime, one that everyone should try to experience at least once. The hype, the history, the crowds, the noise, the competition, all makes it amazing. Will I run it again? Perhaps, but as of 2016 I haven't been back and lost interest in marathons. I left Boston with a smile on my face, energized by the experience, and ready to hit the trails again.



Bob and Davy Crockett – Boston finishers

A month later I ran the Ogden Marathon again and lowered my PR to 3:23:43, but I knew I could break 3:15 if I really was serious about training. Doing some research for my age group, it looked like I was in the top-20 in the state for those that ran a few marathons each year. I wondered how fast I could have run when I was much younger. A friend told me that a local marathoner who trained very hard and ran many marathons, who was quite a bit younger than me, was somewhat frustrated by my marathon accomplishments. I wouldn't train seriously for them, would just go and run them, yet would do quite a bit better than him. I couldn't explain it either.

In 2011 I tried to be more serious about marathon training, ran Ogden again, but really struggled in the heat, and finished in 3:29:29. It was painful and I didn't have fun. I was through with marathons and haven't run any since then (as of 2016).

However, I felt that the half-marathon distance was a good short distance for me. I could run that distance pretty fast without crashing. In 2010 I set the Utah Valley Half Marathon course record for my age group, in 1:30:14. It was pretty cool seeing my name printed in the next year's program. In 2011, I really wanted to break 1:30 on the course. While waiting for the start for an hour, I ran in the dark up on the trails in Provo Canyon away from the crowds. I then came down just in time to start and finished in 1:29:13. I was very pleased and got some great complements from runners around me who I helped motivate to finish fast. I finished 2nd in my age group, but was only beat by one of the fastest runners in the state in my age group.

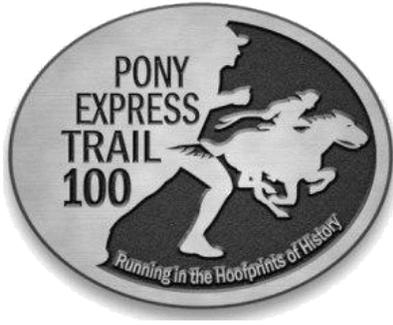
After that, I generally started to retire from my dabbling in road running. As I continued to try to run very fast, with increased age, I started to pull muscles more often. It just wasn't worth it. 2010-11 was my best year for PRs. I ran a 5K in 19:51, a 10K in 42:05, half marathon in 1:29:13, marathon in 3:23:43, 50K in 4:38, 50-miles in 8:07, 100K in 10:49, and 100-miles in 19:40. To cap it all off, I was the overall winner at Across the Years 48-hour, running 187 miles.



Various awards from road races

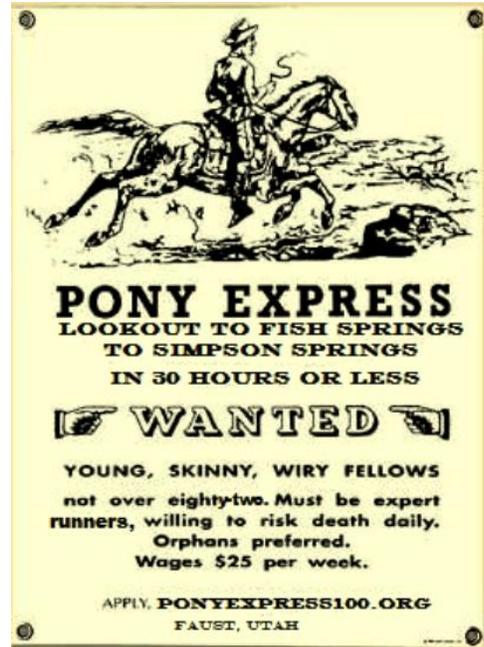
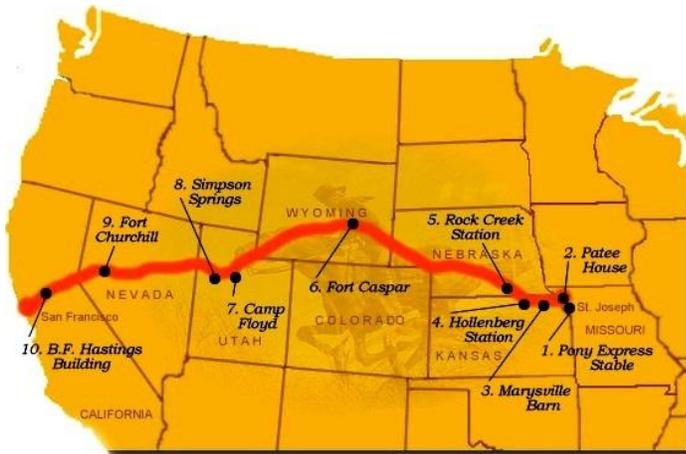
Clearly during those years, all the tempo training and all the shorter road races helped increase my foot speed and greatly improved my ultramarathon performance. I retired from road races in 2014 because of the impact the fast pace was having on a chronic leg problem.

Birth of the Pony Express Trail Runs



The historic Pony Express trail crosses about three miles from my home. I have a passion for US history and during the winter of 2004-05, I decided that it would be fun to try to run much of the historic trail in western Utah. I had never even driven it before, so running it would be a great new adventure and a good way to run some long distances during the winter months.

The Pony Express was about fast mail delivery. In our day we send mail around the world in microseconds using the energy it takes to click a key with our finger. In the 19th century the time and effort to take mail across the continent was extraordinary. An overland coach mail service between California and the States began soon after the California gold rush. But the service was inadequate, irregular, and erratic. Harsh weather conditions, long distances, and Indian problems made it difficult

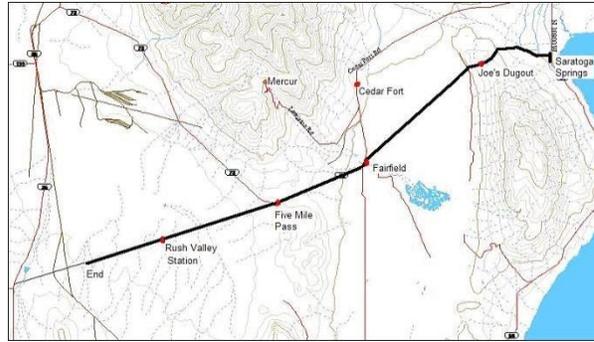


to provide regular mail service.

In 1860, the Pony Express company was established to greatly speed up cross-country mail delivery. Mail sent by coaches took at least one month. The Pony Express promised cross-country delivery in only ten days. The system was a relay race. Riders would change about every one hundred miles. The riders would change horses every ten to fifteen miles. Scrawny, athletic riders were hired, "young, good horsemen, accustomed to outdoor life, able to endure severe hardship and fatigue, and fearless."

My Path to Ultrarunning – Davy Crockett

My first run on the Pony Express Trail was on December 3, 2004. I left my house on a chilly day and just started running west toward the historic route. I didn't know what I would see or experience, I just ran. I first ran through housing developments and soon the developments disappeared.



I stopped to look around me. As far as my eye could see, there was nothing man-made to be seen except for the paved road. There was not a structure in sight to all the horizons. The remote feeling was both invigorating and a little fearful. Here I was out in the middle of nowhere, with frigid temperatures, left to my own skills and fitness to stay warm and out of danger, similar to the riders of the past. I ran past

three Pony Express station sites and after reaching the 50K mark, called home for a ride.

During the next couple weeks, I continued my run from the points I stopped at, getting help from family to shuttle my car to the finish of each segment. I wrote up my running adventures on the trail was even able to publish several articles in *Marathon and Beyond*. I wished I could run all the way to the Nevada border but it took too much time driving out to the points to shuttle a car. My friend Brad suggested that instead of shuttling cars, why not run an entire 100 miles on the trail with a car going along to crew me. That sounded like a great idea, but I wouldn't do anything with that idea for a couple years.



A marker put up in the 1950s marking that actual trail



The start of the first Buffalo Run

In the meantime, I became a student of directing races. Jim Skaggs had moved to Utah and was experienced putting on an ultra in Ohio. He invited me to participate on a race committee to establish a 25K and 50K on Antelope Island. This was totally new territory for me and I just did my best to try to find

ways to help, along with watching and learning. Most runners have no idea about all the organization and costs needed to put on an ultramarathon. I was able to see it first-hand. I realized it was a lot of hard work, a labor of love, but within my capabilities. We spent a full year planning, met with the park officials,

tested out the course several times, and eventually opened up registration. The Buffalo Run was first held on March 18, 2006 with about 150 runners. It was a great success and would continue to grow each year into the largest trail race in Utah.

Pony Express Trail 100 – 1st Running

The idea of running the Pony Express in a race format still stirred in my mind. Phil Lowry suggested that we do it as a winter run which would totally connect us with the harsh elements that the pony express riders faced. It was a crazy idea but I set a date for December 29, 2006 and I invited anyone to join us, running either 30, 56, or 100 miles. Eleven runners participated and we arranged for a three crew cars to drive along. We started our crazy run just a few miles from my home at the Pony Express Elementary School in Eagle Mountain, Utah.

It was an exciting morning to see the runners arriving. We soon were off and eventually formed into two groups, a faster and slower group. While running across Cedar Valley, Phil reported that it was 15 degrees. All went very well. At the 30-mile point at Faust, most of the runners finished. Only Phil, Brent Rutledge, Steve Kissell, and I continued. Phil would later drop out at Simpson Springs. I was alone in the lead followed about five miles back by Brent, Steve, and Milada Copeland who joined in to run 100K. During the night it became so cold that I had to wear ski goggles and my handheld bottle would turn into slush in just 20 minutes.



Yes, it was cold



My crazy crew, my kids in front of a station monument

That first year, we had to touch each Pony Express station monument along the way. This meant that we had to visit a monument a mile off the main road, the Dugway Station. After that point, I had marked the course along the actual historic route which required us to bushwhack through the desert. It was a tough thing to do in the middle of the night, in temperatures approaching single digits. Many years later, Steve and Brent still give me a hard time for making the course that difficult.

We all pressed on through the very long night and near dawn, I arrived at the 100-mile finish, at Fish Springs National Wildlife Refuge with a time of 25:29, my best 100-mile time up to that point. The couple who managed Fish Springs took me in, fed me, treated me very kindly, and even let me shower while we waited for the others to arrive. They finished in 26:50. As we drove 100 miles back

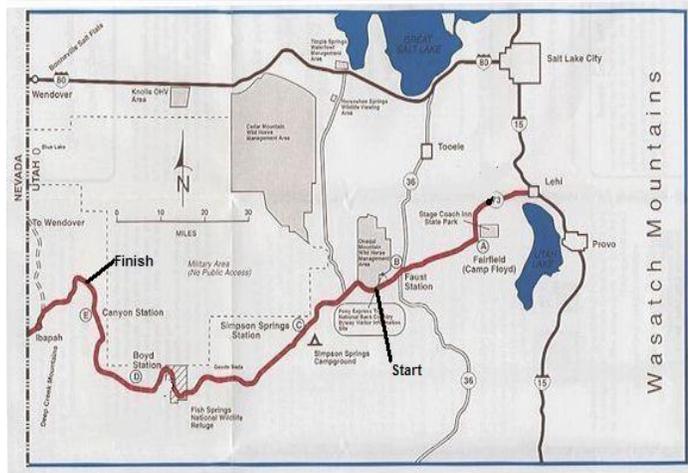


Finishers, Milada, Steve, Me, and Brent

to the start for the next three hours, it amazed me just how far we had run.

2nd Running

Brent Rutledge enjoyed the experience so much that he persuaded me to schedule another Pony Express 100 run just a couple months later on March 2, 2007. This time we pushed the course out 40 miles so we would not run on any pavement, starting at Lookout Pass. If we were successful, we would finish near the Nevada border. We also wanted to try starting in the afternoon, going through the cold night while we were fresher. Jarom Thurston joined us, attempting his fist 100-miler.



Jarom is done, I still had seven more miles

Brent ended up having some trouble and dropped at about 30 miles, but Jarom and I pushed on, even through wind chills of zero degrees. Dawn arrived as we ran through the tiny town of Callao, in the middle of nowhere. Jarom had some serious issues at about mile 93 and needed to drop. I continued on and reached the 100-mile mark on top of a mountains range at 23:26, the only one to finish. The roads were nice and soft, but the temperatures were still too cold for running a race out there during that time of year.

3rd Running

The third running was later that year on October 26, 2007. This time the course would start at a Pony Express viewing area near Faust and finished 100 miles out to the west. We started around noon. Leading up to this run, an anonymous troublemaker tried to do everything possible to stop our run. They contacted the BLM and Tooele County trying to stir up trouble. Their efforts backfired. The BLM, Fish and Game, and Tooele County were all very supportive and interested in our unique run that was getting people out to discover the west desert.



Starters

Seven of us started together with several crew cars. The weather was perfect, not too warm during the day and no brutal cold during the night. I had found a good time of year for the race. Runners dropped out along the way for various reasons and at the finish it was me and Brent again. I finished in 24:45, ten minutes after Brent.

The drive back was very tough. I discovered that the roads this time of year were very rough to drive on, not soft like in the spring. Despite slow driving for that 100-mile drive back, we got a flat tire. We changed to a spare, but about 50 miles later the spare went flat too and



Brent and Davy, the two finishers



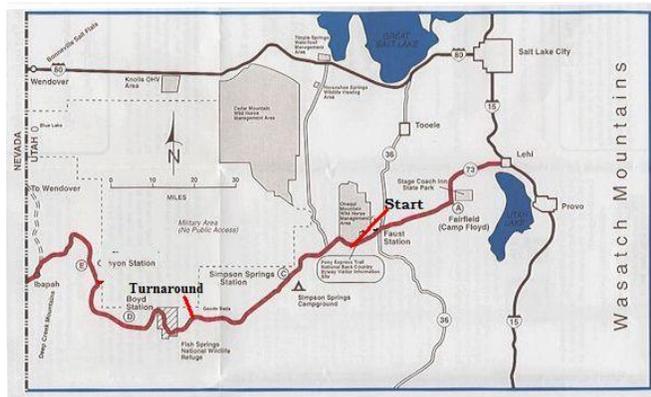
couldn't be pumped up. I stopped the van, exhausted, very discouraged and asked, "OK, what do we do now?" Silence. A truck eventually came by and they offered to help. I decided to send the guys into town with the tire and see if they could get it fixed, and then come back to get me. I waited for many hours, exhausted from running 100 miles and stuck in the desert. Paul, my crew guy, came back after dusk and rescued me. The lesson I learned that day was that doing an end-to-end 100-mile race on that road was just too hard on both the runner and the vehicle driving back. The temptation is to drive fast to get

home, but in most cases that would result in a flat tire. I decided that the next year would be an out-and-back.

Many race directors conduct a race without testing out the race course. I learned from Jim Skaggs the importance of testing out a course several times before getting serious about making it a formal race. Too many times first-year races turn into disasters. Runners get lost, race markings become vandalized, the distance is off, or various other problems are experienced. I was avoiding all these problems by first introducing this race as a free race. You get what you pay for.

4th Running

October 17, 2008 was the 4th running of the Pony Express Trail 100. This year we again started at Lookout Pass, would head 50 miles along the historic trail to the Blackrock Pony Express Station location and return. That year I made finisher awards and added some signs to make it feel more like a real race.



Seven of us started that year, two which planned on running 50 miles. Three of us finished the 100-miler. That year Matt Ward broke the course record in 23:02 and I finished in 24:26. I wasn't sure that I had yet found the right course because the final several miles were pretty tough, all uphill. Matt wrote, "That course was deceptively hard...I was WORKED. Those last twelve miles are just a long slow uphill grind that I thought would never end!"



Starters

5th Running

In 2009, the race grew up to consist of a bigger field, about 15 starters. That year I introduced two starting times, 6 a.m. and 8 a.m. to give slower runners a head start and a little more time. Also for the first time a 50-mile race.

With the early morning start, we encountered for the



Antelope herd

first time large herds of animals, both antelope and wild horses. Each year after that, they were generally all seen at the same place, between Government Creek (mile 9) and Simpson Springs (mile 16). They were an amazing site to see in the beauty of the morning light.



8:00 Starters



Wild Horses

There is a large fence that extends from the two of Dugway to Simpson Springs. We later learned that someone at Dugway puts out feed for the wild horses and very often they will travel to Simpson Springs along the fence line. Watching them gallop in the desert is a inspiring experience.

That year, Mike Place volunteered to put on a feast at the 50-mile mark where crews and runners could feast on great food and interact. This feast would get bigger and better in each year to follow.



Me on the way back



50-mile turn around sign

Phil Lowry set the course record for the 50 that year in 9:30 and I lowered the 100-mile record to 22:58. At mile 98 I even stopped for about 20 minutes to conduct a radio interview that was pretty funny. You can [listen to the interview here](#).

Phil Lowry had a great experience and loved the course. During the next week he called and we had a long conversation about the race. He tried to convince me to turn it into a formal race with paid registration. He predicted far more people would come if it was a formal race. I dreaded thinking of all the work needed, but within a few weeks I decided to go for it. I formed a race committee including my backpacking buddies who have been mentioned many times in the other chapters, Brad, David and Carl, and also Craig Lloyd, Phil Lowry, Matt and Anne Watts. They all wanted to help.

There was a lot of work to do. Establish a website, set up registration, design a logo and buckle, get awards, find sponsors, figure out permits, and do some marketing. The hard work had already been done for the past several years – figuring out a course that would work.

6th Running – First formal race year

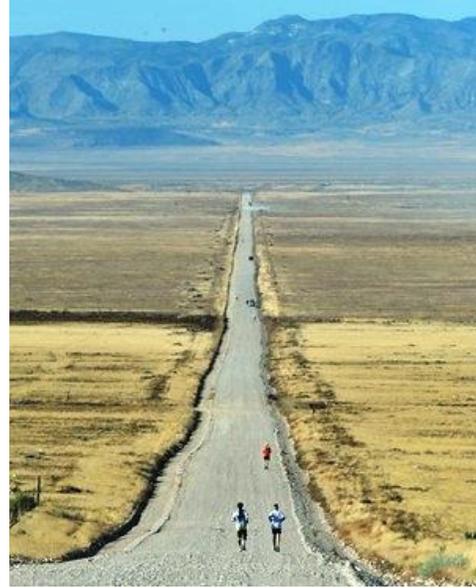
The 2010 race became real. I changed the course one more time to avoid the grueling uphill finish back to Lookout Pass. The 100-mile course would go out about 58 miles and then come back and finish at Simpson Springs. This would make the course much easier and with the extension of the turnaround point, allow the 100-mile runners to experience the Fish Springs National Wildlife Refuge.

Russ Smith of Skycall and KSL Outdoors radio show became a crucial contributor to the race. Starting in 2010, each year he would bring out his big rig to be an amazing finishing home for the 100-mile runners to recover at Simpson Springs.



Russ Smith's rig

That year the field doubled (as Phil predicted), nineteen 100-mile starters and nineteen 50-mile starters. I ran the 100-mile race again. An amazing feature of this course is a long 18-mile straight road section that can really mess with your mind both during the day and the night. During the day it seems that you are never getting closer to the Dugway mountains that you need to go over. In the night you can see the crew vehicles behind you but judging their distance is almost impossible. Sometimes you look back and see what looks like a headlamp chasing you but in reality it is the headlights of a car about ten miles back. A local settler in 1931 wrote about this stretch, “The long, straight road leading down from Simpson to Riverbed stands out on [a moon-lit] night with startling clearness. [The mountains] stand at attention in the weird light. The whole desert seems tense, as if waiting expectantly for something; and one finds himself scanning earnestly the far-off shadows that seem to form and move, and then dissolve again, down the broad white road toward Riverbed.”



That year, during the day, I was in first place among the 100-milers but the warm afternoon slowed me way down. Ed Ettinghausen (the Jester) passed me around mile 60 and by mile 68 it was dark and I was about three miles behind. I had recovered from my problems and had plenty of speed again. At a crewing stop, I strategized with my crew chief, Josh, how we could do a sneak attack on Ed and catch up without him noticing until it was too late. On this course you can usually see your competition coming and it motivates them to run harder. I didn't want to motivate Ed any more. I had been using a pattern of having my crew car go ahead of me three miles and then stop to wait for me to be crewed. This pattern was a clue to the runner in front how far the runner behind was.

Ed and his crew could see the headlights of my crew car but couldn't see my flashlight because I started to run by the stars. So, even though I was catching up, Ed wouldn't notice because I had my crew car keep decreasing the distance driven ahead. After being crewed, I would tell Josh to wait a certain time before driving ahead but never stop ahead of Ed's crew. It looked like I was still at least 3-4 miles behind. But as I neared Dugway Pass at mile 78.9, Josh reported that I was just a half mile behind Ed. I told him not to go over the pass until I caught up with Ed. At the top of the pass was a checkpoint and buddy Carl was there. He asked, “where is your light?” But then added, “I know what you are doing, sneaking up on him!”

I ran like crazy, descended over the pass in the dark and when I was within about 50 feet of Ed stopped at his crew car, I turned on my bright green light. I'll never forget the surprised look on Ed's face. “Davy!” He then pointed to the road ahead and said that 1st place was now all mine. He had been so sure that he had 1st place in the bag. From there, I would use my crew to tell me how far behind me Ed was. I would instruct Josh to wait until Ed passed by, and then drive up to me and report how far behind Ed was. It was a great strategy. I increased my lead up to three miles and finished in first with a new course record of 20:53:02.



Resting right after my victory

It was my 6th Pony Express Trail 100 finish and was the most fun for me. We had twelve 100-mile finishers and had our first female finisher, Adriane Frehner. Fourteen runners finished the 50-mile race, Damian Stoy lowering the course record to 7:37



Pretty bad winning your own race, but I loved the trophy

7th Running



Me, running with my son Kevin at mile 35

In 2011, the field continued to grow with 20 100-mile starters and 39 50-mile starters. I worked closely with the BLM for the first time that year and they supported our efforts out in the west desert. Jay Aldous crushed the course record and finished to 100 in 15:06:27, a record to stand for years. Seth Wold also lowered the 50-mile course record in 7:17. These guys proved that this was a very fast course.



Pablo Riboldi finishing the 50 at dusk with three of his kids

This was the last year I would run the 100 and also direct the race. With the much bigger field, I discovered how stressful it was to do both. I had to take care of race issues during my run and just couldn't do both well. I would greatly miss running past most of the field, greeting them along the way. I finished that year in 25:14:35.

8th Running

By 2012, camping out at the start became a fun feature for the race. Many runners and their crews would camp and enjoy getting to know each other at evening campfires. Now that I was taking in fees, I could afford buying items to make the look and feel like a true ultra.

We had a reporter come out from the Salt Lake Tribune and he published a [front page article](#) about the race that year. The race really grew that year with twenty-seven 100-mile starters and forty-nine 50-mile starters. Young 18-year-old Tyler Bodily lowered the course record for the 50 to 7:15:33.



With the race bigger, I established four starting times, assigning times based on predicted pace, with slower runners earlier, and faster later. Around mile 30 most of the runners converge into a large pack covering a few miles on the long straight road to Dugway Pass. Seeing all the crew cars and runners on the road is very

amusing to see. A few hunters or tourists drove by and just couldn't believe their eyes as to what is taking place in the desert.

9th Running

The 2013 race was run under a beautiful full moon. We had thirty 100-mile starters and thirty-six 50-mile starters. Every year so far when we have held the race in October, we have had perfect weather. It was so pleasing to me to watch so many friends run.

My brother Bob, finished his first 100-mile race in 24:26:56. Good friends won the race that year. Matt Van Horn, who I had paced at Wasatch won the 100 in 16:52:55. Kendall Wimmer won the 50 in 7:23:15 and



My brother Bob, running to his first 100-mile finish



Jen Richards also won the 50 in 7:46:58. There were so many impressive performances. I loved awarding the finisher medals and buckles at the finish lines and watch the emotion and all the hugs among the families and friends.

The feast at Blackrock was amazing. Pablo Riboldi, who has been mentioned many times in this history put on his famous Argentine Barbeque. It is an amazing sight out in the remote desert and it tastes so good. We feed all the crew and runners. It

costs a fortune to put on, but well worth it.

We also encouraged decorating crew cars this year and it was funny to watch all the crazy decorated cars out in the desert.

The successes among first-timers on this course is pretty amazing. Also the number of runners who establish personal records is impressive. There were many personal records in 2013. 100-milers, 18 finishers: 15 PRs (including 9 first-timers) 50-milers, 33 finishers: 28 PRs (including 20 first-timers).



Aaron Williams pirate crew car



choose to quit. But so many are now finishing. By 2015, there have been 116 100-mile finishes and 202 50-mile finishes.

But a little discouraging is the high DNF (Did not finish rate) among the 100-milers. Usually at least 40% of the runners do not finish which is a very high rate for 100-mile races. From what I can tell there are two main reasons. The first reason is mental. When things get rough, it is just too easy to quit because your crew car is so close, warm, and comfortable. The second main reason is the flat nature of the course. I've watched seasoned mountain 100-milers have a very difficult time with the course because they don't train enough on the flats. Runners will have muscles cramp up and then



When I went for my solo winter run for the first time on the Pony Express Trail back in 2004, I never dreamed how that little run would grow. In 2015, including runners and crews, I led about 250 people out into the remote desert and from what I could tell, most of them were smiling. Because of the crew format of this race, I've heard many stories how families have connected with their ultrarunners for the first time during a race. Usually they just sit and wait, but in this race, they watch and cheer the entire way.

Children have connected with dads and moms. Spouses have come away with a better appreciation about what ultramarathons are all about. That is probably the most rewarding part for me, to watch the reactions among the crews.

Thanks goes to the 19th century Pony Express riders for inspiring this run and demonstrating what endurance can take place, even in the remote desert of western Utah.



All-time 100-mile finishers 2006-2016

1	Jay Aldous	15:06:27*	2011
2	Steven Jeffs	16:31:41	2016
3	Matthew Van Horn	16:52:55	2013
4	Kendall Wimmer	17:52:22	2011
5	Kelly Agnew	18:02:57	2013
6	Craig Lloyd	19:18:05	2011
7	Ben Blessing	19:42:09	2013
8	Curtis Eppley	19:47:55	2015
9	Phil Lowry	19:54:15	2011
10	Cherri Marcinko	19:59:59*	2013
11	Philip Sicklinger	20:03:27	2015
12	Sherry Shay	20:15:57	2014
13	Bob Peinemann	20:24:54	2014
14	Phil Lowry	20:37:37	2013
15	Davy Crockett	20:53:02	2010
16	Keeler North	21:02:20	2012
17	Wes Ritner	21:12:07	2014
18	Brian Janecek	21:24:38	2012
19	Ed Ettinghausen	21:30:00	2010
20	Justin Larson	21:42:09	2016
21	Stephen Massey	21:42:18	2015
22	Ed Ettinghausen	21:45:57	2014
23	Cassidy Hood	21:49:53	2012
24	Lorie Alexander	22:01:14	2012
25	Melissa Soper	22:16:35	2015
26	Erika Mcfarland	22:17:43	2014
27	Lorie Alexander	22:17:43	2014
28	Juan Caballero	22:23:45	2013
29	Jason Laurie	22:25:24	2016
30	Carter Williams	22:32:09	2016
31	Craig Lloyd	22:46:12	2010
32	Davy Crockett	22:58:19	2009
33	Matt Ward	23:02:00	2008
34	Matthew Watts	23:16:28	2011
35	Nate Hill	23:16:50	2016
36	Juan Caballero	23:17:34	2014
37	Misty Alessandri	23:18:24	2014
38	James Skaggs	23:18:25	2016
39	Davy Crockett	23:26:00	2007

My Path to Ultrarunning – Davy Crockett

40	Carl Duke	23:29:37	2016
41	Matthew Watts	23:31:54	2009
42	Brian Hill	23:32:02	2011
43	Joanna Boyd	23:35:06	2014
44	Kyle Emery	23:40:19	2015
45	Nicole Lowe	23:54:42	2016
46	Ivan Mclean	23:56:51	2011
47	Paul Grimm	24:04:45	2016
48	Dan Brenden	24:08:06	2016
49	Andres Reyez DiAz	24:08:13	2014
50	Bronson Kelly	24:15:57	2011
51	Nichole Lowe	24:15:58	2014
52	Heidi Bennett	24:20:28	2012
53	Luis Leon	24:24:07	2013
54	Davy Crockett	24:26:00	2008
55	Robert Crockett	24:26:56	2013
56	Liz Bauer	24:33:46	2012
57	Brent Rutledge	24:35:00	2007
58	Brent Rutledge	24:43:00	2008
59	Davy Crockett	24:45:00	2007
60	James Harrison	24:48:25	2012
61	Craig Stahl	24:50:39	2015
62	Emmanuelle Dudon	24:55:14	2013
63	Zachary Case	24:56:05	2013
64	Launi Evans	24:57:05	2014
65	Hope Hyatt	24:59:49	2015
66	Dan Brenden	25:05:41	2015
67	Davy Crockett	25:14:35	2011
68	Bronson Kelly	25:16:04	2013
69	Eric Brummer	25:18:17	2016
70	Matthew Watts	25:20:18	2014
71	Wan Ho Kou	25:24:34	2016
72	Dennis Ahern	25:25:55	2012
73	Drew Brazier	25:27:09	2014
74	Davy Crockett	25:29:00	2006
75	Peter Van Horn	25:30:22	2014
76	Michael Cummings	25:36:10	2011
77	Tetsuro Ogata	25:53:29	2010
78	Launi Evans	25:56:40	2013
79	Eric Brummer	25:58:05	2011
80	John Blanchard	25:58:18	2010
81	Trevor Kerr	26:02:18	2014
82	Cassidy Hood	26:02:23	2014
83	Paul Losee	26:02:54	2015
84	John Wog	26:04:23	2010
85	Scott Dakus	26:09:00	2009
86	Troy Robertson	26:09:12	2010
87	Breanna Cornell	26:11:32	2014
88	Nanette Palmer	26:13:11	2011

My Path to Ultrarunning – Davy Crockett

89	Michael Rose	26:15:58	2013
90	Jason Harrison	26:31:27	2012
91	Launi Evans	26:45:39	2016
92	Brian Currie	26:45:52	2015
93	Stephen Kissell	26:50:00	2006
94	Brent Rutledge	26:50:00	2006
95	Darren Ames	26:50:57	2013
96	Vince Romney	26:53:31	2012
97	Paul Newton	26:54:20	2014
98	Ross Pieper	26:58:34	2013
99	Andrew Jensen	26:58:52	2015
100	Eric Johnson	26:59:41	2014
101	Misty Alessandri	27:01:45	2014
102	Forrest Stuart	27:01:47	2014
103	Ken Maughan	27:07:12	2012
104	Marissa Walker	27:08:22	2014
105	Mark Hllenthal	27:10:00	2012
106	Heidi Bennett	27:10:15	2016
107	Mark Horan	27:14:29	2014
108	Joy Patten	27:17:39	2016
109	Larry Adams	27:19:34	2011
110	Dyanna Wallace	27:23:17	2016
111	Jennifer Saunders	27:27:23	2011
112	Joe Larsen	27:30:22	2010
113	Carl Tippets	27:30:22	2010
114	Jared Broderick	27:53:24	2016
115	Paul Grimm	27:57:02	2013
116	Don Landry	28:05:00	2009
117	David Angelson	28:08:23	2013
118	James Willcox	28:24:25	2012
119	David Blaylock	28:30:22	2012
120	Olaf Questereit	28:45:36	2009
121	Stephen Kissell	28:47:14	2011
122	Chris Anderson	28:55:38	2014
123	Shane Harrison	28:58:50	2016
124	Adriane Frehner	28:59:31	2010
125	Paul Losee	29:08:39	2011
126	Shalise Morgan	29:12:29	2013
127	Gary Stosich	29:18:00	2009
128	Quintin Barney	29:18:16	2015
129	Spencer Wells	29:19:55	2016
130	Tara Tulley	29:26:49	2016
131	Dean Dyatt	29:35:35	2010
132	Karsten Solheim	29:37:20	2010
133	Brad Holt	29:37:35	2016
134	Gary Stosich	29:40:00	2007
135	Paul Losee	29:41:24	2010
136	Joshua Bryant	29:42:28	2014
137	Hyrum Wright	29:48:05	2016

My Path to Ultrarunning – Davy Crockett

138	Alan Wright	29:48:05	2016
139	James Willcox	29:48:35	2011
140	Melissa Gagestein	30:01:58	2013

Frequently Asked Questions



Whenever anyone learns for the first time that I run 100-mile races the usual questions start coming. I can count on this happening almost every week at work during the beginning of a meeting. I enjoy answering these questions and watching the reactions. But I hope they go away with a greater understanding of the sport. Here are many of the common questions asked and my answers.

- **How long does it take to run 100 miles?** It depends how tough the course is. My fastest 100-mile run was 19:40 during a fixed time race called Across the Years. The course was totally flat. My fastest time during a 100-mile race is 20:27 at Buffalo Run 100, a pretty flat course. My slowest 100 miles was 39 hours running across the Grand Canyon four times which involved a lot of sight-seeing. My slowest 100-mile race was a very tough course called Mogollon Monster 100 which took me 35:11. The world record for 100 miles is 11:47:21 on a track.
- **Do you sleep during the run?** No, not on purpose. At times there is a bunch of sleepwalking and weaving going on, but not on purpose. The clock is always ticking so stopping to sleep just affects your finishing time. At times when very drowsy, I will lie down by the side of the trail and take a five minute catnap. But it is hard to sleep because concerned runners pass by and keep asking if I'm OK. One time a couple were hesitant and they whispered, "Should we check his pulse?" There are multi-day stage races held where runners stop to sleep. In a 48-hour race, I rested and slept for 17.5 hours but still reached 151 miles.
- **Do you ever walk?** Yes, a ton, but I try to do it very fast. On a flat course like the Pony Express Trail 100, I can usually run most of the first 25 miles, and then take more frequent walking breaks. On mountain courses, I will walk many of the uphill sections and then run most of the flats and downhills. My goal in 100-mile races is to be able to run up mild hills late into the race. If I can, I can usually finish with a good time because others are walking. I've finished many flat 100-mile races with walking less than two miles.
- **What is your mile pace?** Again, it depends on the course. Most of the 100-mile races I do have big mountain climbs and your pace obviously slows on the climbs. On a totally flat race such as Across the Years, I start with an 8:00 pace, by mile 50 I'm averaging an 11:00 pace, by mile 80, a 12:00 pace, and by mile 100, a 14:00 pace. But all this varies greatly depending on how I feel at the time. For very mountainous courses that have monster climbs, at times I'm lucky to be averaging a 20:00 pace. You will hear frequent cautions against starting 100-milers too fast and doing periodic walking each mile. That is good advice if your goal is to only finish. But once you gain experience and wish to compete, you generally throw that advice away. [See Pace to Race.](#)
- **Do you eat while you run?** Yes, if I didn't, I would get sick and stop by 20 miles. You have to learn how to run with a food in your stomach. However, after a while during a race I will lose my appetite and start forgetting to eat. You have to force yourself to eat or you will lose energy. During one year at the Pony Express Trail 100, I consumed: 1.2 gallons of water, 11 cans of Ensure, 2 liters of Gatorade, one six-pack of coke, three bean burritos, 8 mini-bagels with cream cheese and turkey, two thermoses of potato soup, half a can of potato chips and some Guacamole dip, a few Reeses cups, and about 12 Succeed Caps (electrolytes). Usually I will also consume Hammer Gel, but I did not during that run. I didn't eat enough and probably lost about two pounds. I gained this weight back during the following week. Fueling during 100-milers involves a careful balance of fluids, carbohydrates and electrolytes. [See Fueling on the Run.](#)
- **How do you carry all of your food?** Most 100-mile races have "aid stations" between 4-10 miles apart. At each station you can fill your water bottles, eat and drink, and take food for the road. At some of these stations will also be a personal "drop bag" that I arranged before the race to be

delivered to that location. In that bag I can have extra socks, food, or anything I might need. When I started racing 100-milers, I used to carry a lot of stuff with me and have drop bags filled with junk at many locations. Now with experience, I travel very light. I usually only carry two hand-held water bottles and some gels in my pocket. I will put the things I need for night (warm clothes and a flashlight) in one of the drop bags at a strategic location.

- **Why do you use handheld bottles?** I've used camelbacks and waist packs. If I put anything on my back while running it acts as a boat anchor and slows me down. I usually only use one during long adventure runs. I used a waist pack for several years but developed abdomen problems. The problems went away when I went to handhelds. Handhelds are easy to get used to using and they are a great protection when you fall. I have probably saved breaking fingers several times. I let the bottles take the force of a fall rather than my hands. When I broke my hand during a Bighorn 100, I was only carrying one handheld. When I fell, I stuck my open hand out and it caught a rock in just the right place.
- **Do you ever throw up?** Yes, and sometimes I can do it without losing stride. Experienced 100-mile runners know there is no shame in throwing up when your stomach is in bad shape. Most of the time you immediately start feeling better and can carefully ease back into eating again. Some runners brag that they have never thrown up and go slowly just to avoid it. I think they are nuts.
- **Do you ever stop to rest?** At each aid station I will stop to eat and refill water bottles for a couple minutes. I usually don't sit down until after mile 60. One year while running the Pony Express 100 I sat down only four times for a total of ten minutes, including a bathroom break. At other races I haven't done as well, and when I get very cold and sleepy may sit by a warm fire for a while to come back to life.
- **What about the bathroom?** Well, let me put it this way: Ultrarunners quickly get over modesty, especially those who run near the front of the race. Both sexes run together. You learn to avert the eyes and move on. There just isn't time to find secluded private spots. Ladies learn to take care of business about as fast as the men. If runners are hydrating themselves properly, these events occur often.
- **How do you find the time to train?** Most of my training occurs early in the morning before the sun rises and before my family wakes up. As of 2016, I have probably run more than 17,000 miles before sunrise. In 2015 I finally bought a treadmill which makes it convenient getting in some training before work.
- **Do you train every day? How much do you train?** Much less than what you would think. I have discovered that once I have built up my mileage base, I really don't have to run as often to stay fit, as long as I keep doing very long runs. During 2013-16, I concentrated on running very long runs on Saturdays and then mostly resting in between them. I ran 3,200 miles that year, but only ran on average 2.5 days per week. In 2010, I ran 3,400 miles and ran on average 3.5 days per week. In 2016 I ran 43 runs of 50K (31 miles) or longer. As of 2017, I've run 317 runs of 50K or more. [See The Frequent Long Run.](#)
- **Do you keep running in the winter?** Yes, of course. I usually run more miles in the winter than any other time of the year. Many runners take the winter months off and lose fitness. I have continued to run every winter since 2003. As wise runner I knew once said that the secret to being in shape was to never get out of shape. [See Winter Training.](#)
- **Do you ever run on the treadmill.** Yes, I now have a treadmill in my basement and use in year round when the weather is poor or to get a quick run in before work. For me occasional treadmill running helps me develop my foot speed and mental strength. At times I run 30 miles on it in a day. [See Treadmill Training.](#)
- **I've heard that in order to run 100-miles you need do long back-to-back training runs?** Not so. I've never done them and have been successful. I do very long single runs and then make sure I recover from them. I think long back-to-back runs can lead to injury.
- **What about those rigid training plans that tell you how many miles to run each day?** I firmly don't believe in those. I run when it feels like I can, and rest on days I feel like I should. Such training

plans lead to burn-out and injury. To push myself, I at times set a weekly goal for miles and try to achieve that by the end of the week. But I play it by ear on which days I run. I chuckle when I hear people say, “My training plan says I have to run 15 miles today.” [See Training Strategy.](#)

- **Is stretching part of your training regimen?** For me no, unless it is before and after tempo or speed training that tends to tighten up the muscles. I would rather get running than spend a bunch of time stretching. I find that after running a few miles, I’m warmed up nicely. For me muscle strains have been few. In 2013 early in the year I pulled my hamstring and it has affected me ever since, but that happened running a silly 5K..
- **How many miles do you run in a year?** **2002:** 291, **2003:** 566, **2004:** 1,193, **2005:** 2,109, **2006:** 2,576, **2007:** 2,600, **2008:** 3,148, **2009:** 2,865, **2010:** 3,479, **2011:** 3,943, **2012:** 2,065, **2013:** 3,202, **2014:** 3,007, **2015:** 4,564, **2016:** 4,742 for a total of 41,450 miles.
- **Aren’t you afraid running alone at night in the mountains?** For me night running is a very peaceful time to run. Usually at night I only run on very familiar trails or a marked course during a race. In 100-milers it does get lonely as runners spread out and I won’t see another person for hours because we are running at the same pace. Most of these races allow you to have a “pacer” run with you to keep you company for the second half of the race. I usually don’t use pacers except for local races when I want to share the experience with running friends.
- **So you run 100s without pacers or crews?** Yes, most of my 100s have been run without any pacers or a crew. For me, pacers tend to distract me. I worry how they are doing. Sometimes they slow me down. Interesting conversations distract me. The best pacer for me is an experienced runner who knows me well and can play the right mind tricks with me to make me run faster. Crews can be a great help to cut down time in aid stations, but I’ve also observed many runners who spend way too much time at aid stations with family and friends. The objective should be to get in and out in a couple minutes.
- **What about wild animals or serial killers?** My wife is always worried that I’ll run into a serial killer, but so far, so good. I think I can outrun one anyway. I’ve almost run into deer, elk, moose, porcupines, rattlesnakes, skunks, rabbits, bats, birds, and mice. During an early morning run I once came upon an angry mountain lion who was tracking a deer. It screamed at me pretty loudly for a minute but then ran away. I have seen three mountain lions in ten years. I’ve also come upon a few bears, but they have always taken a look at me and ran quickly away. What scared me the most were two sheep dogs who came up from behind quietly during the night and started to nudge me. They wanted the bacon in my pocket.
- **Why do you use a green flashlight?** In 2004, when I was a spectator, high on the Wasatch 100 course in the middle of the night, I observed that many of the front-runners used green handheld lights. I struggled for months running with enough light at night and finally decided to buy a green light, a very durable diver’s light. I was amazed how it helped me run much faster at night. The green light is easier on my eyes and doesn’t wash out the trail. By using a handheld light, the angle of the light is much lower than a headlamp which allows me to see the shadows of the rocks on the trail much easier and there is less tripping.
- **Do you ever get lost?** Yes. Most races mark their courses well with little flags or reflectors hanging on trees and bushes both at turns and along the way to give you confidence that you are heading in the right direction. However, when your mind gets tired, at times you do miss turns. Pacers can help to keep you on course. But everyone eventually experiences the panic of being off course. It is part of the sport. You finally convince yourself that you are on the wrong trail and turn back. For those who aren’t leading the race, looking for foot prints is a great help. I am now very good in spotting fresh footprints. On one 50-mile race, I took a wrong turn with a half mile to go. What I feared most was the ridicule and jokes that would pile on me from my friends as they would see me coming in from the wrong direction. Sure enough, I’m still putting up with that. [See Blunders and Trail Comedy.](#)
- **Why do you like to run 100 miles?** Several reasons. 1. I enjoy the intense challenge, to push myself to physical and mental endurance limits. 2. I enjoy being able to see very remote places with just one-day of effort. 3. I enjoy running at night. 100-mile runs for me always require night running. 4.

Because it is possible 5. Because it teaches me a lot about myself. 6. Because it reduces day-to-day stress. 7. It motivates me to keep my fitness level high.

- **Do you ever win?** Yes, a few races with smaller fields. I'm a mid-pack runner that works hard, has a firm determination not to quit, and can usually finish in the top 25 percent which is pretty good for my age. I do usually fair very well in fixed-time races. I won the pretty complete 2010 Across the Years 48-hour run with 187 miles. For my age, 57 in 2016, I did finish a 100-miler in 20:51, which was the 5th fastest in the world in 2016 for runners age 57+. Also in 2016 I won Crooked Road 24-hour race, and ran 110.2 miles at Across the Years which was the 4th furthest in the world in 2016 for runners age 55+. [See Running Against the Aging Curve.](#)
- **Who pays you to do this? What do you get for finishing?** The biggest award is just the satisfaction of reaching your goal and finishing. Each race usually has "cutoff" times. If you don't reach locations on the course by a particular time, you must drop out. When I started racing 100-miles, I constantly worried about these cutoff times. Now I am fast enough to stay well ahead of them. If you finish a 100-mile race within the cutoff time, the award is usually a belt buckle. Yes, a big shiny belt buckle. The tradition finds its roots from horse endurance races. I now have a very large collection of custom belt buckles.
- **How often do you run 100 miles?** I've averaged about 8 100-milers per year. In 2016 I set a personal record by finishing 12 100-milers. As of early 2017, I've finished 87 100-milers in twelve years. 87 finishes is 9th in the world for career finishes.
- **How many people are crazy enough to run 100 miles?** Worldwide it is estimated that about 32,600 people have finished a 100-mile race since 1980. In 2016, there were about 12,200 runners who finished a 100-miler that year with about 2,500 first-time finishers. When I finished my first 100 in 2005, there were only a total of about 1,500 finishers that year so the sport has been significantly growing. But it still is pretty small. In 2013, there were about 240 runners from Utah who finished 100s. The average age for ultrarunners is early 40s. The oldest runners to ever finish a 100-miler were 75 years old. In 2016 about 170 different 100-mile races were held.
- **How long does it take you to recover?** After my first 100-mile attempt in 2004, I could not run again for four weeks. Now, if I don't get injured, I can usually start running again in five days. I can race again in two weeks. Twice I have ran two 100-mile races within five days of each other and did very well in all. If I do longer runs closer together, my body gets trained to recover more quickly.
- **What were your favorite runs?** The runs that I have enjoyed the most have been adventure runs in the Grand Canyon and the Uintas in Utah. I get the most attention locally from my six consecutive summits of Mount Timpanogos. That was crazy. Among my favorite 100-mile races are Cascade Crest in Washington and The Bear in Utah. [See Running 1000 miles in the Grand Canyon.](#)
- **What was your hardest race?** The toughest 100s that I have finished are Mogollon Monster 100 in Arizona and Plain 100 in Washington. Mogollon Monster runs on a very rocky course with long climbs and was hot during the day and cold at night. Plain 100 is a self-supported race with no aid stations and no course markings. It also is about 109 miles. [See review of 34 100-mile courses that I have run.](#)
- **Why have you never run Western States 100?** For me, Western States 100 is not the type of 100-mile race I like for a few reasons. 1. It typically is very hot. My body does not do well with hot races. Heat training helps, but for me recovery is still hard after a hot 100. 2. I enjoy low-key races far more than over-hyped races that seem commercialized. That's just me. 3. Western States requires getting through a difficult lottery process. There are so many other 100-mile races out there that are more beautiful, aren't as hot, and aren't as hard to get into. I observe people who get so depressed about not getting selected for Western States and I wonder if they haven't yet discovered there is a world of ultrarunning outside the Sierra Mountains.
- **What are fixed-time races and why do you run them?** The winner of a fixed-time race is the runner who can run the longest distance in a fixed number of hours. I like these races because of their competitive nature. You can track your competitor's progress and have a more controlled environment to keep a steady pace. I discovered that I can compete very well in these type of races. I

only run a couple of these each year, but I've won a couple and usually place pretty high. My best 12-hours is 67.1 miles. My best 24-hours is 117.8, and my best 48-hours is 187 miles. [See Running Fixed-time Races.](#)

- **What do you think about as you run?** The time passes amazingly fast. I think about my pace, the sights I see, the pain I feel, and the people I meet. I strategize as I go, making plans on what I need at the next aid station stop. I enjoy listening to music as I run and I'm not shy about singing along as I go which my pacers usually hate.
- **You sing while you run?** Yes, at times. Singing gets my mind off the pain and helps me stay awake at night. I think I'm a great singer, but others who run with me have differing opinions. I admit that my singing does fall apart by mile 80.
- **Doesn't this long running hurt?** Yes, sometimes it is agony. Most of the time there is just minor pain and after a few miles the pain shifts to some other place, so I don't have to worry about the first pain. But other times, even at mile 90, I feel no pain and can run very fast. There are wide swings from feeling good, feeling bad, and feeling good again. After all is said and done, the memory of the intense pain fades and I look forward to the next long run. Perhaps like childbirth, but to a lesser degree?
- **Aren't you destroying your knees?** I hope not. My knees have become very strong. I can run down steep hills for many miles without pain. I try to run very few miles on hard pavement. Dirt roads/trails are much softer and easier on your knees. I had knee surgery in 2003 before I started serious running. I was told by the surgeon to not run anymore. Since then I lost about 50 pounds and as of 2017 have run over 42,000 miles on that repaired knee. I think starting to run much later in life than most runners will make a difference in my running longevity. I'm very careful and listen to my body. If it needs rest, I rest and don't feel guilty that I'm not exercising.
- **I heard ultrarunning is bad for your health, is that true?** Sitting on the couch is bad for your health. I've lost 50 pounds and in my late 50s I am in the best shape of my life. I no longer get frequent colds. I don't need to sleep as much as before. I haven't had the flu at all since I started ultrarunning. My resting heart rate is about 50. For me, it is like I've had a new life, full of energy, and if anyone tries to call me old, I say, "Let's go run, I'll race you." Every year some study is published proclaiming that "excessive" exercise is bad. If you read these closely they usually are studying marathon runners who are not in very good shape. [See Health and Life Balance.](#)
- **Do you ever get injured?** When I was first starting out, I would frequently get over-use injuries because I would try to go too far too soon. As I became more fit and experienced, the injuries were far fewer and were minor, usually healing up in about two weeks. But I've had some bad ones. During Bighorn 100, I once slipped, fell, and broke my hand at mile 30. But since I don't run on my hands, I continued on and finished that race. Another time I slipped and fell during the first few miles of a 50-mile race and probably cracked a rib. I continued on and finished that race. During the 2012 Rocky Raccoon 100, I ran on a fractured tibia that kept cracking more as I ran. I finished that race but that was stupid and I couldn't run for six months. Now in my late 50s, muscle pulls are a little more frequent if I do tempo runs. [See Injuries and Rookie Mistakes.](#)
- **Do people ever die during these races?** They are very, very rare. Unlike marathons, most of the runners who attempt 100-milers are in excellent condition. There have been a very small number who have died the day following a race but most of those have been from pre-existing conditions or medication problems. However, hospitalization afterwards are more common. Kidney shutdown is what you will hear about now and then. After my Pony Express race, three runners have been hospitalized, two because of a gall bladder attacks, and the other from overdosing on Tylenol. Years ago Mark Heinemann died of pneumonia related to a bacterial infection after running 207 miles at Across the Years 48-hour run. Joel Zucker died when he returned home after finishing Hardrock 100 in 1998. In 2016 a runner from Mexico died of hypothermia during a 100-mile race in Chile. The race had extreme dangerous weather. More have died in car accidents while returning home from races. Most ultramarathoner deaths recently have occurred in the high mountains doing dangerous adventures without using proper safety precautions. [See Dangers and Safety.](#)

- **Do you run marathons? Ragnar?** I did a few marathons, just for fun. I don't like running on pavement and am not motivated to chase faster marathon minutes. In 2009 I did run three marathons and set a PR of 3:24:49, qualifying for Boston. The following year I ran Boston, setting another PR. But to me, marathons are painful and not very fun. I'll run an occasional 10K race for some speed training. My best 10K was also in 2010, 42:04. In these shorter road races I can usually medal in my age group. I don't train to be fast on roads. But because of good endurance, I can perform well in these types of races. See the chapter: [Dabbling in Road Races](#). Ragnar? I've never run it. It sounds like a fun thing to do with friends, but running a handful of 10Ks isn't very hard, no offense intended.
- **What kind of shoes do you run in?** I run in trail shoes. In recent years I have run mostly in max cushioning shoes called Hoka. My shoes must have good room in the toe box. If they fit right, I don't get blisters. I do change out the insoles at times depending on the terrain, whether my feet will be wet, and because of other factors.
- **What about running barefoot?** The book "Born to Run" really started a barefoot craze. I believe man invented shoes to protect his feet from injury. I think running the distance of an ultramarathon barefoot is asking for an injury. I've seen people try it and observed their beat up feet afterwards. I would much rather finish a 100-mile race with feet that are not sore. I can connect well with the ancients with shoes on.
- **Do you get blisters?** I used to, but I've learned to take care of my feet and also the feet seem to get tougher. Before a race I tape certain areas of my feet as a precaution. When I get dehydrated, the feet are more susceptible to blistering. Also over hydration (fluid-retention) makes blisters more likely. Now I rarely get serious blisters during a 100-miler. Usually I only get minor ones that I don't notice until I clean my feet after a race. [See shoe and foot care](#).
- **Do you change your shoes during a race?** Rarely. If the shoes are performing well, there is no reason to change them. I do very often change or clean out my socks every 30-40 miles or so.
- **How often do you buy shoes?** I usually put 400-600 miles on a pair of shoes. After that, they start breaking down, my feet hurt more, and I start getting hot spots. I usually have several pair and alternate them. So, I will buy a pair of shoes about every other month. My sons fight over my old shoes. They like to wear them.
- **Are you sponsored?** No, and I don't really have any desire for a sponsorship. I use gear that works for me, not gear that would bring me other benefits. I see others who seem to "sell their souls" for a sponsorship and are "over the top" about how the gear helps them perform and hashtag them in all their posts. I am not into gear. You'll see me running with a garbage bag instead of an expensive rain jacket because it works. If a certain shoe doesn't perform well, I'll switch. I'm into running and inspiring others to run, not into gear and getting freebies.
- **Do other members of your family run?** Not as seriously as I do. I have a wife, six children, and six grandchildren. All my kids have been swimmers, most of them captains of their teams. One son runs ultras now and then, and has finished a few 50s and a 100. A couple other kids like casual running. I have an older brother who has finished quite a few ultras and three 100s.
- **I've heard about hallucinations during these runs. Do you get them?** Yes, at times. When sleep deprivation kicks in this can happen. I recall seeing a toy submarine on the trail during a race. I next saw a nice park bench out in the high mountains. Neither were there. In the Grand Canyon the large rocks start turning into buildings or people. It bugs me so much that I have to keep my eyes to the ground until it stops. The next one happens very frequently. It seems my mind detaches from my body. Thoughts like, "We need to make him eat something" go through my mind. It's like I'm two beings, a mind controlling things, and a body that it takes care of. It freaks me out at times.
- **Are you the guy that summited Mount Timpanogos a record six consecutive times?** Uh, yes. The record has been called "a record for the criminally insane." The story is [here](#). I also compiled a list of [unusual runs that I've been the first to do](#).
- **Have you met Dean Karnazes, the "ultramarathon man"?** No, but I've run in a couple races that he was also in. I understand that he is a very nice guy. I respect the impact he has had on the sport and how he has inspired thousands of runners. He's a very good runner, but is no longer an elite

ultramarathon runner. He hasn't won an official ultra since 2006 (Vermont 100), and now runs very few ultras and isn't very competitive in them. He's now 54 years old and now about my speed (or slowness). His marketing folks at times have attributed some questionable records to him. Since his first book came out, he's concentrated on performing and inspiring others rather than racing. I hope new ultrarunners who come into the sport will also become familiar with the true elites in the sport who's racing accomplishments dwarf those of Dean.

- **How many Hundos are you going to do?** They aren't called "Hundos." They are called 100-mile races, or 100-milers. Those who refer to them as "Hundos" probably are cyclists. When someone says "Hundo" to me, I think of a car company. I hope to finish 100 100-milers someday. [See Reaching for 100 100-mile finishes.](#)
- **How did you get into this sport?** The answer is long, and I have a long answer prepared. See ["My Path to Ultrarunning."](#)
- **Are you nuts?** Probably.

Also, [Listen to a podcast](#) where I answered more questions.

Review and ranking of 34 100-mile courses

During my running career thus far (2004-2017), I have started 99 100-milers on 34 different courses including several fixed-time race courses where I reached 100 miles. In all, as of 2017 I've finished 89 races of at least 100 miles. I thought it would be interesting to average my finish times on each course and sort them from slowest to fastest. The resulting list is sorted roughly from toughest course to easiest for me. Others may sort this list differently, perhaps because they have more or less difficulty with heat, cold, climbs, or altitude. This is MY ordered list. I'm not analyzing finish rate, or how fast the winners finish, I'm analyzing how tough they are to me personally as an older guy and the features of a course that make them tough for me. No, I haven't attempted Barkley or Hardrock yet so they aren't in the list. For each, I'll give a brief review of the course.



1. Mogollon Monster



Average time	Finishes	Best Time	Place
35:11:00	1	35:11:00	19th

Mogollon Monster 100 runs below and on top of the Mogollon Rim in central Arizona. The Mogollon Rim rises about 2,000 feet for a span of 200 miles across Arizona and into New Mexico. The course runs on sections of the Highline Trail shared by the very tough Zane Grey 50-mile race. I've run and finished Zane Grey 50 four times and after that fourth time vowed that I wouldn't return because it hammers me. But I was up for a tough challenge. I believe this was the toughest 100-mile course I have run. The distance is actually 106 miles raising the toughness factor. The climbs were grueling. During the night I experienced hypothermia and during the day heat exhaustion. But I pulled out of it and finished. The toughest part was the last ten miles. At about mile 95 there is the worst gut-wrenching climb followed by the roughest, nastiest, rocky, long descent. The finishing rate was only about 50%.

2. Plain



Average time	Finishes	Best Time	Place
32:01:30	2	31:45:00	5th

The Plain 100 is one of the toughest 100-mile races in the country, in the Cascade Mountains of Washington. It is very tough for these reasons: 1. The race is actually about 106 miles. 2. There are no course markings. Racers must use maps, directions, and navigation skills. 3. There are no aid stations, it is a self-supported race. 4. The trail conditions can be very challenging because of dust that permeates shoes and socks. 5. There are three massive climbs (and descents) of nearly 5,000 feet and a total of 21,000 feet elevation gain. 6. Usually it gets pretty hot. 7. It has had a very high DNF rate. Before I ran it there were only 18 finishes in the first nine years of the race, a stunning 15% success rate. The course consists of mostly well-maintained single-track motorcycle trails. There are also some stretches of dirt road and one 3-mile section of pavement. The care put into the motorcycle trails by a biking club is impressive. Switchbacks are reinforced with a lattice of concrete covered with dirt. There are many miles of V-shaped trails which are tough on the feet and legs. Most runners do not finish in their first attempt. I was the very first runner to finish twice in my first two attempts. I love the challenging course and the adventure running format.

3. H.U.R.T



Average time	Finishes	Best Time	Place
DNF mile 73	0	67.5 – 22:53	25th

H.U.R.T. 100 is held in Hawaii, above Waikiki. I ran this race very early in my ultrarunning career and was in over my head. I didn't finish this race. The course is a 20-mile loop, with out-and-backs to two of the three aid stations. Between each aid station would be a serious mountain climb and descent. So each loop would have three difficult climbs. For 100 miles, you need to complete five loops. There are roots. Not just a root or two, but hundreds in a just a short stretch of trail. They looked like a spider web covering the trail. When I made the mistake of stepping on a root, my foot would always slip. I kept making the same mistake until my brain finally got the message: "Don't step on the roots." The strategy

was to dodge the roots, step in-between them. Stepping on rocks was also a dangerous exercise. They were almost as slippery as the roots. Avoiding mud was a silly strategy and I quickly concluded not to worry about the mud. For most of the course you are buried in the tropic forest but the beauty is outstanding. This is a very difficult course because it is tough to get in a good running rhythm.

4. Wasatch Front



Average time	Finishes	Best Time	Place
30:39:14	4	28:28:47	48th

The Wasatch Front 100 in Utah is well-known, one of the four races in the Grand Slam of ultrarunning. The race is a hometown course, typical of the rugged trails in the Wasatch Mountains. I know the trails well but have not yet had a good race at Wasatch. It normally gets pretty hot in the afternoon which affects me poorly and by nightfall I have always have had a rough time for at least several hours, sometimes through the entire night, caused by the shift to cold weather and effects of altitude. Because of my rough times there, it isn't among my favorites, but I sure love to run with so many local friends. Despite my challenges, I have always finished. But I actually have more fun either pacing or running up on the course during the night greeting and helping friends.

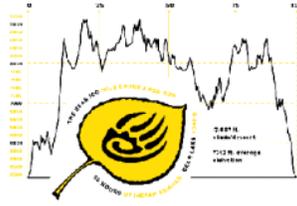
5. Capitol Reef



Average time	Finishes	Best Time	Place
33:53:41	1	33:53:41	10th

This race runs on the Aquarius Plateau, the highest plateau in North America. What makes this race so tough is the altitude (all but 12 miles above 9,000 feet), boulder-ridden trails, and constant route-finding even with course markings everywhere. While this race has far fewer climbs than mountain races, the other factors slow me down and makes this race tough for me. I was not prepared to go this slow and didn't have all the clothes I needed for the freezing night. If I were to run this race again, with the course knowledge and better preparation, I could approach running it closer to 28 hours. As of 2016, this 100-mile races has been discontinued.

6. The Bear



Average time	Finishes	Best Time	Place
29:31	7	26:30:45	27th

The Bear 100 runs in Utah and finishes in Idaho at Bear Lake. It started as an Idaho loop course in the early years and now is a point-to-point course. I've written up many details of this race in the chapter: [Streaking the Bear](#). This is among my top favorite races and courses.

7. Grand Mesa 100



Average time	Finishes	Best Time	Place
32:12:19	1	32:12:19	11th

Grand Mesa 100, in Colorado runs on a high plateau above 10,000 feet. The course layout is very confusing and many runners made wrong turns. Course marking are rough or vandalized. At mile 43, you descended down 5,000 feet in nine miles, off the mesa. Some years that section can be very rough and overgrown. Much of it is a series of boulder-ridden stream beds. The last 25 miles involves several miles on cattle trails or questionable trails across fields. The first year I didn't finish the race because of a terrible rain storm for nine hours and I was poorly prepared with rain gear. I returned the next year and finished it but had stomach issues that stopped me for several hours. Altitude, weather, and trail conditions make this a tough race.

8. Bighorn



Average time	Finishes	Best Time	Place
29:09:36	7	26:45:31	25 th

This race warns to be extremely challenging due to the rugged terrain of the Bighorn Mountains of Wyoming. The course is an out and back with elevation gains of 18,300 feet. The course features three major climbs and runs in and out of forests and fields full of wildflowers. As for its beauty, I believe it is probably one of the most scenic 100-miler in the country. It features a late-morning start and three other race distances that all converge to finish around the same time the next day. Each year course conditions are totally different depending on the snow pack from the previous winter. One year my feet were wet for about 70 straight miles. On another year the course had to be changed because of deep snow still on the course. I love the challenges but this course usually can beat up your feet. The last five miles are always hot and exposed on a dirt road back into town, but it can be run very fast if you still have energy. During one year, I blasted down the last huge climb with great speed and finished very strong, passing my mentor, Phil Lowry with about 50 yards to go after he had been ahead of me by several miles for most of the race. On another year, I broke my hand at about mile 30 from a fall but still made it to the finish. This is among my favorite 100s.

9. Bryce



Average time	Finishes	Best Time	Place
29:44:03	2	29:37:01	46 th

Bryce 100 is held on the next major ridge line to the west of Bryce Canyon National Park. While the race is not held in the national park, along the way runners are able to view many similar rock formations and run a few miles through hoodoos. It runs above and below what are called the Sunset Cliffs that face to the west. Much of the course is above 9,000 feet, so altitude is a major factor why it is tough on me. In recent years the altitude has been shutting down my stomach during the night as I get chilled. During the night you are up on the rim high and it also gets cold. The course is deceptively tough but the beauty is first-class. The aid stations are few and very far apart. I ran this race in its first year. My finish time was a bit of an outlier because I had a rough time at night due to the altitude and actually quit for more than an hour and then took my time finishing. I reached the 50-mile turn-around at 12:04. I believe on a good day a more typical finish time for me would be 26-27 hours. Here is a video I made to [preview much of the](#)

[Bryce 100 course](#). I returned and ran this race again in 2016 but had the same struggles and only finished a few minutes faster.

10. Squaw Peak



Average time	Finishes	Best Time	Place
29:32:20	1	29:32:20	1st

I received permission from the race director to run this 50-mile course twice during the race. I hope that someday a 100-mile distance will be official. If it was, here is where I would rank this course for me. The 50-mile course is a tough mountain loop course and my best time on it has been just under 11 hours. Running with twice would involve climbing nearly 20,000 feet. When I ran the course twice in 2015 for 100 miles, I ran the first 50-miles self-supported and had no one pushing me so didn't run terribly hard, I was just interested in finishing the 100. I suspect if I was racing the course and had no issues, my time would be around 27 hours. I attempted to run another double in 2016 but the weather was very hot and I didn't continue after the first 50 miles.

11. Trashed Trail



Average time	Finishes	Best Time	Place
31:10:55	1	31:10:55	2nd

Trashed Trail 100 was held above Henderson, Nevada in 2017. That may be the only year it will be held. Shorter distances are run there each year. The course was a figure 8 run twice for about 102 miles. There was about 16,000 feet of climbing along the way. What made this course tough was the rugged, rocky trails along the way with miles of deep sandy wash to slow things down. The year I ran it, the wind was fierce, making for very tough conditions.

12. Virgil Crest



Average time	Finishes	Best Time	Place
32:42:34	1	32:42:34	17th

The Virgil Crest 100 runs above the town of Virgil, New York, through the Greek Peak ski resort, where I used to ski in the 1980s. This was my third mountain 100-mile race in the four weeks. While this should be listed higher in toughness for me according to my finish time, it was an outlier because I had pretty severe heat exhaustion during the last ten miles that cost me about three hours. The heat and humidity slammed me on the second morning. I just had a bad race, but I loved the course. The course is a 50-mile out-and-back course with a tough mountain loop thrown in the middle, taking you up to the top of the ski mountain, not just once but four times during the 50-mile out-and-back. In all during the entire 100 miles, there were 20 significant climbs for nearly 20,000 feet of climbing along the entire way. Most of the course runs through beautiful green forest, some of it is almost dark enough for a flashlight during the day. The trails are soft and fast. I ran the first 50-mile out-and-back in 12:48 on a rain-soaked course. On a good day, I believe a 26-hour finish would be more typical for me. But the heat and humidity make this a pretty tough race for me.

13. Cascade Crest



Average time	Finishes	Best Time	Place
28:43:24	4	27:40:20	47th

Cascade Crest 100-mile Endurance Run is held in the Cascade Mountains near Snoqualmie Summit just an hour from Seattle Washington. This is among my top favorite races and courses. The theme for the run is “Tall Trees, Tough Trails.” The trees are amazing, there are long climbs, but the trails aren’t too technical. There is plenty of single-track and weather has always been pretty ideal. I have yet to have a really good race there and I know I can run it faster, but I’ve always had a wonderful time despite my challenges. I grew up in Washington, and while in high school could be found each Saturday in the winter on the ski slopes at the resorts of Snoqualmie Pass. One very cool feature is a two-mile run through an old train tunnel in the middle of the night.

14. Kodiak



Average time	Finishes	Best Time	Place
29:28:30	2	29:42:00	17th

Kodiak 100 is run in the San Bernardino Mountains at Big Bear Lake, California. I would classify this as one of the easier mountain 100s. It has about 16,000 feet of climbing along the way and is run most of the way at 7,000 feet. It has two steep climbs of about 3,000 feet and one of 2,000 feet. What keeps its difficulty down are the miles of dirt roads and quite a few miles of pavement thrown in. The finishing rate was only about 62%, pretty low. My time was rather slow for me due to problems with course markings, the heat, and because I ran this two weeks after a difficult year at Wasatch 100. The course is actually about 103 miles, increasing its difficulty rating. The next year it was ran in reverse direction and my time improved by only 27 minutes.

15. Tahoe Rim



Average time	Finishes	Best Time	Place
27:28:22	6	25:43:00	18th

Now in my list we start reaching the “easier” 100-milers for me. The Tahoe Rim Trail 100 is held in the mountains on the north-east side of beautiful blue Lake Tahoe. The course is laid out on state park and state forest land, climbing ridges overlooking beautiful Lake Tahoe and various reservoirs. Much of it runs on the remarkable Tahoe Rim trail. The surface is mostly very runnable, soft single track. There is about 19,500 feet of climbs, aided by many switchbacks. Most of the course runs between 7-9,000 feet elevation. This race has a low finisher rate because it is a 50-mile loop course that is run twice. Many runners take the easy way out and quit after the first loop. A feature added after the first few years, is a tough climb up a ski resort black diamond slope. In 2009 the race was the 100-mile National Championships. I was the Grand Masters (age 50 and over) Champion and received a bunch of nice awards. I was also was only the second person to finish the race five times and earn the 500-mile belt.

16. Leadville



Average time	Finishes	Best Time	Place
26:15:46	1	26:15:46	60th

Leadville 100 in Colorado is one of the classic races in the Grand Slam of ultrarunning. I ran it when the field wasn't as big, before it gained fame through the book "Born to Run." The course is actually pretty easy, with lots of dirt roads and fast trails. It does feature two monster climbs up above 13,000 feet over Hope Pass. But if you have trained for altitude, this race is one of the faster ones. The altitude is what makes it harder and the unreasonable cutoff times can be very challenging for slower runners. I ran it very well in 2007, pretty early in my ultrarunning career. But since the race was sold to a corporation, quality has decreased and the field has exploded with ill-prepared runners making it crowded. It has lost any remote mountain feel. I may not return.

17. Coldwater Rumble



Average time	Finishes	Best Time	Place
27:22:22	2	25:43:17	13th

The Coldwater Rumble 100 runs in Goodyear Arizona, near Phoenix on various desert trails in Estrella Mountain Regional Park. The 100-mile course was in a huge 20-mile figure eight with an aid station in the middle and another one on the bigger loop. The course was run clockwise on the first loop and then alternating directions from then on. To reach 100 miles, you needed to run the course five times. I had mistakenly thought that the race difficulty would be similar to Javelina Jundred but quickly corrected myself within the first mile. We climbed into the foothills of the Sierra Estrella Mountain range. The trail is pretty rough at times and heat can be an issue. I ran this race a second time and cut my time by more than three hours.

18. Monument Valley



Average time	Finishes	Best Time	Place
25:50:30	1	25:50:30	5th

Monument Valley is a region in southern Utah/northern Arizona that features a cluster of enormous sandstone buttes that tower as much as 1,000 feet above the valley floor. Much of the area is included in the Monument Valley Navajo Tribal Park with its impressive views that rival any national park. Monument Valley 100-mile race was held in this spectacular park. Miles and miles of sand are the major difficulty factor for this race. There are several big climbs, but they are nothing compared to the sand running. In its first year there was much confusion about course layout and a difficult section to navigate during the night. In 2015, I led the race for the first 17 miles. As of 2016, this 100-mile race has been discontinued.

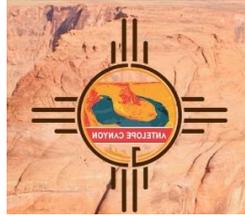
19. Grand Canyon



Average time	Finishes	Best Time	Place
28:38:58	1	28:38:58	15th

The Grand Canyon 100 in Arizona presents spectacular viewpoints outside the park on the North Rim, that tourists miss and opened my eyes to a section of the canyon I had never seen before. In 2015 the days before, the first 13 miles were hit by an unusual snow storm making the course slow for those miles climbing up and down forested dirt roads. The majority of the miles is a winding soft single-track that is easy to follow along the rim of the famed canyon with amazing viewpoints. Altitude is an issue and increases the difficulty. I was delayed by about three hours of stomach issues. As of 2016, this 100-mile race has been discontinued.

20. Antelope Canyon



Average time	Finishes	Best Time	Place
DNF - 91	0		DNF

Antelope Canyon 100 is run in and around the spectacular and unusual city of Page, Arizona. If you like running through slot canyons, on slickrock next to cliffs, across miles of open desert, this one is probably for you. There isn't a lot of climbing in this race but there are miles, and miles of sand in the first 40 miles to slow you down. The remaining miles were 10-mile loops around Page on a generally easy single-track trail. I didn't finish this race in a moment of mental weakness when the weather got very poor with rain and snow. I reached 90 miles at about the 24-hour mark and was delayed during the night with an hour of stomach issues. As of 2016, this 100-mile race has been discontinued.

21. Vermont

Vermont 100 Mile Endurance Run

Average time	Finishes	Best Time	Place
25:18:19	1	25:18:19	79th

Vermont 100 is also one of the classic races in the Grand Slam of ultrarunning. The race is run near Woodstock, Vermont, and runs up and down beautiful rolling hills by gorgeous ranches and farms and through a few small rural towns. The course is a huge loop, laid out in a "shamrock" formation, consisting of 70% dirt or jeep roads with the rest on forest trails (there are a couple miles of pavement). The course both climbs and descends about 15,000 feet. Many of the dirt roads are very hard and feel like pavement. The wooded trails are wonderful, soft and technical at times. An endurance horse ride is conducted pretty much on the same course, at the same time. The course is fast and could be run the entire way. However, I had great difficulty because of the heat and humidity. During the night I had to rest along the trail and I remember a couple runners coming by me who asked, "Should we check his pulse?" I ran this race early in my ultrarunning career and haven't returned because of heat.

23. Moab



Average time	Finishes	Best Time	Place
24:02	2	23:33:33	1st

The Moab 100 course in Utah is laid out on the Monitor and Merrimac Loop, a popular trail for mountain bikers. The 5.37-mile course is a loop with an out-and-back tail, like a lollipop. The route goes clockwise around the loop on odd laps and counter-clockwise on even laps. It first passes by the ruins of the historic Halfway Stagecoach Station. It then ascends up and down over a small ridge via a rutted jeep trail with scattered rocks. With huge Courthouse rock on the left and gigantic Mill-Courthouse Mesa on the right, the route crosses through several deep sandy washes and then climbs up a slickrock ramp to the base of the Mesa. The views along the way are terrific. It is a fast course but the slickrock sections really pound on tired legs. The field is usually on the small side and services provided are minimal for the entrance fee. I won the race in 2008.

24. Javelina



Average time	Finishes	Best Time	Place
24:19:07	2	23:46:59	35th

This desert 100-mile race is run in McDowell Mountain Park near Fountain Hills, Arizona. The course is a loop format that runs on the 15.5-mile Pemberton Trail. It consists of six loops in alternating directions and then you run a shorter loop to bring the distance up to 101.4 miles. I reached 100 miles on the course at about 23:25. This is a fast course if the weather is nice and not too hot. The heat eventually slammed me and I wasted at least an hour in the final stages but still finished well. Because it is a loop course, the finishing rate is low and many runners take the easy way out and go home with a 100K buckle. Out of the 250 starters that year, only 125 finished. The race is usually held near Halloween and under a nearly full moon, so many run it in amusing costumes.

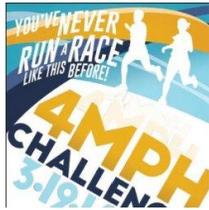
25. Salt Flats



Average time	Finishes	Best Time	Place
23:27:37	5	21:36:36	2nd

Salt Flats 100 starts and runs on the famed Bonneville Salt Flats Speedway in Utah. It is very unique. After the speedway, the course then runs along the foothills of various “islands” above the salt and up and over five significant passes. There are some views that are amazing. There is a very tough ten-mile stretch across mud flats that can be very tiring and slow. This is an “easier” 100, but not a flat run. It has a very generous cutoff time, so is great for first-timers or slower runners. In 2013 I finished in less than 24 hours just 5 days after running 107 miles at a fixed-time race. In 2014 I was leading the race until about mile 44.

26. 4mph Challenge



Average time	Finishes	Best Time	Place
24:50:00	1	24:50:00	3rd

4mph Challenge is held along the shoreline of Whiskeytown Lake in northern California. For this race you must maintain at least a 4 m.p.h. (15-minute-mile) for each six-mile segment. If you don’t finish six miles in 90 minutes, you are out. Once you finish the segment you wait for the clock until 90 minutes and off you go again for the next segment. Each segment includes a 200-foot climb and the year I ran it, it included an unavoidable deep creek crossing so your feet were wet the entire time. The unusual format makes this difficult. Even at 90 miles, you must still be running, walking won’t be fast enough. I really enjoyed the format but it was much more difficult than expected.

25. Rocky Raccoon



Average time	Finishes	Best Time	Place
24:41:04	5	21:07:58	42nd

Rocky Raccoon 100 in Texas is the site of my first 100-mile finish so it has a special place in my heart. The course runs in Huntsville Stake Park, north of Houston, Texas. The 20-mile course runs all over the park, making its way around Lake Raven. The loop is run five times to reach 100 miles. The course had been changed in recent years to eliminate two out-and-backs, replacing them with more forest single-track. I really enjoy the new course much better. Most of the course runs through forest on a nice soft surface but there are lots of roots in places. This is a fast course and I've believed I could break 20 hours on it, but haven't quite made it. In 2012, I didn't realize that I came into the race with a tibia stress fracture and during the entire race my bone kept cracking more. I finished very slowly, over 28 hours and then couldn't run for six months.

27. Buffalo Run



Average time	Finishes	Best Time	Place
21:57:57	3	20:27:00	3rd

The Buffalo Run, held on Antelope Island in the Great Salt Lake, Utah, started as a 25K and 50K race. Later a 50-mile race was added. In 2010, race director Jim Skaggs gave me permission to test out a possible 100 distance by running the 50-mile course twice. I started the evening before the main race, used a crew during the night, and then used the 50-mile aid stations during the day. I was the first person to run 100 miles on the island. The next year the 100-mile race became official. The course is fast but depending on the weather, the night can be brutally cold, especially if there is a wind. But so far each year the weather has cooperated. One of these years it will be an epic cold-weather run. In 2011 I can brag that I came in 3rd while Karl Meltzer came in 2nd. No, it wasn't a battle to the finish. He came in several hours before I did.

28. Pony Express Trail



Average time	Finishes	Best Time	Place
23:53:17	7	20:53:02	1st

The Pony Express Trail 100 is held on the historic Pony Express Trail in western Utah. I am the founder and the race director. I ordered this race easier in the list as far as toughness, but I ran this race several times very early in my ultrarunning career so had slower times then. Breaking 20 hours on this course has been well within my reach. I described this race in great detail in the chapter: [Birth of the Pony Express Trail Run](#). I believe this course is likely the fastest all-dirt point-to-point 100-mile race in the country.

29. Pickled Feet



Average time	Finishes	Best Time	Place
25:08:53	3	22:22:00	2nd

Pickled Feet 48/24/12/6 hour run is held at Eagle Island State Park, near Boise, Idaho. They also provide a 100-mile option. It runs on a mostly flat, smooth dirt road trail on a 2.5-mile loop. The scenery during the loop is great – rural farm land, by a small lake, and along a river. I run the 48-hour option one year and the 100-mile option two other times. Because this race is mostly dirt road or uneven trail, it is more difficult than loop courses that are rock-free or paved. On one of my years there I had stomach problems and ended up stopping for 6 hours before deciding to finish.

30. Pigtails Challenge



Average time	Finishes	Best Time	Place
20:49:51	2	20:34:00	2nd

The Pigtails Challenge is held at the Lake Youngs watershed near Renton, Washington. I had expected a park, but discovered that the 9.4-mile loop trail runs around the perimeter of a very protected reservoir that supplies drinking water for Seattle. Along the trail, there is only one place where you can get a glimpse of the lake. The perimeter trail is mostly a wide multi-use trail that is popular for running during the mornings and evenings. It is non-technical and well-maintained. Because of the wet weather, gravel is added frequently and this year the trail was well-graveled but still very fast. The trail rolls, with about 700 feet of climbing during each loop. I ran the 150-mile option, but had a good 100-mile split time. The sea-level altitude really helps. I returned in 2016 and ran the [100-miler](#), finishing in 2nd.

31. Jackpot



Average time	Finishes	Best Time	Place
20:50:13	2	20:51:31	6th

Jackpot 100 is held at Cornerstone Park near Las Vegas, Nevada. This race is a loop-format race on a 2.38-mile course with dirt road and pavement surfaces. There is a mild climb to run up twice each loop to mix things up but the course is pretty fast. Each lap includes about seven 90-degree turns to slow things down. The course the year I first ran it was probably a little short, 2.30 each loop so that made the 100-mile distance a bit easier. I returned the next year and beat my time by three minutes in 14 hours of rain. The course was again a bit short.

32. Crooked Road



Average time	Finishes	Best Time	Place
22:45:00	1	22:45:00	1st

Crooked Road is a 24-hour race held in Virginia with a 1.18-mile loop course, mostly dirt, with just a little bit of rolling along the way. This is a very good course to run high mileage. The year I ran it included high chilly winds at night which caused me to stop often, but I still came away with the win.

33. Across the Years



Average time	Finishes	Best Time	Place
22:03:57	8	19:40:00	1st

Across the Years a fixed-time race in Arizona, but I reached the 100-mile distance each year I ran there. The first year I ran the 24-hour race. I next ran the 48-hour race for three years, and this past year ran the 72-hour race. The race used to be held at Nardini Manor, in Buckeye, Arizona, west of Phoenix. We would do loops around the property on a nice soft surface. In 2010 I won the 48-hour race with 187 miles. The following year the race was moved to Camelback Park, the spring training baseball facility in Glendale, Arizona. The course changed to a hard dirt surface with some pavement. In 2011 I reached the 100-mile mark faster, but at the 150-mile mark I experienced bad leg pain which turned out to be a stress fracture. I limped to a 2nd place finish with 175 miles. For those two years, my 24-hour split would have won the 24-hour race.

34. Northcoast



Average time	Finishes	Best Time	Place
21:48:00	1	21:48:00	5th

North Coast 24-hour is one of the premier 24-hour events in the country. It is held at a park in Cleveland, Ohio, on the shore of Lake Erie, on a 100% paved trail. The track is a 0.9 mile track and has a gentle hill going up on one side of the course. The hill really never bothered me, and was a welcome change. But the wind was another matter. A fierce wind came off Lake Erie nearly the entire race, so each loop you had both a headwind and a tailwind to deal with. During the night I even took shelter for a while in a porto-potty. Later I became so cold that I had to rest for about 45-minutes in my car. But I still reached 100 miles and in 24 hours reached 107.7 miles, finishing very strong.

My Running “Firsts”



My greatest running love is doing long solo adventure runs. To make them even more interesting, I enjoy doing “firsts.” These are tough runs that as far as I know, no one has ever attempted or accomplished before. By publishing these “firsts” I hope that others attempt these and even run them faster, establishing fastest known times.

My “firsts” described below were all solo and either unsupported or self-supported. If anyone knows of someone who has accomplished these runs before or after me, I welcome the information. When I do these runs, I don’t try for “fastest known times” because I enjoy sight-seeing and taking pictures. My aim is to just finish. My motivation for documenting these are not to boast of “records” but to inspire others to do the same and find creative “firsts” to push the limits of what is possible.

Adventure runs can be supported, self-supported, and unsupported.

- **Supported** means you have a dedicated support team that meets you along the way to supply whatever you need.
- **Self-supported** means that you don’t carry everything you need from the start, but you don’t have dedicated, pre-arranged people helping you. This is commonly done a couple different ways: You might put out stashes of supplies for yourself prior to the trip, or you might just use what’s out there, such as stores, begging from other trail users, etc.
- **Unsupported** means you have no external support of any kind. Typically, this means that you must carry all your supplies right from the start, except any water that can be obtained along the way from natural sources.

Spanish Fork Canyon to Provo Canyon – July 2, 2004, 55 miles, unsupported, about 26:00 – [details](#)

I ran from Spanish Fork Canyon, starting below Soldier’s Summit, most of the way on the Great Western Trail to the South Fork of Provo Canyon. I was such a rookie, had never been on the route before, hauled a pretty heavy pack, and greatly underestimated the difficulty. Perhaps someone had done this before.



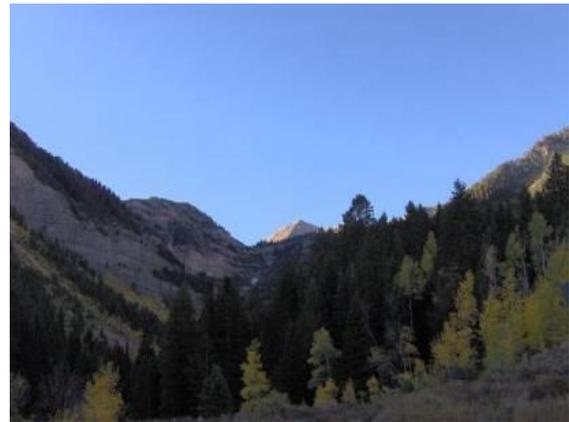
Loop around Lake Mountain – November 13, 2004, 32 miles, self-supported – [details](#)

I've accomplished this run all the way around Lake Mountain more than 15 times now. Several times I have run with friends. The route on the east side of the mountain is along a power line trail. I usually run that side before sunrise to avoid target shooters. (After the big 2012 fire, shooters are now banned, but some still appear.) I loop around the south side using Soldier Pass road. The east side is a straight dirt road in the valley to some dirt roads looping around the North end. Depending on the route, you can do an exact 50K. This is a great long training run. As of 2015, about a dozen other runners have made this run.



Quad Mount Timpanogos – June 30, 2006, 56 miles, self-supported, 20:51 (FKT) – [details](#)

Mount Timpanogos (11,749 feet) is the most popular hiking destination in Utah. I run the Timpooneke Trail because of its steady, runnable ascent and beautiful scenery through a series of four plateaus and meadows, collectively known as the Giant Staircase. The total elevation gain during this hike is 4,579 feet.



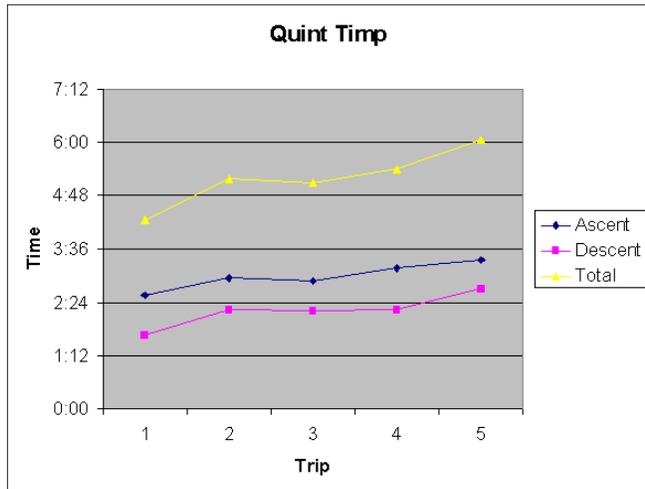
I had planned to run a triple Timpanogos, but on the way down from my third trip, I met fellow ultrarunner, Phil Lowry in the basin. He planned to match my triple accomplishment the following Monday. I said, "I should continue and do a quad today just to spite you!"

He replied, "I bet you can't do it. You will get to the bottom with sore legs and call it quits. I dare you to try." I smiled, knowing that he threw down a challenge I couldn't resist. He had left a note on my car that said, "We are all freaks, and you are our KING! You are nuts, Phil." I headed back up. Despite my slow pace, I was still going faster than all the hikers. At the top, local ultrarunner pioneer, Grizz Randall congratulated me. I did it! I accomplished the first Quad Timpanogos. That Monday, Phil Lowry attempted to match my quad. He allocated 17 hours for the feat and was pretty much on schedule, but called it quits after triple. He was the second person to accomplish a triple.

A few weeks later, Dallan Manscill matched my quad, doing it as supported run. I accomplished a quad two more times, once during my quint, another times during my sextuple.

Quint Mount Timpanogos – August 18, 2006, 70 miles, self-supported, 27:24 – [details](#)

Since Dallin had matched my quad, I was asked many times if I was going to go for five. Yes, I was determined, but fully knew how difficult it would be with nearly 24,000 feet of climbing. It would be a busy time on the mountain and many friends would witness my nutty accomplishment. As I passed people, many asked me the usual questions. I tried to explain that I was trying to break my record of four summits and do five consecutive summits. One guy asked me, “What kind of record is that, a record for the criminally insane?” During my fifth trip, word traveled up and down among the hikers what I was doing. I stopped to talk to many groups who were very encouraging and cheered me on. I arrived to the top for the fifth time without fanfare, just quietly went into the hut and signed the register. When I returned to the trailhead, a forest service guy was there and said, “There he is, the 5-summit guy!” My total time ended up being 27:24:36.



Grand Canyon R2R2R via Hermits Rest – November 24, 2006, 77 miles, self-supported, about 34:00 – [details](#)



I had previously accomplished ten R2R2Rs (double crossings) and wanted to start exploring the more remote areas of the canyon, so I decided to do a very long, different R2R2R, using the Hermit trail on the South Rim. I started at the North Rim, went to Hermit’s Rest on the South Rim and returned. The experience running on the remote Tonto Trail was amazing. It was difficult to run fast because it was faint and times and I kept losing it. The final climb up the North Rim was a painful, slow, death march, but I made it! I threw in an additional ten miles for fun to explore some additional sections of the Tonto Trail further down the river. In later years I would run that section.

While taking a picture of Granite Rapids on the Colorado River, a desert bighorn sheep came close to me and went right in my picture. As of 2016, I’m still the only person to have accomplished this R2R2R.



Seven Utah 13-ers – Kings-Emmons Ridge – July 7, 2007, 48 miles, unsupported, about 20:00 – [details](#)

The highest peak in Utah is Kings Peak, with an elevation of 13,528. In Utah there are 17 peaks that qualify as 13ers (over 13,000 feet). Utah has no peaks over 14,000 feet. All of these peaks are found in the Uinta Mountain range. One thing that makes summiting Utah's 13ers very difficult is the distances from the nearest roads to the peaks – 20-40 miles round trip.



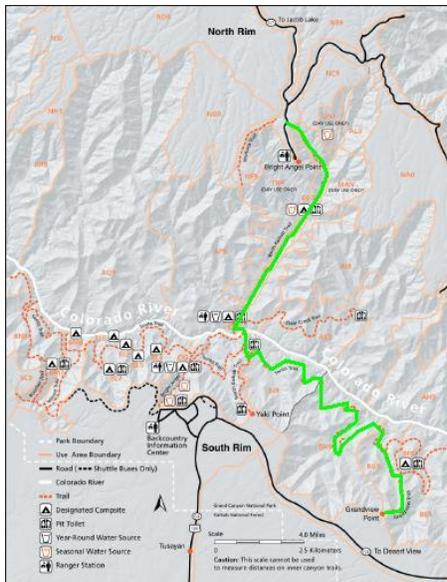
Kings-Emmons Ridge

The Kings-Emmons Ridge is the highest continuous ridge in Utah, one of the highest in the United States, and certainly the highest in the United States outside Colorado. Descriptions tell hikers that it will take them 4-6 days to do a round-trip of hiking the ridge. Four-to-six days? How about one day? I could do it.

This turned out to be the most dangerous solo adventure I ever ran. It is so remote with no one else up on that high ridge that involves boulder hopping for more than five miles. It required careful skill on moving boulders to avoid injury. I fell hard one time, hit my chin and nearly knocked myself out with no one around for miles. I'll never try this again solo, but I did it! I was the first person to travel the Kings-Emmons Ridge in one day from a trailhead, along the way summit 7 13-ers, and return to the trailhead. After finishing, that night, I had nightmares all night about boulder hopping. In 2015, two runners did Kings-Emmons Ridge as part of linking up all of the Utah 13-ers in 36:18.

Grand Canyon R2R2R via Grandview – October 12, 2007, 83 miles, unsupported, 34:07 – [details](#)

On this adventure, I accomplished a R2R2R (double crossing) from North Kaibab to Grandview Point and back, more than 83 miles. About forty of these miles were on the primitive East Tonto trail. In the hiking guides, ten days would be recommended for this adventure. I accomplished it in 34 hours. My climb up and down the South Rim was on the unmaintained Grandview Trail.



Route in Green

the primitive East Tonto trail. In the hiking guides, ten days would be recommended for this adventure. I accomplished it in 34 hours. My climb up and down the South Rim was on the unmaintained Grandview Trail.

I had navigation problems at night but my GPS would eventually get me back on the serpentine Tonto Trail. The final climb up to the North Rim was slow. It seemed like hundreds of hikers were coming down the trail. Because I was such a mess, they could tell that I had come a very long way. I explained to a few that I had come over 80 miles. Finally the end came in sight. I had done it! I had accomplished the first known double crossing from North Kaibab to Grandview Point

No one else has accomplished this feat. However, I repeated on November 26, 2009, 33:58 (FKT) – [details](#)

Utah Triple Crown – August 1, 2008, 37 miles, unsupported, 14:34 – [details](#)

For my 50th birthday, I figured since I was officially “over the hill,” why not go over some huge hills? I wanted to summit the three highest peaks in Utah and return to the trailhead, all in one day. This was inspired by Craig Lloyd, in 2003, who did it using a base camp, but so far no one had accomplished it from a trailhead. I wanted to be the first.

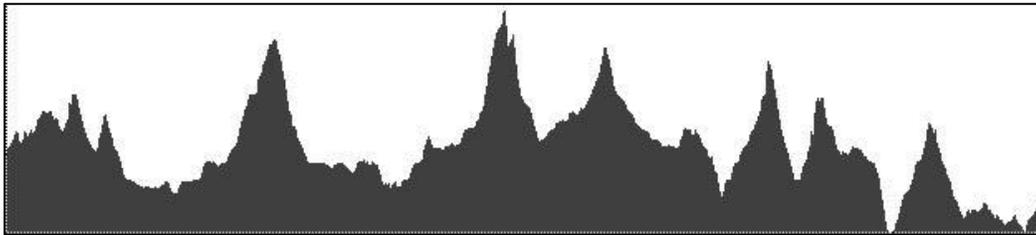


The three peaks, located in the Uinta Mountains are:

- 1- Kings Peak – 13,528
- 2- South Kings Peak – 13,512
- 3- Gilbert Peak – 13,442

I did it! The Utah Triple Crown. I returned home that evening in time for birthday cake. My final time was 14:34:59. But that time was very soft and was easily broken in the years to come by several others.

Solo Uinta Highline Trail, Leidy to Hayden, July 30, 2010, 78 miles, unsupported, 33:19 – [details](#)



Elevation profile of the Highline Trail

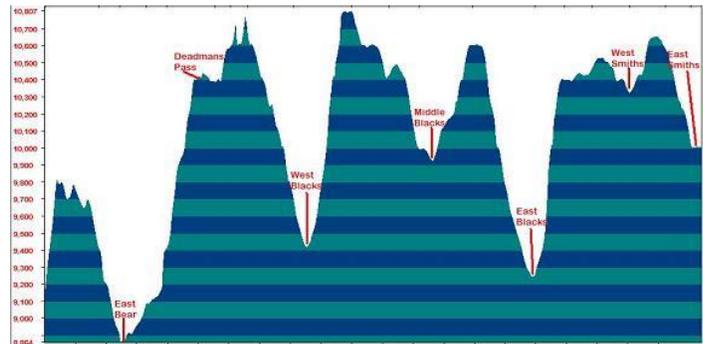
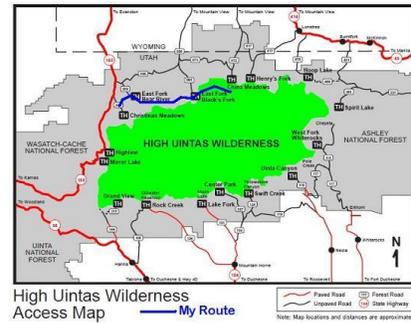
The highest continuous established trail in the Uintas is the Highline Trail (#025) that runs the length of the mountain range. In its entirety, the trail is more than 100 miles long. A 78-mile stretch from Leidy Peak on the east to Hayden Pass on the west is generally recognized as the end-to-end expanse of the trail. I had run much of this trail, but as of yet, no one had run/hiked it solo in less than three days. Others have fast packed the trail before, but no one solo in less than two days.

The hardest challenge about this adventure is getting off trail, even with a GPS. Some people who have never run it think it can be run solo in less than 24 hours. All I can say is prove it. Go try it. To do it fast solo, requires much familiarity of the trail and good experience in the Uintas.

So I did it. I set a speed record on the Uinta Highline Trail for Leidy Peak to Hayden Pass in 33:19:12. The time was soon broken but the solo time stood until the impressive run by the late Stephen Jones in 2013 who set the fastest known time of 27:41:49 and did it solo.

Bear River Smiths Fork Trail double, September 3, 2010, 59 miles, unsupported, 18:08 (FKT) – [details](#)

The Bear River – Smiths Fork Trail (#091) (Also sometimes referred to as the North Slope Trail) is a long-forgotten trail in the Uinta Mountains that crosses the North Slope from west to east. This mostly forest trail connects seven river forks, and climbs up and over six major ridges. It covers nearly 30 miles with climbs totaling more than 7,000 feet. The altitude for the route is between 8,800 feet and 10,800 feet.



Profile of trail

Because the trail is old and forgotten, there are few signs to identify it. Portions of the trail have been taken over by ATV routes, cross-country ski courses, and in a few short sections, newer dirt roads. Portions are faint and are a challenge to navigate. Because of infrequent trail maintenance in this section, the trail has about 400 deadfall downed trees to hop over. After scouting sections of the trail, I was ready to run it end-to-end and back. I started at 1:00 a.m. and finished about 7 p.m. the next evening. It had been an amazing adventure. The weather had been perfect. As of 2016, I'm still the only person to accomplish this.

Double Kings Peak, August 12, 2011, 52 miles, self-supported, 18:05 (FKT) – [details](#)

Kings Peak is the highest peak in Utah at 13,528 feet. All of Utah's peaks over 13,000 feet are located in the Uinta Mountains. I've summited ten of them. Kings Peak gets the most attention and each weekend in the summer dozens of hikers make the trek to the top.



Would it be possible to summit Kings Peak twice in one day, a double? This would involve running from the trailhead to the summit and back twice, a run of about 52 miles and about 10,000 feet of climbing with almost all of it above 10,000 feet. I heard that several people were going to attempt it this weekend, so I decided to join in. With all my experience doing multiple Timpanogos summits, I knew it would be tough, but very possible.

It was a long and tough adventure. I finally finished the first known Double Kings Peak in 19:44:10. I knew that was a terribly slow time, but still, I was the first person to do it. I think a good time would be

around 15 hours. The four others who attempted a double this weekend all quit after one trip. I knew how mentally tough it is to go back out after one trip, so it wasn't surprising. So, I was the last one standing (or stumbling).

In 2013, twice I attempted to do a Triple Kings Peak. Both times, I just could not pull myself out of my car for a third trip. It is so mentally tough to do. But, I did do two more doubles.

Repeated on August 3, 2013 – [details](#)

Repeated on August 9, 2013, 18:05 (FKT) – [details](#)

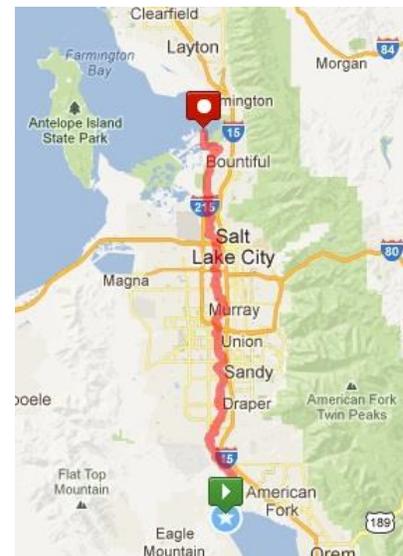
As of 2016, I am still the only person who has accomplished a double Kings Peak.

Loop around Utah lake – October 15, 2012, 82-84 miles, self-supported, 19:28 (FKT) – [details](#)

Every year, hundreds of bikers, bike around Utah Lake, a distance of about 100 miles. They go right by my house and it is fun to watch them. I got the crazy idea to try running around it. I knew I could cut the distance some, but using some old railroad tracks and some trail short cuts. I used convenient stores along the way as my aid stations. It was a long day but I did it. This [video](#) tells the story. In 2015, I [repeated this run](#) with an 84-mile course that avoided railroads. I finished in 19:28.

Utah Lake to Great Salt Lake – November 8, 2012, 58 miles, self-supported, about 14:00 – [details](#)

The Jordan River in Utah meanders for more than 50 miles between Utah's largest natural fresh-water lake (Utah Lake) and the famed Great Salt Lake. For many years a paved recreational trail has been constructed along the river. It is named: Jordan River Parkway Trail. As far as I can tell, no one has before attempted to run the trail end-to-end in one day. That was my quest for this urban adventure run. I decided to go further than that and link up with the Legacy Parkway Trail and the go out to the Great Salt Lake. This adventure wasn't difficult, it was mostly an urban run. I don't know anyone else who has accomplished this.

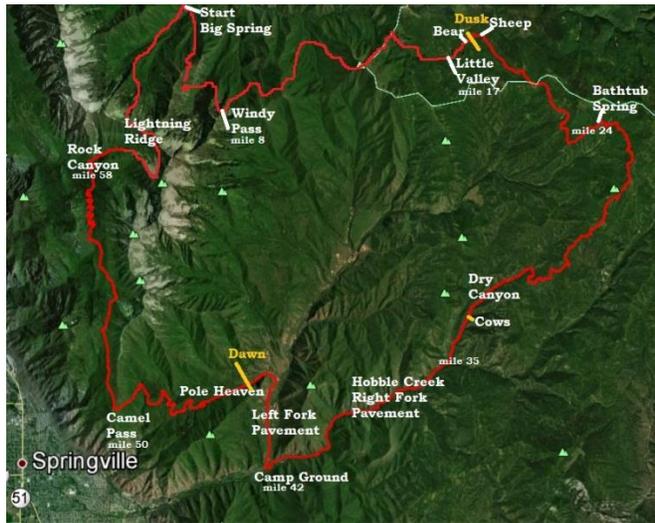


Run around the south Oquirrh Mountains – November 30, 2013 62 miles, self-supported, about 17:00 – [details](#)

I accomplished my 4th 100K+ training run in the past 22 days, for a big mileage month of 441 miles. I started at 2:00 a.m. in the little town of Cedar Fort, ran clockwise around the southern portion of the Oquirrh. Dawn came around mile 23 on the west side of the mountains. This [video](#) tells the whole story. No one else has been crazy enough to try this.

Solo unsupported Kat’cina Mosa 100K – June 21, 2013, 64 miles, unsupported, about 18:00 – [details](#)

One of toughest 100K races in the country is held in Utah, in August each year. It is called Kat’cina Mosa 100K. The course runs a huge loop behind the Wasatch Mountains that rise above Provo and Springville. Nearly half of the course shares the same course as Squaw Peak 50, but in the opposite direction. Kat’cina Mosa runs clockwise and includes about 17,000 feet of climbing along the way over its 62 miles. When I went to the store to buy my food for the run, I ran into a friend who was stocking his van for this weekend’s Wasatch Back Ragnar Relay. I chuckled as I observed the huge amount of food and drink stocked in the van for their series of 10K runs, and then looked down at the little bag of food that I would stuff into my small camelback, for my entire 62 miles.



I started in the afternoon and around dusk came close to a bear running across my route and during the night I was “herded” by a couple sheep dogs who wanted the bacon in my pocket. Later, I chased a cow and a calf for about three miles down a narrow canyon. I finally made it back to my car, accomplishing the 100K run. It had been a great adventure. I sure love running at night but can do without the wildlife and farm stock. No one else has be crazy enough to attempt this. I repeated this run in 2014.

Loop around Brown Duck Mountain – July 3, 2013, 33 miles, unsupported – [details](#)

This run is in the Uinta Mountains accessible from the South side. I ran around a large mountain, Brown Duck Mountain and reaches Cleveland Pass. The trailhead is north of Duchesne and Mountain Home, at Moon Lake. It was an easy drive, 2:45 from my home, all on pavement. The trail is very rugged at times, as most trails in the Uintas are. This [video](#) tells the story.

Five highest Wasatch Peaks – September 19, 2013, 40 miles, self-supported, 21:33 (FKT) – [details](#)

Could it be done? The highest peaks in Utah are found in the Uinta mountain range, but the most impressive peaks that rise from the valley floor to the sky are found in the Wasatch Front. Could the top five be summited in one day? This was one of my toughest “firsts.” It took me two separate attempts to do it. I thought I had climbed the six highest peaks, but later I learned that Bomber Peak doesn’t qualify, not having 300-feet of prominence. These mountains are in three different locations, requiring a 1.5-2 hour drive between them. When I finally finished, I felt pretty thrashed, especially from all the falls going up and down the last tough peak above Snowbird Ski resort. My Garmin indicated that I had climbed about 18,000 feet during my crazy run. While it wasn’t very far, it was very rugged. It felt like I had just finished a 100-mile race. No one else has ever attempted this in a day.



Loop around Mount Nebo – October 13, 2013, 47 miles, unsupported, about 15:00

I have a funny fascination with running completely around mountains. For this adventure I ran around Mount Nebo, the highest mountain in the Wasatch Front. I ran through pretty deep snow and on the south side just couldn't find the right route. I was stubborn and rather than just run the paved highway into Nephi, went back up a canyon to try to find the right way. I still missed it and eventually ran back to the highway into Nephi and then on roads back to my car on the northwest side of the mountain. The [video](#) tells the story. No one else has been crazy enough to attempt this.

Eight highest peaks in Utah County – July 3, 2015, 43 miles, supported, about 30:48 (FKT) - [details](#)

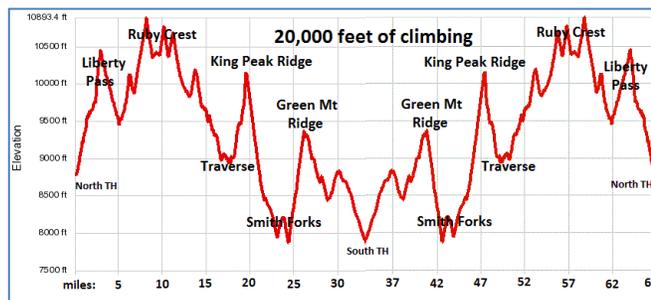
Would it be possible to bag the highest six peaks in Utah County in a day? As I looked closer, why not do all eight peaks in Utah County that are above 11,000 feet? The goal stuck in my mind. I knew it would be very tough, with about 20,000 feet of climbing, but I believed it could be done, and by me. On [July 4, 2014 I made my attempt](#). Fireworks were firing off all evening below me in the valleys inspiring me on. But I came up short and only bagged five peaks. I learned a ton and still believed that it could be done.



A year passed and I made my second attempt on July 3, 2015. Using all the experience from the past year, I made careful plans to compress the time it would take and to do the most difficult sections during daylight. My progress improved compared to the year before by hours, and with some help with friends, I was on the top of the 8th peak in 28 hours and back to my car in 30:48.

Double Ruby Crest – June 26, 2015, 66.6 miles, supported, about 25:38:07 (FKT) - [details](#)

The Ruby Mountains are a range 80 miles long in Nevada above the small cities of Wells and Elko. They can be seen prominently from I-80 and usually are snow-covered late into the summer. As I've driven by, I've wondered about this range rising above the desert floor and whether or not there were any good trails up there. With some checking, I discovered the existence of the Ruby Crest National Recreation Trail, most of which runs through the Ruby Mountains Wilderness area between 8,000 and 11,000 feet elevation. Trailhead to trailhead is about 33.7 miles. If you use the shorter pack trail alternative on the north end, the distance is about 33.3 miles.



I decided that I wanted to run the trail end-to-end and back. As far as I can tell, the fastest known time (FKT) for the trail in one direction is by Stephen Lindsay in 2013, starting from the Harrison pass in 10:23. It is unknown what his trailhead time was, probably around 9:45.

The adventure was incredible and the mountains beautiful. All the climbing totaled about 20,000 feet along the way. That turned out to be one of my finest solo adventure runs ever. The Ruby Mountains are an amazing place. I'm sure I will return and run the trail much faster.

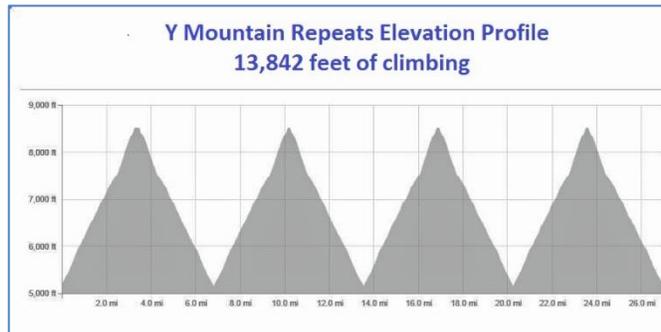
South Oquirrh Mountain Traverse – June 14, 2015, 20.1 miles, unsupported (FKT) 11:42 - [details](#)

The Oquirrh Mountains is a mountain range that runs north-south for 30 miles on the west side of Salt Lake Valley and Utah County. I had climbed up to the ridge top in three spots and have always wondered if it was possible to traverse the entire southern portion of the range along the ridge top, starting from the desert floor at Fairfield to Butterfield Canyon. This turned out to be a rugged difficult adventure but I utilized amazing deer trails that traverse near the tops of the ridges and bagged all the named peaks on the ridge, Lewiston, Flat Top, Lowe, Kelsey, and Butterfield Peaks. My time from the desert floor to the highest Butterfield Peaks was nearly exactly 12 hours. I then ran the canyons back to Cedar Pass and my car, for a total adventure run of 40 miles. In 2016 I [duplicated this run](#) and improved my ridge time to 11:42.



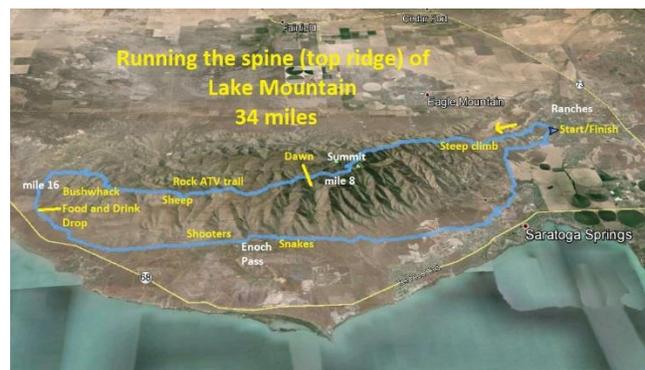
Quad Top of Y Mountain – May 30, 2015, 27 miles, self-supported, 11:20:52 (FKT) - [details](#)

Periodically I like to insert “repeats” into my training. I will select a difficult day hike and see how many times in a row I can do it in, at a much faster pace than hikers. On the day I chose to do repeats to the top of Y Mountain in Provo Utah from the trailhead to the top of the city overlook, four times. The trail first climbs to the top of the block Y on the mountain and then continues on up a couple of steep valleys to the top of the mountain. I successfully climbed it four times in a row, certainly a first because it is so crazy to do.



End to end Lake Mountain on spine – May 2, 2015, 16 miles, unsupported, 5:50 - [details](#)

Lake Mountain rises 3,200 feet behind my home. I’ve run around it many time, run up and down it many times, but felt it was time to run the entire spine of the mountain end to end. I’ve come close in the past but used a valley road to descend on the southern end. Instead, I wanted to stay up on the ridges to the far south end at Soldier’s Pass Road. I started at 2:45 a.m. and did the long northern ascent in the dark. Much of the ascent is bushwhacking on deer trails, but eventually you join with roads near the utility towers and there is a 4WD road all along the top. It eventually descends into a canyon, but I stayed up on



the spine and bushwhacked from ridge to ridge descending to the south. Once accomplished, I ran back to my starting point using the foothills for a 34-mile adventure.

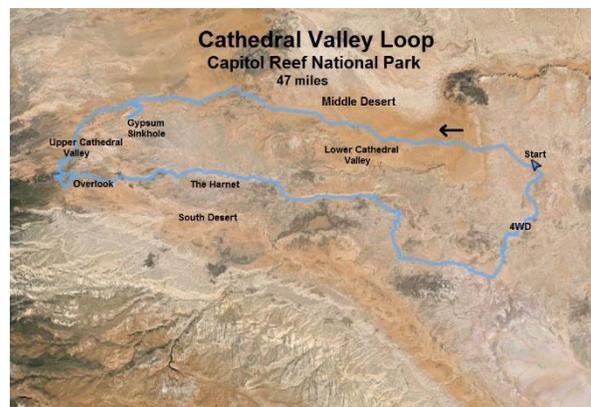
Run around the Onaqui Mountains – March 12, 2016, 48 miles, unsupported, 10:30 - [details](#)

These mountains lie south of the Stansbury Mountains (Deseret Peak) and north of the Pony Express Trail. The south end and west side involves fast dirt road running and I visited the small town of Terra. From there the route is paved up and over Johnson Pass to the little town of Clover. The run on the east side required some creativity and route finding. My chosen route could have been much tighter around the east side mountain range to reduce miles, but would have needed more bushwhacking, more ups and downs, and running on some private property. I was content to run a loop approaching 50 miles.



Cathedral Valley Loop – February 16, 2016, 47 miles, self-supported, 10:24 (FKT) - [details](#)

Cathedral Valley is one of the great remote areas of Utah, part of Capitol Reef National Park. It contains amazing sandstone monoliths. Not many people make this trip. It usually requires a high-clearance vehicle and at times a 4WD vehicle. I decided that I would try to run the entire Cathedral Valley loop. Instead of running the highway to connect the ends of the road, I used a remote 4WD road (0146) to complete the loop. Surely no one had ever attempted this before. With some sight-seeing detours along the way, my run was 47.2 miles.



Quad Squaw Peak – May 7, 2016, 30 miles, self-supported, 9:54 (FKT) - [details](#)

Squaw Peak is a prominent peak rising above the BYU campus at Provo Utah. To get in some good hill training, one morning I decided to do repeats. One round-trip involves 7.4 miles and 2,800 climbing. I started early, at 2:30 a.m. I had hoped to do five, but on my fourth trip a storm hit, turning the trail into a “slip-and-slide.” The trail does quickly dry and I should have continued, but mentally the storm had rattled me and I was ready to quit.



Sanpitch Mountains Traverse - May 14, 2016, 52 miles, unsupported, 16:30 - [details](#)

The Sanpitch Mountain Range is just south of the Wasatch Mountains. It is about 40 miles long and its highest point is Salt Creek Peak (9,997 feet). My adventure was hard and tough. It started off with some steep scrambling to get to the top of the range. The snow was still deep in parts but I made good progress and ran with amazing views all day. My exit from the range involved a remote canyon with rattlesnakes and a bobcat to keep me company.



Run around the Simpson Mountains - May 21, 2016 – 49 miles, unsupported, 11:56 (FKT) - [details](#)

The Simpson Mountains are a mountain range in the remote west desert of Utah that rise nearly 4,000 feet above the desert floor. They are about 13 miles long and ten miles across. They are named for explorer Captain James H. Simpson, a topographical engineer who explored the routes near this mountain range in 1858-59. I began my run at 2:42 a.m. from the site of Porter Rockwell’s historic ranch from the 1850s, near Government Creek. My run all the way around took me just under 12 hours and I had to run against some brutal headwinds while going south.



Pahvant Mountains Traverse – June 10, 2016 – 58 miles, unsupported, 18:00 - [details](#)

The Pahvant Mountains are a range in Central Utah above Scipio, Richfield, and Fillmore. It is about 44 miles long and 10 miles across. There are a number of peaks above 10,000 feet. I ran starting at the valley floor in Scipio, at the north end of the range and ran up to the main ridge, all the way across using trails and dirt roads, and then descended back to the valley floor on the south end at Richfield. My run was spectacular with beautiful green slopes and an explosion of wildflowers. The next day I partially ran back to the start in the valley until pouring rain fell.



Sextuple Mount Timpanogos – July 5, 2016, 84 miles, self-supported, 35:55 (FKT) – [details](#)

Nearly ten years passed since I accomplished five consecutive summits of Mount Timpanogos. No one had matched or broken that record. I had attempted and failed three times to increase the record to six and each time vowed I wouldn't try again. But in July, 2016, I found the determination again, blocked off enough time to allow doing it, and finally succeeding in running up and down the mountain six times. Little did I know that two friends had been planning for several months to match or break my record of five and I shocked them that I upped the record just a few days before their attempt. Scott Wesemann became the next person to accomplish six, but couldn't continue on for seven.



Mount Timpanogos Hill Training

Because of its impact on my running development, I must include an entire chapter on Mount Timpanogos (locally in Utah referred to as “Timp”). For more than 100 years, Mount Timpanogos (11,749 feet) has been the most popular hiking destination in Utah. Timp towers over the valley floors below by more than 7,000 feet – an impressive sight that draws hikers of all ages to its trails. A single round trip to the summit on the trail covers about 14 miles and climbs almost 4,700 feet. (Compare this to about 4,460 feet elevation change hiking down into the Grand Canyon from the South Rim (Bright Angel trail) and back with about the same mileage).



Two trails are the most common accesses to the summit, Timpooneke Trail (from American Fork Canyon) and Mount Timpanogos Trail near Aspen Grove (from Provo Canyon). I prefer the Timpooneke Trail because of its steady, runnable ascent. The trail ascends through a large valley, climbing through a series of four major plateaus, collectively known as the Giant Staircase. You travel by impressive waterfalls, forests, and meadows with wildflowers. Deer and moose are commonly seen along the way.

The final step in the staircase is the Timpanogos Basin (elevation 10,100 feet), a wide-open plateau, surrounded by mountains on three sides. From this basin it is about two miles to the summit. You first climb up to a saddle that presents a view of Utah Valley to the west. Lastly, you make a rough, rocky climb that is steep at times up to the summit.



The trail is mostly runnable, but pretty technical. There are only short sections where the trail is smooth. Most of the trail has large rocks imbedded in it and some rock-slide sections have loose rock. The final steep climb to the summit has many loose rocks. Running quickly down the trail requires intense concentration. I enjoy the trail because it is so technical.

In 2002, I made my first ascent up Timp. It was a slow ten-hour adventure that wore me out. I was physically drained and felt sick and sore for two days. Eight to ten hours or more is typical hiking time for this strenuous hike. Now, a typical trip for me (without racing it) takes about four hours, 2:20 up and 1:40 down with no stops. My fastest round-trip time has been 3:10. I rarely try to race it because I realize that if I do, it will involve one or two falls because of the technical nature of the trail and also because of the distraction of having many hikers also on the trail. During my 3:10 trip, I was on schedule to break three hours, but I fell twice, pretty badly, and those falls took the wind out of my sails. The fastest known time to the top was 1:15:36 by Danny Moody.

As I was developing as an ultrarunner, my mentor, Phil Lowry, introduced to me using the Timp trail for training and to keep track of career summits. Previously I had started to run up and down the mountain but would not do it right, stopping at a saddle, skipping the rugged climb to the summit. Phil helped me understand that reaching the summit each time is what it is all about. As I concentrated on regular trips up the mountain my hill climbing strength increased and it improved my altitude acclimatization. My confidence and ability on to run technical trails was improved.



Timp legends Phil Lowry and Ben Woolsey – more than 1,000 summits.

On June 28, 2016, Phil accomplished his 500th summit. In 2013 Ben reached 600 career summits, an astonishing achievement, probably about 4,000 hours on that mountain. In 2015 Ben did an amazing 100 summits to push his total over 700. In 2016 he reached 800 summits.

By 2016, I had been on the Timp summit 87 times. Surprisingly about 65 of the summits were accomplished at night, in the dark. Traditionally, many college students start their hike very early in the morning in order to reach the summit by sunrise. I really enjoy running up the trail at night because I can chase these lights on the mountain. It is a great game. But also, since I do much of my training during the early morning, it is a perfect match because I know the trail so well, every turn, and so many of the rocks. The groups of hikers can see me coming, sometimes getting scared seeing my green light zoom up the mountain. Once, I had a red headlamp and was also holding my green light. A group tracked my swift progress and when I reached them, they were pretty terrified. They admitted that they thought I was an alien.

When I run down, usually in the dawn light, I often get asked by these young hikers why I'm running down so fast, if something is wrong. My favorite answer is, "She's going to blow! The mountain is going

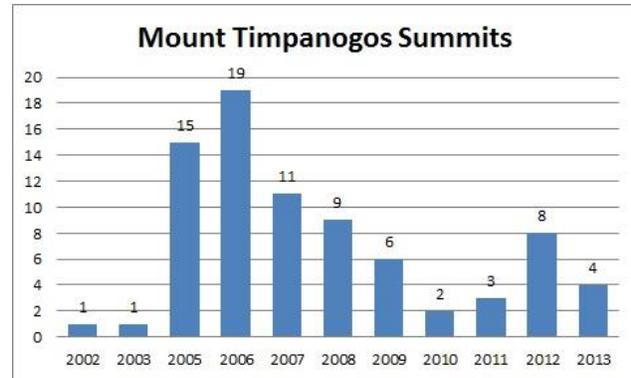
During 2006, Phil was in a duel with Ben Woolsey for #1 in career Timp summits. Phil passed Ben, and by 2007 Phil had about 360 summits to Ben's 340. But Ben is a retired postman from Orem, Utah and once Phil moved further north, and later served in Afghanistan, Ben continued on.



Ben Woolsey's 600th Timp Summit

to blow!” (Timp is NOT a volcano). I chuckle as I keep running seeing the wide-eyed response of the college kids. Passing all these youngsters is good for the ego. Comments always include something like, “you are a freaking animal,” or “you are my hero!” My response sometimes is, “I’m just an old man out for a morning stroll.”

As my ultrarunning experience increased, and I started to become more competitive in races, I shifted to do smarter training to increase my speed. Running up and down Timp was great for increasing climbing strength and for altitude training, but it didn’t enhance my foot speed. It is a difficult trail to run down with great speed. I discovered as I added more tempo runs and some speed work into my training, that my overall performance dramatically increased in 2009-2010.



My personal emphasis in climbing Mount Timpanogos has not been to achieve career summits. But I have caused a stir with my Timp repeats.

The Double Timpanogos

I remember in 2003 observing a guy running the trail for the first time and I was very surprised to notice that he ran the trail twice! He only went to the saddle and back twice, but still, I was impressed. Accomplishing a double Timpanogos hike is a significant physical and mental challenge. To achieve this feat, you do the hike twice in one day with a very short rest at the trailhead between trips to eat and drink. The nearly 9,400-foot climb and 9,400 descent in about 28 miles is a grueling physical challenge, but the mental aspect is just as challenging. After finishing an exhausting single hike/run, you must turn right around and make yourself repeat the same physical challenge again.

I have accomplished the double Timp on quite a few occasions. During such a deed, I would pass other hikers as many as 3-4 times. When they finally realize that they have seen you pass them multiple times, they insist on knowing what is going on. Reactions are amusing. People are flabbergasted at the thought of hiking it twice, not to mention seeing you run many portions of the trail. On my first double experience several hiking groups cheered me as I descended for the second time. I remember one group started a chant, “Go for 3, go for 3.”

The Triple Timpanogos

I was the second person to accomplish a triple Timp. Chris Myers first did it in the mid-90s. Others who have accomplished a triple are: Phil Lowry, Dallan Manscill, Brent Rutledge, Craig Lloyd and Scott Wesemann. Read my Triple adventures: [June 29-30, 2005](#), [October 14-15, 2007](#).

The Quad Timpanogos

On June 30, 2006, I had planned to run another triple Timpanogos, but on the way down from my third trip, I met my mentor, Phil Lowry in the basin. He planned to match my triple accomplishment the following Monday. I said, “I should continue and do a quad today just to spite you!” He replied, “I bet you can’t do it. You will get to the bottom with sore legs and call it quits. I dare you to try.” I smiled, knowing that he threw down a challenge I couldn’t resist. He had left a note on my car that said, “We are

all freaks, and you are our KING! You are nuts, Phil.” I headed back up. Despite my slow pace, I was still going faster than all the hikers. At the top, local ultrarunner pioneer, Grizz Randall congratulated me. I did it! I accomplished the first quad Timpanogos. My four trips took a total of 22 hours. You can read the details [here](#).

That Monday, Phil Lowry attempted to match my quad. He allocated 17 hours for the feat and was pretty much on schedule, but called it quits after triple. He was the second person to accomplish a triple. A few weeks later, Dallan Manscill matched my quad, doing it as supported run.

The Quint Timpanogos

Since Dallan had matched my quad Timp, I was asked many times if I was going to go for five. Yes, I was determined, but fully knew how difficult it would be with nearly 24,000 feet of climbing. I went to face the challenge on August 18, 2006. It would be a busy time on the mountain and many friends would witness my nutty accomplishment. As I passed people, many asked me the usual questions. I tried to explain that I was trying to break my record of four summits and do five consecutive summits. One guy asked me, “What kind of record is that, a record for the criminally insane?” During my fifth trip, word traveled up and down among the hikers what I was doing. I stopped to talk to many groups who were very encouraging and cheered me on. I arrived to the top for the fifth time without fanfare, just quietly went into the hut and signed the register. When I returned to the trailhead, a forest service guy was there and said, “There he is, the 5-summit guy!” My total time ended up being 27:24:36. Read the details [here](#).

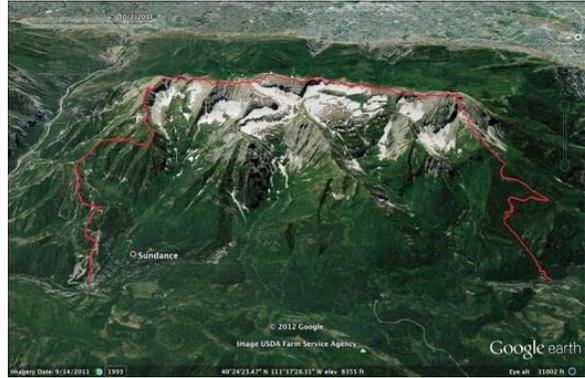
As of 2016, I was still the only person to accomplish a quint Timpanogos. Three times I went up the with the hopes to do six, but each time I only did two or three and came home vowing that I’ll never try again to break it, that it is just too stupid and hard. Others have their eye on it. In 2013, Jennilyn Eaton attempted to break it but was turned away by bad weather before her third summit.

Finally in July 2016, I again found the determination to try to accomplish six. I was in very good shape and confident that I could do it, even at the age of 57. I succeeded! It was 84 miles and 27,000 climbing in 35:55. I became the first person to accomplish a [Sextuple Mount Timpanogos](#). Little did I know just three days later, friends Craig Lloyd and Scott Wesemann set off to tie or break my record. They had been planning on doing this for several months and I totally shocked them went out of the blue I upped the record a few days before their attempt. Together and with others they attacked the mountain. For my repeats I did it all self-supported and alone which makes it much more difficult. But Craig and Scott were successful. Craig accomplished five and Scott matched my six in 36:31 to share the record with me.

While it may seem that these repeat trips are pretty insane, they actually trained me to be very mentally tough, to continue when everything screamed at me to stop. This helped me later on to have the mental toughness to avoid DNFs, to continue on loop format courses, and have the mental toughness for fixed-time races. I also became the first person to run a double Kings Peak, the highest peak in Utah. A double involves about 52 miles. As of 2016 I still am the only person to do that and have accomplished it three times.

Running the Timpanogos Ridge

In 2013, I tried something new for me on Timpanogos, to run the entire Timpanogos ridge, summiting all the peaks along the way. In 2012, Jared Campbell accomplished this amazing feat doing both the climb and descent using routes, not trails. (See route to right).



I wasn't as daring, and instead chose to use the established trail to reach the top in the middle and then do out-and-backs to both ends of the ridge, essentially running it twice.



The first time I did this, I ran it during the night and in the fog! It was a crazy adventure and you can read the details [here](#). A week later I repeated it because I was trying to summit the six highest Wasatch peaks in one day. I did accomplish this crazy feat. (Actually it was the five highest peaks using a 300-foot prominence definition. Bomber Peak misses that definition by a few feet). Read the details of that adventure [here](#). I again ran the ridge during when I summited the eight highest peaks in Utah County in 2015. Read about that adventure [here](#).

Including all my runs on the mountain, I've probably run nearly 2,000 miles on Timp.

In those early years 2004-2006, practically the only runners that could be seen on the mountain were Phil and I, but today from June to October you can see many runners every weekend making their way up and down the mountain. In June there is usually still large snow fields to cross and the entire Basin may be covered making the ascent slower, but if you know the right early season routes, you can get down the mountain very fast. It is best to learn the trail well, going up first with someone experienced. I've seen so many first-timers taking some wrong turns and get in trouble, especially in the early season. Be careful up there.



After 2013, I mostly retired from running Timp, instead choosing to run in new places rather than on the same mountain over and over again.

Health and Life Balance

In my early years of ultrarunning, at times well-meaning friends would confront me to let me know that they thought I could be ruining my life and the lives of others by participating in, and encouraging ultrarunning. As of 2016, after nearly twelve years in sport, my family and friends know now this is part of my life and it seems like concerns have decreased because my happy life goes on. But all new runners in the sport will probably be confronted by similar concerns. I don't claim to be a doctor or family therapist of any kind, but I can offer opinions that comes through my experience after nearly ten years of ultrarunning.

Some typical beliefs are:

1. That because low-mileage runners get injured, surely a high-mileage ultrarunner is seriously damaging their body far more.
2. That some exercise is of course good, but the level of exercise an ultrarunner participates in not normal and therefore unhealthy.
3. That ultrarunners are neglecting their families and are being selfish.

Let me deal with each concern:

Concern #1: Because low-mileage recreational runners get injured, surely a high-mileage ultrarunner is seriously damaging their body far more.

I believe that ultrarunners are far less-susceptible to injury than what I'll call a "recreational runner." This is someone who may run now and then and perhaps gets serious enough about it to run a marathon. When I was a recreational runner (and a poor one), I was always getting injured or sick, and it would make me quit running. I then became a couch potato, gained weight and continued with poor health. I see these types of runners always battling injuries. I constantly advise runners how to recover from injuries.

There is one huge difference in the running I do. I generally avoid roads like the plague. Most of the time, I only run roads during a road race (5k, 10k, etc.) or during the winter when the trails are muddy. This makes a huge difference on the wear and tear of an ultrarunner's body. I do believe that high-mileage on roads can be damaging to the body over time because of the jarring caused on joints and bones. Running on soft trails are a world of difference.

I also believe that once ultrarunners have established a high mileage base (and frequently they do go through injury to reach this) that their body has gone through some amazing adjustments that now prevent injuries that are typical with a recreational runner. I'm always asked, "Aren't you ruining your knees?" No. My knees now are stronger, the ligaments and sinews tighter, such that they can endure great distances without problem. I don't get common running injuries like ITBS or runner's knee problems anymore. People just



"To avoid overtraining, fitness experts say you shouldn't swim more than 3 or 4 times a week!"

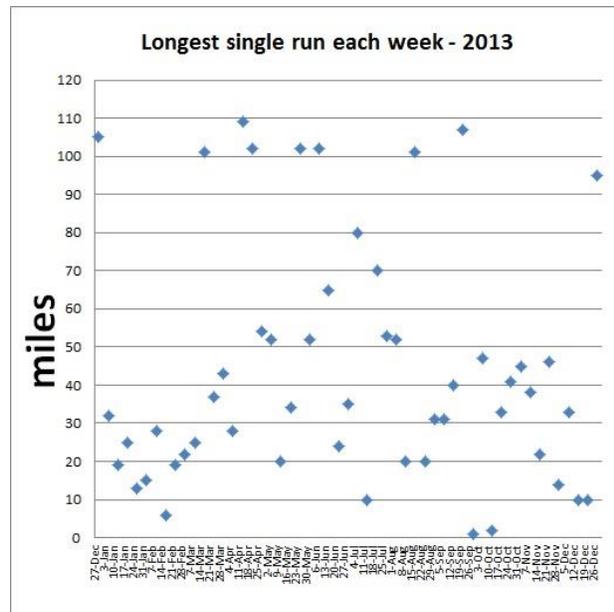


"Refusing to go to the gym is not the same thing as resistance training."

can't understand the wonder of the human body, that it can do amazing things to adjust once it has become used to the stress. It puts up new barriers to protect itself from that stress.

Many people don't have an understanding of the fast recovery ultrarunners experience once they have a high-mileage base. After my first 100-mile race, I could hardly walk for a week, and couldn't run for a month. I also experienced some soft-tissue damage in my knee. But I didn't have that high-mileage base to protect me. Now I do. I can run a 4-hour marathon and feel no pain the next day. I can run a 50-mile race, and be out running pain-free in three days.

In 2013 I experimented with doing very long runs each week instead of running every day. I discovered that my body adjusted and could start recovering faster than it ever had before. I was even able to run two 100-milers with only five days rest between them. I performed well in both, each under 24 hours. But this is hard to understand if you haven't experienced it. If a recreational runner feels pain for a month after a marathon, surely ultrarunners must feel several months of pain after a 100-milers. The logic doesn't hold.



Does this mean that I don't get injured? Yes I do, especially because in 2014 I am turning 56 years old. Here are some of my chronic injuries that I deal with.

1. I have some numbness in my feet — the ball of my feet extending to a couple toes. It is minor and I don't really notice it much anymore. After long races it will be more pronounced, but then it mostly goes away. I don't see this as a problem.

2. I have a neuroma in the ball of my right foot. This is a bunching of nerves that can cause severe pain extending out to your toes. Anyone can get this, even non-runners. I just deal with it. Good shoes help. Using a thinner insole helps. During a race it can flare up for about ten miles and really hurt, but then it calms down.

3. I tore the meniscus in my right knee when I was an over-weight backpacker. So, I have less cartilage protection in that knee. I can feel pain there at times, but I have learned to manage it and the knee has become stronger and now protects itself. I feel far less pain in it than years ago. I feel less pain if I consistently run. Nine years after my knee surgery, I went back to my orthopedic surgeon to have him check the knee again. An MRI showed no new damage at all. When I told that doctor that I had run 24,000 miles on that repaired knee, he started bragging to all his office staff.

4. About once a year I bruise my bladder, usually due to running dehydrated. The result is soreness in the abdomen and hematuria (blood). This can be alarming, but a running doctor understands what is going on. I let it heal and am more careful about hydration.

5. I get sesamoiditis in my feet. There are two little bones in the ball of the foot behind the big toe named sesamoids. These have become irritated over time and get inflamed. They are not fractured, but the surrounding tissue has grown more, in an attempt to protect them. The cause is pretty simple – shoes too narrow. Wider shoes solve the problem for me. Large toe boxes like the Altra shoes have worked great.

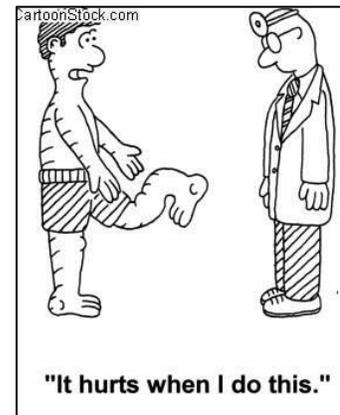
6. I have some cool scars on my arms and legs from face-plants on the trail. Big deal, at age 55 I'm not entering beauty contests anymore. To prevent this, I like running with hand-held running bottles. When I fall, the bottles take the brunt of the damage.

7. I have Peroneal Tendonitis in my left ankle. This was caused by a badly rolled ankle and is a common runner injury. I've learned to manage it and protect the tendon from further stress.

8. I have a hamstring pull that flairs up. I injured it running a silly 5K too fast for my age, not in a 100-miler

9. In 2012 I experienced my most serious injury, a stress fracture in my tibia. This was caused by running in old shoes that caused my right foot to turn in too much. Rather than let it heal, I aggravated it more and then couldn't run for six months. I learned a lot about bones and taking the time to heal.

10. OK I did break my hand while running a 100-miler, but it was a freak accident. I was running down a slick grassy slope and my feet flew out in front of me. I put my hand down on the grass and a sharp rock hit it in just the right place. I continued on and did finish that race. The X-ray technician was skeptical about my story. The break looked like I punched someone or something.



So that is it. Nothing terrible besides the problem leg bone. No ITBS problems, no planter fasciitis, no serious muscle problems, and no back problems.

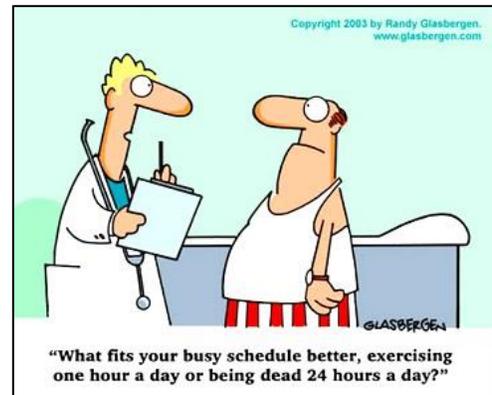
Articles pop up every year about some study that concludes that ultrarunning is unhealthy. [Here](#) is a recent article. Some have posted this article as proof that ultrarunning is unhealthy. But if you read closely, you understand that yes, we probably have more allergy problems than others (well, we are in the outdoors a ton more), and have more asthma. But: "ultramarathon runners appear healthier and report fewer missed work or school days due to illness or injury."

When I have health checkups, all is OK. My cholesterol level is great because of the super high level of HDL caused by good fitness. Nurses who draw my blood always comment on the wonderful deep red color due to high oxygen content. When I had an EKG the technician commented on my strong heart and said, "you must be a runner." My resting heart rate is about 50. Yes, I have hay fever and sinus problems, but I have had that all my life.

I haven't addressed nutrition. While my nutrition has improved, I'm not a shining example in this space and could do better.

Concern #2: Some exercise is of course good, but the level of exercise an ultrarunner participates in not normal and therefore unhealthy.

Recreational runners for some reason believe there is a wall at 26.2 miles and that anything over that is not normal. What is so magic about 26.2 miles? Yes runners constantly complain about “hitting the wall” before that distance. They therefore think it is a barrier, and anyone going past that is not normal and doing something amazing or unhealthy. All of this is pretty silly and is mostly just a misunderstanding of how to fuel properly and get the balance in your body to prevent the crash into the “wall.” In most of these cases, their body hasn’t yet adjusted to the stress of high mileage. Just because they haven’t experienced the lack of pain and stress at long distances, doesn’t mean it isn’t possible, even for them.



I probably exercise on average about 8-12 hours per week. Is that excessive? Because I now have a high-mileage base and my body has adapted in amazing ways, I can be dormant for days and then just jump right back into the saddle with no problem for even higher performance. I’m not exercising huge amounts each week. Yes if I was young and wanted to be an elite ultrarunner, winning races, I would need to do much more. But, as of 2016, I’m 57 years old. It is not going to happen. I’m happy with strong performance in races and a fitness level so I can do them often.

I don’t follow ridged training programs that prescribe how many miles you “must” run each day to prepare for a race. I watch out for overtraining and have learned to detect the signs of fatigue. If I need to rest, I will skip days.

With the amount of exercise I do, I know far more about my body. I understand the signals it sends me when there is something wrong. I believe strongly that if I develop a serious illness, that I will detect it far faster than when I was a couch potato. I know my body now. I didn’t before. I believe my life will be extended for years more because of ultrarunning if I’m lucky enough to avoid accident and disease. As a couch potato, or even as an occasional recreational runner, I didn’t have this knowledge or fitness to protect my body.



Concern #3: Ultrarunners are neglecting their families and being selfish.

This is a danger. Yes, many ultrarunners neglect their families. I especially worry about younger runners who have busy families with young children. I hope they aren’t missing out on experiences with their families that they will later regret.

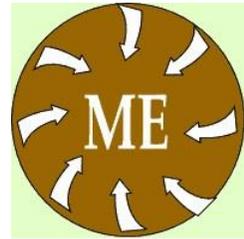
I took up ultrarunning in my mid-40s as my children were leaving the nest. I try to be careful with my time. I sleep about 7 hours on average per night. Once I became fit, I discovered that my sleeping needs decreased. My wife sleeps about nine hours on average per night. My remaining teenager at home seems to sleep 12 hours a day. Therefore, there is on average at least 2 hours per day when I’m awake and the rest of the family is asleep. I try to do almost



all of my training during those hours. Where is the harm to the family? Yes, for races I'm away, but I try to get my family to go with me at times and when I add up the days, I'm away from home far, far, less than others who have demanding jobs that take them away from home. My wife isn't a runner. We negotiate on time. I try to listen and be a good husband and father. We have a very happy family life.

Most people think that in order to run 100 miles, you need to run every day. Not so. Taking a look at my 2010 running history, I ran about 3,400 miles that year, but only ran on average 3.5 days per week. I never train on Sundays and I believe firmly that a day of rest every week helps a ton. In 2013, when I concentrated on running very long single runs each week, I ran a total of 3,200 miles, but on average only 2.5 days per week.

Some argue that ultrarunning is a very selfish use of time. I don't buy this at all. I am also a musician and used to spend hours each week practicing. How is this talent less selfish? I can share that talent by playing for others. I make sure my ultrarunning experience is not selfish by writing about my experiences and sharing them with others. This is very fulfilling. I'm hopeful that my writings have affected many other people who have been inspired to improve their lives with better fitness or set greater heights in their goals. Its not just about me, its more about others.



From a good friend: "I've been reading this blog for years. Davy's 'selfish' ultrarunning has dramatically changed my life. In August 2008 I was diagnosed with Type 2 Diabetes, complete with all the side effects, blurring vision, urinary problems, circulation problems and more. I was overweight and it hurt to stand up and walk." This friend started walking and then ran. Eventually he could run a 50K. He continued, "Six months from truly poor health to being able to run 32 miles. This insane and crazy sport has freed me. Down over 40 pounds, blood sugar is normal, side effects are gone. Thanks for being selfish Davy."

From another reader, "I know a lot of us ultrarunners get the same questions from friends and family with a concerning tone. I first tried to explain to them how great it felt to push my limits and open up doors within myself I never knew existed, but soon realized I was not closing the gap with their understanding. Nevertheless, a few do understand and helped crew which resulted in them getting a peek into what is possible. Some have even started to live healthier and exercise after hearing about my experience, although they have no plans to go the distances we do. I warn them that the only limit is in their head!"

Lastly, I would like to put in a plug for the [Pony Express Trail 50 and 100](#). I purposely designed the format of the race so it could be shared by family and friends. A crew is required to follow along to provide support and watch their runner perform. Yes, I could change the format of the race to include aid stations and eliminate the need for crews, but I won't as long as I'm the race director. The reason is because I have personally witnessed miracles happen between these runners and their crews. I've seen sons who come out grumbling about having to crew their dad, but by the end of the race the son is so excited that he's talking about running the race next year. I've seen the tears of joy at the finish line, not just from the runners, but from the crews too who watched the highs and lows of the entire experience. If you want to truly share the ultrarunning experience with your family and friends, consider Pony Express Trail 50 and 100.

Conclusion

I'm comfortable with being an ultrarunner. I know the general population thinks it is crazy because their conclusions are from their own experience and prospective. They don't understand the facts. My health has greatly improved and I've had amazing experiences in the outdoors that most people will never experience. But with all of this, life balance is the key. Running isn't my entire life. I have a wife, six children, and as of 2016, six grandchildren. I enjoy spending time with them. I still have a busy career, and serve many hours in my church. I have other hobbies, including family history research, authoring books, and watching sports. With anything, life balance is important.

Dangers and Safety



No, I don't agree with this common statement

Even more fun than running 100-mile races for me is doing solo adventure runs. My first long solo adventure run was in 2002, to Kings Peak in Utah. Over the years I gained more and more experience and learned how to run with minimal weight on my back, but enough food and emergency items to keep me out of trouble. I've now run thousands of miles solo in the back country in Utah and Arizona. I'll routinely do runs of 50K to 50 miles and at times up to 100 miles.

I've been criticized for going out alone for such long distances. But those who know me understand that I'm actually very conservative as it comes to safety.

One year a local road runner who experienced the Grand Canyon for the first time was so excited about the experience that he scheduled a large group run for a Grand Canyon R2R2R in the heat of June, inviting anyone interested, including people he never had met before. Dozens of first-time Grand Canyon runners expressed interest. I was very vocal about how dangerous this was at that time of the year and how improper it was to organize group runs with strangers into dangerous areas. I had read and followed very closely all the canyon rescues and deaths from heat exposure. That runner and his friends slammed me on social media. Eventually someone informed the NPS authorities. Thankfully this large event never took place and soon the NPS started to require permits for these type of group runs.

The vast majority of my runs involve routes and trails where I know, where I can run into people, so I'm rarely really alone. I know my limits and take what I think are reasonable precautions. On certain runs I'll take a rented satellite phone or a SPOT tracker. Other things are taken like signal devices, fire starters, and emergency blankets.

Why solo? First it is tough to find someone who can go as far as I like and keep up. Second, in my mind with each person added to the adventure, increases the odds that a problem will happen. I'm confident in my abilities and know that I can get myself out of most trouble. I do not know for sure the abilities of others and if they can't really do it, the adventure turns into a worrisome rescue operation. My biggest fear while running solo is an accident/fall which would leave me unable to walk out. But so far with thousands of adventure miles, things have worked out.

Precautions have to be made. I always inform others exactly where I am headed and when I plan to finish. If you announce an adventure publically, please make sure those who read about it, know that you have everything taken care of. In 2013, a new friend announced a solo Uinta Highline Trail end-to-end run in potentially very bad weather and he let us follow online via his SPOT tracker. When terrible weather came in, the help button was pushed on his SPOT and none of us knew that this was actually a signal to his friend that he was bailing out to a pre-defined escape route. Those of us following were about to jump in our cars to the rescue and I stayed up almost all night worrying. I felt some responsibility because I had published my Highline Trail runs which have inspired others to also attempt it. All turned out OK, but the lesson learned was that we should not cause stress and worry on those at home. If we are clear with our plans and possible contingency plans, worry will be less and the right actions can be taken at the right time.

Tragically in 2016, this same person, taking on even more risks, was killed by an avalanche while skiing alone in the back country. Runners in social media wanted to honor his memory by organizing an end-to-end Highline Trail run in the Uintas in his memory. Such a run would be dangerous for those who weren't prepared for a rugged, long run of that distance. I spoke out against this. They just didn't get it. This tragedy didn't have to happen. Safety lessons needed to be learned. Why honor the memory of a fallen runner by seeking dangers and risks for yourself? Instead honor his memory by promoting safety. Thankfully instead, later in the summer local runners constructed a memorial in the location where he was killed.

Starting in about 2013 a different breed of runner started to appear more and more on local Utah social media. These runners loved to run on dangerous ridges and many would post eye-popping dangerous photos on the Internet showing themselves in very risky situations. Others would post leaping pictures on dangerous summits. Some of these runners were well trained in mountaineering and I didn't worry about them, but others were not. These actions bothered me deeply because you could see the youthful comments in reaction to these photos and videos, calling them "cool." You would see responses such as "Let's do!" This practice continued into the winter. Certain runners would even dare each other so see how long in the winter they could run up into the mountains with shorts and without warm clothes. Then dangerous summit quests extended into the winter, not a problem with well-prepared experienced mountaineers, but many runners were not.

Perhaps unrelated, more people seemed to fall off high ridges and peaks and die in Utah. An ultrarunner who was signed up for Squaw Peak 50 fell off Mount Olympus in icy conditions. A fairly experienced hiker fell off a dangerous Mount Nebo ridge. A rookie hiker fell off Lone Peak taking the wrong route.

By 2016 Utah runners increasingly were drawn to attempting traversing very long and pretty dangerous ridge lines in the Wasatch Mountains without any climbing gear and through the night. One such route coined as the Wasatch Ultimate Ridge Linkup (WURL) involves circumnavigating Little Cottonwood Canyon across 36 miles of rugged ridges. Runners without proper training and skills were drawn to do this dangerous adventure and I would cringe each time I heard people were attempting it. In August 2016 an experienced woman, Celeste Yang aborted a WURL attempt and just a few days later fell to her death on a dangerous ridge near Mount Olympus. She was with your boyfriend but they were not using any safety gear. On social media I was sad to see comments such as, "at least she died doing something she loved," and very little comments encouraging runners to use climbing gear across dangerous areas. One runner mocked the idea of going for a trail run taking a rope.

All this really bothered me and boastful dangerous pictures and videos continued to be posted on local social media running groups. One year a small local group of guys created a film and successfully were signed up for a series on a national cable TV network. The pilot episode showed these guys scaling dangerous ridges unroped and arguing over pushing limits. Most locals applauded these guys, but I felt serious distaste. While other reality adventure shows on TV emphasized safety, this one only glorified risk-taking. Thankfully the series was quickly canceled after just three episodes.

I eventually spoke out about the practice of posing purposeful risky photos but of course got slammed on social media. But I didn't back down. Why post these photos and videos which indirectly encourage untrained kids to also seek these dangers? Safety was almost never mentioned with these photos. Roping up was never considered and even sometimes mocked in comments. One person expressed the view that we should never feel guilty if someone dies after trying to mimic our adventures. I totally disagree. We have a responsibility to point out the dangers and to promote safety. We should not glorify taking risks without safety precautions.

For winter events, needed equipment is rarely mentioned. More and more I felt distanced from this local running group. It seemed to be more about doing silly and risky antics in the mountains than respecting and enjoying nature. The local group held an annual dinner and I invited my wife to come with me. A video was shown at the event, mostly of silly antics on ridges and summits and winter quests. It all felt very uncomfortable, wasn't about the running I loved, and we left early. On social media, when a well-respected ultrarunner asked for a greater respect for the mountains, asking that these runners stop leaving items and messages to each other on summits, he was also slammed and mocked by some. I totally agreed with him. I concluded that I was just a different breed of runner and probably part of an older generation. I believe the summits should be treated with great respect. The Native Americans have reverent feelings for many of these summits. These summits make me feel close to God. I don't share the joy to act silly on them and take risks on them. So I started to run even more by myself instead of seeking to be run with this group.

To run solo, you need some good outdoor survival skills such as the ability to find water, start a fire, build a shelter, seek for food, read a map, and know directions by the sun and stars. Getting lost is way down on my list of worries because of careful preparation before the adventure. You need to stay on trails and routes, avoid short-cuts, and understand the dangers of getting rim rocked (stuck on ledges). You need be able to detect early both the symptoms of hypothermia and dehydration. If running at night, you need the right lighting systems and backups including batteries. You need great foot-care experience and bring with you items to repair your feet. You need solid first aid skills and some sort of kit. Without this experience and items I would never attempt these kinds of adventures.



Common sense tells me to avoid solo runs in extreme conditions. I avoid heat, such as the Grand Canyon mid-May on. I avoid running in severe cold. I avoid running alone in the back country with snow avalanche danger. I avoid runs that require dangerous climbs. I'm not skilled in climbing and even if I were, I wouldn't do that alone. If my route comes upon situations where I need to use my hands to climb up or down, I stop and question whether I should continue. I back off, even if I believe I can do it without problem. Why take the risk? I can always find a different, safer route. I won't go into caves or mines or other such dangerous situations. I won't run slot canyons if there are storm in the forecast. So no, I would never do the kinds of climbs and runs attempted by Aron Ralston who became trapped in a slot canyon when a boulder fell on his arm. If I enter an area that looks dangerous, I'm not timid in turning around and going back. To me, those are just extra miles, no problem. Many people keep going because they dread going back because it seems hard. Not me.



So I hope as one reads about my adventures and if they are tempted to copy, that they have enough experience and are taking the right precautions.

- [Hiker dead of apparent fall from cliffside near Alta](#)
- [Hiker dies from fall near Lisa Falls](#)
- [Experienced hiker missing in Utah mountains found dead](#)

- [Body of missing skier found buried in avalanche](#)
- [Tooele man dies after falling on Mt Nebo](#)
- [Hiker falls to her death on Utah's Mount Olympus](#)
- [Hurricane teen dead after falling off 200 ft. cliff](#)
- [Hiker dies in 100-foot fall at Zion National Park](#)
- [Missing hiker found dead in Little Cottonwood Canyon](#)
- [Woman fell after hiking most dangerous area of Bridal Veil Falls](#)
- [Couple killed by lightning while hiking Lone Peak](#)
- [Fallen hiker hoisted from canyon in busy year for rescues](#)
- [Hiker found dead after fall from Mount Olympus](#)
- [Body of overdue hiker found in Big Cottonwood Canyon](#)

Adventure Running in Capitol Reef National Park



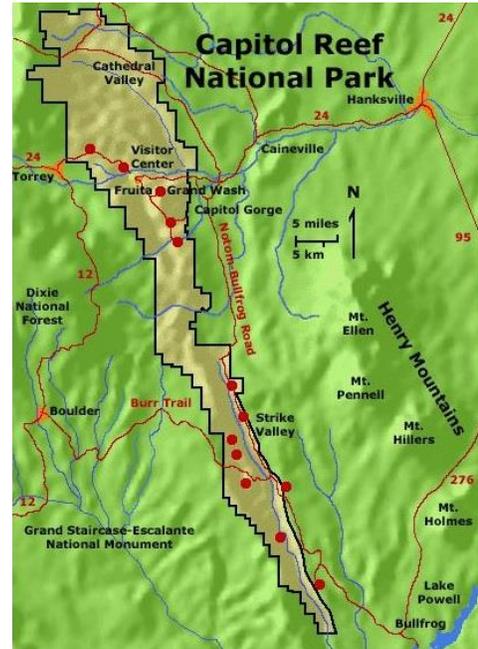
My favorite national park to run in is the Grand Canyon, and my second favorite is Capitol Reef National Park. This is one of the lesser known national parks. There is no entrance fee and when you drive through it on the highway, it only takes 15 miles to drive across its width. To me, it is a running treasure

Capitol Reef is in a remote area of south-central Utah that did not have a paved road going to the area until 1962. In 1971 President Nixon signed a bill to make the area into a national park. This park is still a relatively secret national treasure compared to the other well-known parks in Utah. It is an ultrarunner's paradise because of its solitude, spectacular scenery, primitive and rugged trails, slot canyons, and gorgeous slick rock.

The major feature of the park is the Waterpocket Fold. This is a remarkable, nearly 100-mile long up-thrust extending like a rugged spine from Thousand Lake Plateau southward to Lake Powell. On the east side of the Waterpocket Fold is an extremely long valley that extends the length of the Waterpocket Fold.

Bordering the east side of the valley are high cliffs of Halls Mesa. Winding through the valley is Halls Creek normally dry but runs full of water during flood run-off times. This valley can be brutally hot during the summer and surprisingly warm in the winter.

In 2002, in late November, before I discovered ultrarunning, I convinced backpacking buddies, Brad and David, to ditch their heavy boots for running shoes and go fast pack [Lower Muley Twist](#) with me. Brad and David were skeptical about this approach, fast packing, but came with me and we had a wonderful time exploring this canyon for the first time. It is almost as stunning as Paria Canyon, but the walls not as high.



The colors were fantastic and the alcoves were amazing. For this adventure from the trailhead at “The Post” we first took a cutoff up and over the Water Pocket Fold and then descended into the Twist. From there we traveled down the canyon until it spilled out into the wide open Halls Canyon, which Halls Creek winds through. Using radios, we kept in contact with each other as Brad and David chose to hike in the creek bed and I ran up and down the old wagon trail exploring the desert.

David wrote, “For a while we followed Halls Creek which was meandering all over the valley until we finally struck out across on our own. We saw some fantastic scenery on both the drive down and the drive back on the Burr Trail was incredible including switchbacks up an almost sheer face followed by one of the most scenic canyons I’ve driven through in years, capped by the drive from Boulder to Torrey over the high plateau – beautiful!”



Standing in front of the Water Pocket Fold at The Post



Waterpocket Fold on left, Halls Mesa on Right

Just two weeks later I returned to run Lower Muley Twist again, this time in the opposite direction. It was December 7, but perfect weather to still run in shorts. This area can stay pretty warm and is great for winter runs. Only four other people had signed the register since David, Brad, and I had been there a couple weeks earlier. I took off running and heading south through Hall's creek canyon was beautiful as the sun was rising.

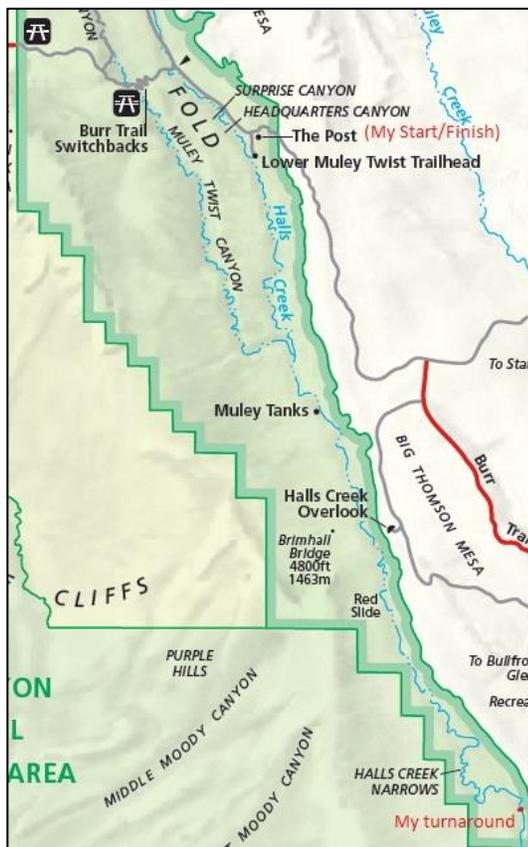
But then I became confused as to which canyon to turn into the Water Pocket Fold to reach Muley Twist. I chose what I thought was right but I only saw one set of foot prints. I continued on for more than an hour and eventually spilled back out into Halls Creek. I eventually noticed Brad and David's footprints from two weeks earlier. It was a frustrating "turn" of events. I was determined to do it right and started over, still making a navigation blunder. I went a mile too far and reached Muley Tanks. I checked out the tanks. They were large pools, or tanks in the slick-rock, full of frozen water. Still determined, I headed north, bushwhacked, searching for the right canyon and found a very cool slot canyon on the way. But I eventually found the right canyon and had a great run up Lower Muley Twist. I learned my lesson and within a couple weeks I would buy my first GPS.



In 2004, I returned and ran the entire Lower Muley Twist with a neighbor friend. We did a big 22-mile loop and even climbed up the huge Burr Trail switchbacks to the top of the Fold.



My favorite adventure in Capitol Reef was in December, 2010. This was a 42-mile out-and-back adventure run along the Hall Creek drainage, nearly all the way to the national park boundary near Lake Powell. I started at “The Post” at 2:30 a.m. and had an amazing night run in and along Halls Creek. No one else had signed to trailhead register for weeks so I was truly on my own, miles from anyone. I was basically trying to accomplish a five-day backpacking trip in about 12 hours.



area is so remote. I did notice plenty of coyote tracks on that trail and it looked like the coyotes were maintaining the trail more than hiker boots.

I tried as much as possible to stay on the old wagon road that keeps a straight path down the valley, instead of following the winding river. The wagon road was developed in 1880s for access to Halls Crossing at the Colorado River. But the wagon road isn't much of a road anymore. It now is a faint single-track trail depressed in the desert floor from the weight of years of wagons and horses. Now it even gets very little boot traffic because the

Soon I noticed water appearing in the creek. There would be long sections where a small amount would be flowing, but then it would disappear again for a few miles. At one wet spot, I made the mistake of running into quicksand. It sucked me into my shins. I would have wet feet for the rest of the run. What was funny is that on the way back, I again ran through this exact spot again.

A night obstacle illusion really boggled my mind. As I ran along the riverbed, it seemed like I was always running uphill. But I knew this was impossible because the creek flowed to Lake Powell. It really looked like and felt like I was running uphill. I even had to stop and look at the waterflow carefully to convince myself that I was actually running downhill. For the section I ran, the creek would actually lose nearly 1,000 feet.

The starry night was spectacular. At times I would turn out my light and just look up into the sky. I was so far away from any town or city so there was absolutely no light pollution. It seemed like I could see millions of stars. But then I saw a light up on the mesa. It looked like the moon was rising, but there was no moon. Finally I concluded that it must be some car headlights at Hall Creek Overlook. They turned out but later turned on again and were shining brightly down toward me. As I continued to run, I noticed that the light was now above the top of the mesa, floating in the sky! I was astounded to realize that I was looking at Venus rising. I couldn't get over how bright it was here in the dark desert.

Finally I could see the glow of dawn appearing. I could tell that a spectacular sunrise was coming, so I climbed out of the creek and made my way to the Waterpocket Fold in order to climb up and get a better view. Climbing and running all over the white sandstone slickrock was a blast. I could see why they named this the Waterpocket Fold because there were plenty of pockets in the slickrock with puddles of water. The sunrise was spectacular. I had such an amazing feeling watching it, knowing that I was in such a remote location, and the only one there to see it.



After the color show was over, I made my way down from the Waterpocket Fold and continued my run. I soon arrived at Halls Narrows. The creek started carving its way into the Waterpocket Fold making a spectacular three-mile winding slot canyon.



I knew continuing would involve wading and swimming, nothing I was interested in doing in December, so instead I headed up and over using the wagon trail to Halls Divide. Going up I couldn't find the trail, but at the top I did and running down the other side was a complete blast.

At the other side of Halls Narrows, I did a little exploring inside the Narrows until deep water stopped me from going further. Back out, I looked at my watch. It was 8:45 a.m. time to turn back. I was very close to the park boundary and about six miles from Lake Powell. It would have been nice to make it to Lake Powell, but I had already run 21 miles. I could always return and try to go further.



Me on top of Halls Divide



Now with daylight, it was much easier to stay on the wagon trail. It was still pretty faint but I got very good in being able to relocate it. If I lost it, I would simply do a big zig-zag ahead and would always find it again because it just went straight.

My run back up the valley was spectacular with ever-changing colorful views. Finally my car came into sight and I finished my 42-mile run in about 12 hours, 20 minutes. It had been a perfect day. I love doing these adventure runs even more than running in the races. For me, this is running at its finest.



In 2013 I returned to Capitol Reef and for the first time ran both Lower and Upper Muley Twist. This [video](#) tells the story of this incredible run.

In 2014, I again traveled to Capital Reef National Park, only three hours from my home. I had always wanted to run Spring Canyon, which is a hidden deep and narrow canyon that runs west to east. It starts near Thousand Lakes Mountain and ends at the Fremont River. Towering above the canyon are Wingate cliffs and Navajo domes. The entire length of the canyon from the entry point above Sulphur Creek is about 18 miles. Add on to that about 5 miles to reach the entry point. In my case, I added on another seven miles for side trips and wrong turns for a rugged 30-mile adventure. It turned out to be an amazing all-day adventure. I was able to quickly hitch a ride back 13 miles to my starting point. This [video](#) tells the story.



Cathedral Valley is a spectacular desert valley on the North end of the park that does not see many visitors because of the long dirt road access. I visited Lower Cathedral Valley containing the Temples of the Sun, Moon, and Stars. These spectacular monoliths are made of pink Entrada Sandstone. Before returning home, I did a quick seven-mile morning run around these remarkable monuments. With no trails, I did a random run up and down dry washes and across sandy desert mounds. This [video](#) tells the story



In 2015, Cathedral Valley again beckoned me. I decided to run the Cathedral Valley loop for a 47-mile adventure. During most of the year, a 64-mile loop (including a paved-highway connector) can be driven to view this spectacular area. Instead of running the highway to connect the ends of the road, I used a remote 4WD road (0146) to complete the loop. This make a loop of about 43 miles, most of it on fast maintained dirt road. With some sight-seeing detours along the way, my run would be 47.2 miles.

The previous day I dropped off some fluids and food at mile 32.5. I began my epic run at sunrise and was in awe all day as I ran by the amazing cliffs and monoliths. I had the entire area nearly to myself. Just one vehicle came by. I was thrilled to have a large herd of elk run with me for a while in the afternoon. I finished my run in 10:24 after traveling 47.2 miles, climbing 2,416 feet along the way. Wow! What a great adventure. Read about all the details [here](#).

Running Fixed-time Races

In 2008, I ran my first fixed-time race, a 24-hour race in Buckeye, Arizona, Across the Years (ATY). Instead of a fixed-distance like 100 miles, there is a fixed time to run, and the winner is the runner who runs the furthest. Since my first race, as of 2016, I have now run more than 1,200 miles in this type of race. I am not really a veteran yet, but I do have some good experience now, and I was the overall winner in two of the races.



Over the years I've come to deeply respect the athletes who run this type of race and have learned much from them. When I got involved, there were only a handful of runners who ran both mountain ultras and fixed-time races, but now the cross-over seems to be larger. It truly is a different type of running that requires diverse skills, mental toughness, and a boat load of strategy in order to do well. With each race I have gained more experience and now know what it takes to excel in them.

Fixed time races involve running loops, over and over again. The shortest loop I've experienced was at Across the Years when held at Nardini Manor, which was a half kilometer loop. The longest loop was about six miles at Laramie 24-hour. The common question asked me about fixed-time races is, "Don't you get bored?" Surprisingly, I'm never bored during these races. My mind is always active with strategic, tactical thoughts. You can constantly gauge your competition. Most races use electronic displays to see your distance and pace and also your competition's. In mountain 100s, you almost never know where your competition is and how they are doing. In this type of race, you can even run right behind your competition, observe, and talk to them.

Another aspect of fixed-time races that is very appealing is the social nature of them. Because everyone is running on the same track, both the slowest and the fastest runners are together and interact with each other along the way, giving one another encouragement and keeping each other awake.

Because each lap is a fixed distance and usually fairly flat, you can very easily set goals for your pace and track closely your progress. I usually set goals for certain distances like marathon, 50k, 50-miles, etc. I then construct a chart to help me determine the average pace or lap times that I need to achieve. At Across the Years when you cross the mat for each lap a board shows you last lap time and your total distance. They usually have another board that shows what place you are in overall so you can know who you are chasing or who is chasing you. In this way it feeds my competitive nature. My mind is always working, planning, and strategizing using this data.

Competitor	Laps	Mi	Km	Last Lap
Christian Griffith	408	126.76	204.00	00:05:55
Kurt Kennett	138	42.87	69.00	00:07:18
Ray Krolewicz	574	178.33	287.00	00:05:33
Jean-Jacques d'Aquin	439	136.39	219.50	00:05:32
Mikhail Popov	600	186.41	300.00	00:03:30
Martina Hausmann	619	192.31	309.50	00:05:28
Stephanie Buettner	156	48.47	78.00	00:04:39
George Nelsen	424	131.73	212.00	00:11:08
Jack Polce	154	47.85	77.00	00:02:38
Ulrich Kamm	589	178.78	284.50	00:06:37
Wendell Doman	211	65.55	105.50	00:03:23
Sue Norwood	136	42.25	68.00	00:04:18
James Skaggs	477	148.20	238.50	00:05:35
Dan Badolone	286	87.84	143.00	00:10:28

The Across the Years runner board

2008-2009 Across the Years 24-hour race



72/48/24-Hour

I brought my wife, Linda, and son Connor with me to Arizona to watch and help crew me. We arrived a day early and it was interesting to watch the runners already racing and how they operated. I was thrilled to watch veterans run such as John Geesler, Tracy Thomas, Juli Aistars, Uli Kamm, Hans Bern Bauer, and others. I observed that most of the runners had set up personal aid stations right next to the track so they could quickly grab items. I followed their lead and went off to the store to buy a table and other items. There was a very good race-provided aid station to use too, but by using a personal aid station for some items you can save even more time.



Me and my son Connor

The next morning I was ready to run my first 24-hour race. I was very anxious and watched Matt Watts finish his impressive 117.128 miles. Wow! I warmed up by running with him for part of a lap. [Listen to audio of Matt with 47 minutes to go.](#) At 9:00 a.m. I was away. Matt, who was now resting after his race, would yell out stuff like, “only 399 more laps to go!” Thanks a bunch. That was tough to think about.

My mental strategy was to break up the race into 20-lap (10K) segments. I would set my sights on the milestones and attempt to reach them within a goal time. I reached 5K in 24:47 and 10K in 50:52. I reached the marathon mark at about 4:16 and the closest 24-hour day 2 runner was about four miles behind me.



Running by the aid station

I had various aches and pains along the way but generally worked through them. One of my goals for this race was to beat my personal records for the 50K, 100K, and 100-mile distances. Sure enough, I met my first goal! I reached 50K at 5:02:09, a personal best at that time. I also beat my best 50-mile time with 8:59. I was six miles ahead of the next day 2 starter.

The night became cold and I finally started to struggle. After lap 223, I couldn't resist stopping in the heated tent to warm up by a heater. This was my downfall and I learned that for 24-hour runs if you want to pile up the miles, you just have to resist stops like that. By midnight I reached 75 miles and for the first time started to notice runners passing me.

Late into the night, hallucinations started to get to me. At one point on the track, you started running toward a statue that includes a bust of a head. That head started to come to life and wanted to talk to me. It was funny. I actually avoided looking toward it each time I ran that section. Between 2-3 a.m. I really slowed, and only completed 3.5K. Eventually I warmed up enough, put on more clothes and came back to life.

I finally reached 100 miles at 22:48 which was a personal best for me. From there I climbed the leader board into 3rd place. For the last hour I just pushed as hard as I could for more miles. I knew that I had lost many miles during the night. As the sun rose, the track again filled with runners who had napped during the night. It was great to see so many new friends again. By 24 hours, I reached 104.39 miles and was very pleased. I did well, but not great. I knew I could do so much better. But still, in my rookie attempt, I finished in 5th place out of 48 starters.



Almost finished



My average lap time for each 10k segment

I had a great experience and I knew I would be back for more. I learned that these fixed-time races are very different from 100-mile races. They have to be treated much differently. I learned many things. I should adapt better and have better strategies. I should take care of my feet better. I should organize my table better so it would be much easier to find things. I should eat better. I should watch the clock more closely and do less walking.

2010-2011 Across the Years 48-hour race

I returned to Across the Years two years later with in much better condition, ready to step it up and try running the 48-hour race. I had no idea what to expect. I set my goal to achieve 150 miles during the race and believed that would be very possible. But I had never run past 109 miles in one stretch so all this was unknown territory for me. As a dream goal for a near perfect race, I hoped to reach 180. In my wildest dreams, 200 miles was out there. I looked at the competition and realized that my best hope was a third-place finish.

That year I started on day 1 and the race was again held at Nardini Manor. I knew that by starting on day one that the track wouldn't be as much clogged up with slower moving runners on day one when I wanted to run the most miles.

The weather forecast looked pretty terrible. A cold front was coming in. My attitude was positive. In past races with bad weather I usually do fantastic against the competition because I do so much training during the nights when it is cold.

At 9 a.m. we were away. I quickly took the lead. My strategy was simple, go out fast and run hard while I was feeling very well to bank miles. At about ten miles, world-class runners, John Geesler and Jamie Donaldson caught up with me. John and I ran many fast laps together when I was a lap ahead of him. John was running in the 72-hour race and Jamie in the 24-hour race. Jamie would go ahead of us both.



Me in coonskin hat ahead of John Geesler

48 Hour			
Place	Name	Miles	KM
1	David Crockett	30.447	49.0
2	Liz Bauer	27.651	44.5
3	Debra Horn	27.340	44.0
4	Tammy Massie	23.612	38.0
5	Dan Brenden	22.369	36.0
6	Mark Hellenthal	21.437	34.5
7	Steve Hughes	21.437	34.5
8	Joe Judd	21.127	34.0
9	Karsten Solheim	20.505	33.0
10	Gasper Pulizzi	19.573	31.5
11	Mary Smith	16.466	26.5
12	Gary Cross		

48-hour leader board

In the 48-hour race, I discovered my competition in the race would indeed be Debra Horn, a member of the US National 24-hour team. I would build up a lead, at most to 24 laps, but she would fight back and bring that down to a ten-lap lead over and over again.

At about 11 a.m. the rain was coming down and it continued for the next 16 hours. Even with the rain and mud, I was having a fantastic time. It was very cool to see my name so high in the standings. My race was going super. I reached the marathon-mark at about 3:45. At the 50K mark, I set a personal record for that distance, at around 4:15. As the sun went down, I also set a PR for the 50-mile distance at around 8:15. The rain continued to fall. At the 100K mark (62 miles), I again set a PR for that distance, at about 10:50. I was more than an hour ahead of my 2008 race pace. I walked very, very few laps. In fact during the entire first 24 hours, I probably only walked a total of one mile.



Running in the rain and mud

At about 1 a.m it really started to pour. I quickly took shelter with others in the heated tent. We looked like a bunch of soaked rats. The wind was ferocious. Only about three runners stayed out on the track during that terrible portion of the storm. The delay was discouraging and I after 20 minutes went back out.



Me dressed warmly in the morning battling the wind

I reached the 100-mile mark at about 19:45, more than an hour faster than any time before. I finally had broken 20 hours for a 100-mile run. That had been one of my bucket goals. I was pleased about that. The rain was finally stopped. During the night, I took over second place in the

overall mile lead for all three races as John Geesler started to have some issues that would not allow him to run any more. He now only walked. Jamie Donaldson, running the 24-hour race, stretched a lead over me by about four miles. On the track, it looked like there were now only three runners who were truly running, Jamie, me, and Debra Horn. At 9 a.m. Jamie finished her 24-hour run with an amazing 123 miles. But I was only a few miles behind her, at 116, the most I had ever run in one stretch and in 24 hours. If I would have been in the 24-hour race, I would have been the male champion, but I still had 24 more hours to run.

I hit the 200K mark (124 miles) at 26:18. At that point I now had more miles than anyone out on the track. Debra Horn was 17 laps behind me. The track finally dried up. In the late afternoon, I linked up with Ed Ettinghausen who wore funny hats. We had a great time talking. Ed was doing a fast power walk, so I followed his lead and did the same, doing about 17 laps with him.

In the evening, one of the Coury brothers would periodically go out on the track and run some very fast laps. I decided to try to keep up with him and could. I discovered that my legs felt better running very fast.

What I did for a while was run a very fast lap, then run a couple slow ones, and repeat.



Competitor	Laps	Mi	Km	Last L
David Crockett	492	152.86	246.00	00:05:53
Philip McCarthy	220	68.35	110.00	00:03:11
David Elsbernd	140	43.50	70.00	00:04:11
Dale Perry	145	45.05	72.50	00:03:21
Paul Grimm	337	104.70	168.50	00:07:11
Jeff Hagen	389	120.86	194.50	00:05:31
Matthew Kalina	172	53.44	86.00	00:04:21
Jamie Huneycutt	154	47.85	77.00	00:04:11
Tammy Massie	322	100.04	161.00	00:04:11
Steven Tursi	219	68.04	109.50	00:05:53

At 10:47 p.m., at mile 160, I had had enough. I was pretty miserable. I went into my tent and decided that my race was done. Debra was 20 laps (10K) behind me. But that wasn't my concern. I needed to get warm. I got into my sleeping bag and tried hard to recover. But things got worse and eventually I bonked very hard, low in electrolytes. I was suffering terribly but after taking some S-caps, Advil, and drinking an Ensure, I pulled out of it. I then tried to find sleep. I took cat naps, not finding deep sleep. I didn't know what time it was and just hoped to wake up at dawn in time to go out and watch runners finish their second day at dawn. I had run 160 miles and that exceeded my goal and was a great achievement that I was proud of.

But I thought about things. I now felt great. I could hear the beeps out on the track from runner chips marking off another lap. Why wasn't I out there? I had no idea what time it was, I just hoped the night was not over yet (it was nearly 3 a.m.) I dressed warmly and went back out on the track.

I discovered three things. 1. I had been resting for 4 hours! 2. Debra Horn now had the 48-hour lead and the most miles on the track, 10 laps ahead of me but walking. 3. I was well rested and could easily run again. I was not pleased to see that my name was no longer at the top of the leader board. At the leader board was a guy who liked to follow the race standings. He recognized me and had a big grin on his face. I'm sure he knew that I had lost my lead and had been gone for four hours. I looked at him and only said, "The chase is on!" He really grinned now. I was ready to put on a show for him.

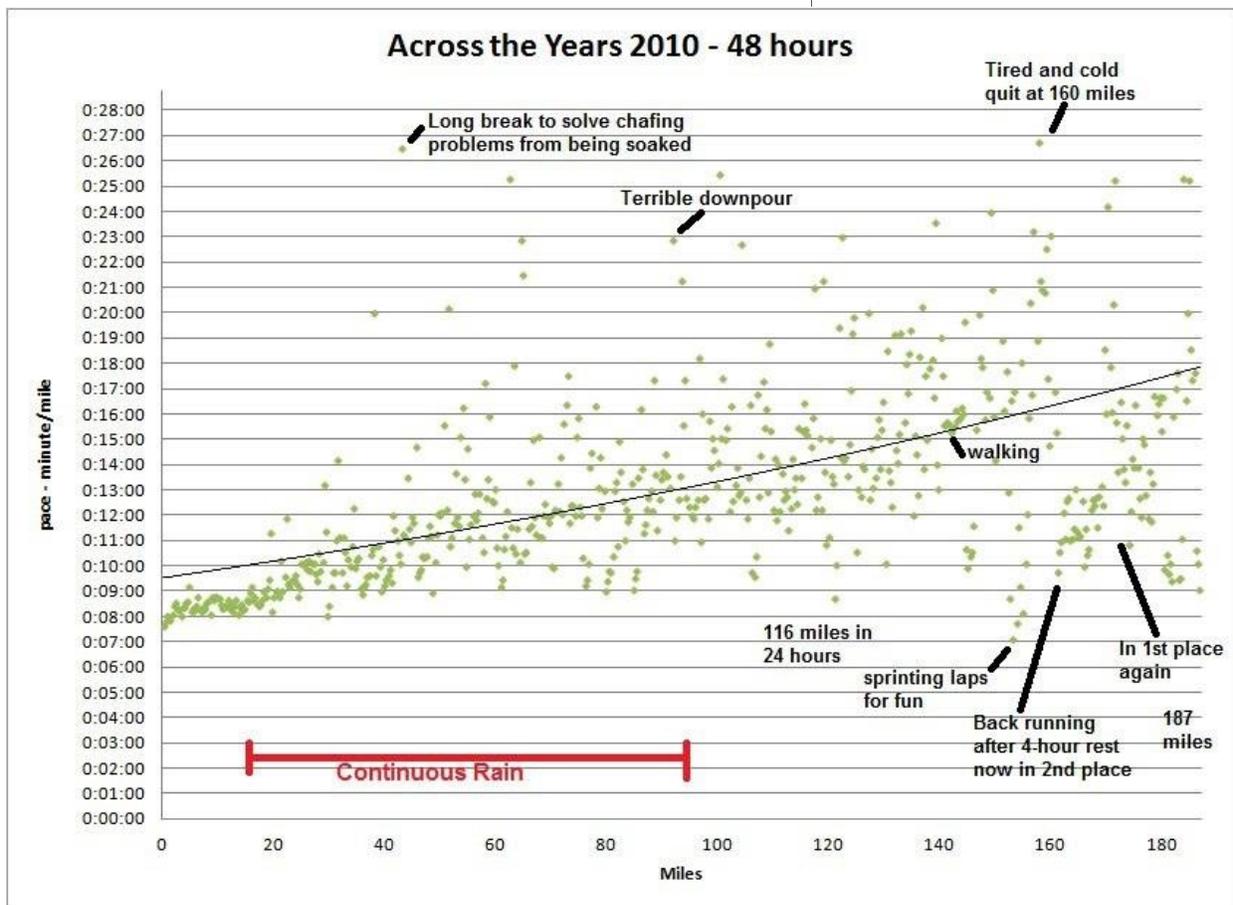
I ran some numbers in my head and predicted that it would take about two hours to catch up with Debra. I started to fly. More people started to watch the leader board. I knew I needed to lap her at least ten times and I did about every two to three laps. Finally at about 4:45 a.m., I passed Debra in distance and was in the lead at the top of the board. She knew it too, and just said "good job" as I passed her. I was now at mile 170 and feeling fantastic. I knew I could reach my dream goal of 180. The guys at the leader board also cheered me.

I stretched my lead out and as 24 hours approached I saw that I could reach 300K so I started to sprint some of the fastest laps I had run the entire race. I passed 300K and the finish finally came. I ended up with 187 miles. Debra did great too, finishing 13 laps behind at about 183 miles.

The next day I discovered that none of the other day-2 48-hour runners had come even close to me. I had been the overall winner! I was amazed that I won, given the very competitive field. But I worked hard, think I had a good strategy, and somehow it worked. I was glowing for days because of that great experience. I was a little disappointed that I didn't reach 200 miles, letting that slip by because of that 4 hour rest, but I couldn't help it. Without that rest I would never had been able to run that fast to the finish.



Crossing the finish line



2011-2012 Across the Years 48-hour race

This year I set my sights on running 200 miles in 48-hours. I really thought it was within the reach of my abilities, and if I could achieve that, I would likely win the race again. I had finished nine 100-mile races without a DNF that year, but my times were all slower than previous years and I began to wonder if

my age (53) was really finally slowing me down once and for all. I had trained very hard, running more miles in a two-month stretch than I ever had in my life. I even had six consecutive weeks of more than 100 miles training. I was focused and determined.



This year, ATY was being held for the first time at Camelback Ranch, the spring training facility for the Los Angeles Dodgers. We now had a wonderful wide 1.05-mile dirt path loop (with a couple hundred yards of pavement.) However, the surface was much harder than the soft surface at Nardini Manor.

For Day 1 we had about 130 runners start, all the 72-hour runners, the first group of 48-hour runners, and the first group of 24-hours. We were off and running at 9 a.m. I held the overall lead on mileage for a few laps, but then elite runner, Joe Fejes, a 72-hour runner passed me going very fast and would continue on to the 72-hour win. View a [video](#) of the start.

My pace was strong, but the heat of the day slowed me. I reached the marathon distance at 3:54, and 50K at 4:50, slower than last year, but right on the pace I hoped for. Luis Miral, a young, fast, 37-year-old in the 48-hour race was keeping pace with me and he eventually went ahead and lapped me. View a [video](#) of me running at mile 45. By mile 72, I took the lead and extended it fast.



My Path to Ultrarunning – Davy Crockett

During the night, I focused on reaching a personal record (PR) for the 100-mile distance. My pace was slowing, but was pretty consistent, between 13-14-minute pace, including stops. I didn't push too hard, just kept the pace going. I reached 100 miles at 19:40, about six minutes faster than last year, a PR for 100 miles! I was pleased, and it brought new confidence to me. I next set my sights on the 24-hour mark. I charged ahead and reached 117.8 mile during the first 24-hours! This was more than a mile further than last year. (It turned out that if I would have run the 24-hour race, I would have been the champion of that huge race of 140 runners.) I was more than 11 miles ahead of my good buddy Tom Jackson. It looked like he would be my main completion. But even so, we helped and encouraged each other along the way.

Competitor	Laps	Mi	KM	Last Lap
Davy Crockett	96	100.80	162.222	00:16:17
Rainer Satzinger	58	60.90	98.009	00:19:34
Randall Tolosa	44	46.20	74.352	00:51:05
Ed Ettinghausen	93	97.65	157.152	00:17:04
Valdis Aistars	41	43.05	69.282	00:18:58
Chisholm Deup...	55	57.75	92.940	00:27:08
Juli Aistars	72	75.60	121.666	00:18:25
Tom Pelsor	59	61.95	99.699	00:16:25
Robin Saenz	84	88.20	141.944	00:17:19
Miles Krier	84	88.20	141.944	00:17:19
Carl Hunt	45	47.25	76.042	00:18:47
Max Welker	57	59.85	96.319	00:15:19
Tom Jackson	85	89.25	143.634	00:16:05

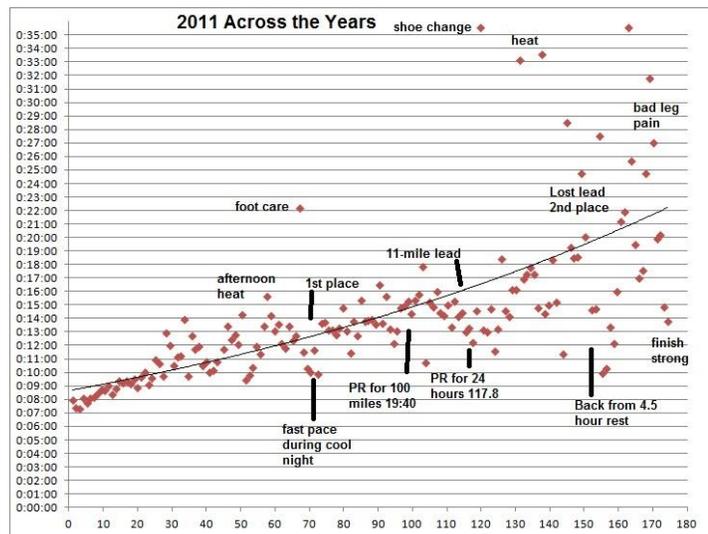
For much of the second afternoon, I went very slowly and runners around me passed me over and over again asking if I was OK. At about 3 p.m., I stopped at the air-conditioned restroom and ended up just lying on the floor for about 15 minutes trying to bring down my body temperature. I wasn't thinking very straight. My goal for 200 miles was slipping away.

About mile 130 something happened. I started to have some bad leg pain that I just couldn't figure out. I did my best to ignore it, but my pace started to really suffer. (I wouldn't know until three months later that I had suffered a stress fracture in my tibia.) As the sun started to set, I concluded that this just wasn't working right any more. I couldn't continue doing 18-minute laps and hope to win this race, so I stopped to try to take a nap in my tent at mile 142. When I finally came back out on the track at 6 p.m. I only had a two-mile lead over Tom and I knew it wouldn't last. He took the lead at mile 145.

I knew my race was just about done. My lap times were taking over 20 minutes. At one point I threw up very violently, leaving me with a very sore stomach. This had been about the sixth time I had thrown up. It was now cooler, but the heat had done its damage and my leg pain continued. My pace was very slow. Mile 149 took 24 minutes. Finally at 8:30 p.m., I was finished. I had reached 150 miles and that was fine. I was too sick and sleepy to continue. I got in my tent and called my wife to say I was finished. I was content.

Finally at midnight, I felt better and decided to get back to work. At 12:30 a.m., I was back at it and felt 100% better. I soon was running sub-11-minute loops which was a huge difference compared to most of the others plodding along at 20-minute loops. I received lots of compliments. It was super fun and I was so pleased to feel well again.

Several laps later, I passed a runner. It was Tom. I slowed down to run the rest of the lap with him. He had been taking a nap in the warming tent. I was at 157 miles, he was at 172 miles. That was very discouraging to hear, but I was pleased for

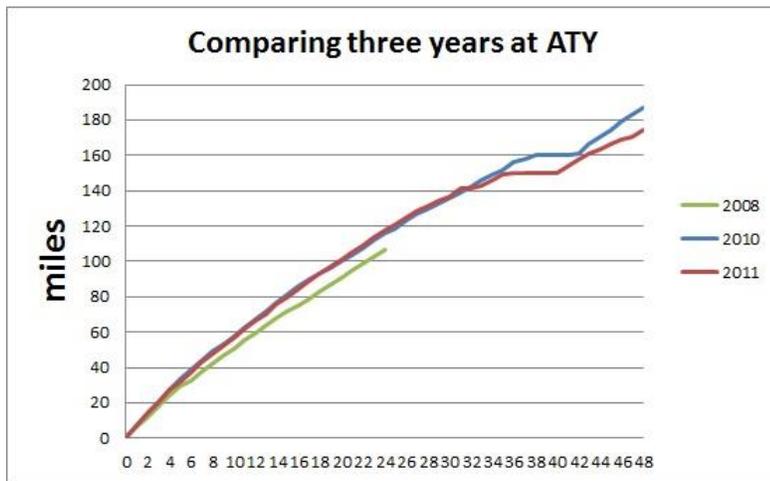


Tom. We focused on how far Tom could get. My motivation and leg pain took a hit and my laps slowed. I knew there was now no hope in getting the win. So I just tried to enjoy the rest of the race and see how many miles I could do. My pace for the rest of the race was better than Tom's, I did lap him a couple times, but he was solid.

As dawn arrived, Tom and I ran parts of several laps together. Others came out on the track. Tom reached 187.95 miles, just a little further than I did last year. Tom was the overall champion and I came in second place with 174.3 miles. See a [video](#) of my aid station. View a [video](#) of my finish.

Competitor	Laps	Mi	KM	Last Lap
Ed Jelmsberg	67	70.35	113.217	00:11:03
Davy Crockett	166	174.30	280.509	00:14:35
Juli Aistars	132	138.60	223.055	00:13:18
Lori Hickernell	100	105.00	168.981	00:23:11
Kimberly Miller	84	88.20	141.944	00:23:11
Karsten Solheim	143	150.15	241.643	00:19:38
William Murphy	93	97.65	157.152	00:20:39
Timothy Lubbers	61	64.05	103.078	00:28:37
Bill Dickey	76	79.80	128.426	00:21:04
Joe Fejes	198	207.90	334.583	00:10:38
Kevin Crockett	63	66.15	106.458	00:21:24
John Winkley	54	56.70	91.250	00:20:48

My finish board



I was discouraged that I didn't reach 200 miles, but now looking back, I understood that I had a serious injury. That last 24 miles took its toll. My right leg was in rough shape. A month later I ran Rocky Raccoon 100 and broke it even more. Eventually I found out what was wrong with it and I wasn't able to run for the next six months.

2012-2013 Across the Years 48-hour race

I returned for a third time to run the 48-hour race. It had been a long recovery all year to heal up the massive stress fracture suffered a year earlier. I hoped that I could run well, but still felt a little pain so was not too serious about the race this year. I helped my son and brother each reach 100 miles. Three Crocketts reached 100 miles! I reached 50-mile in about 9 hours and I reached 100 miles at 22:37:34, almost three hours slower than last year. I just took it easy on the second day, watched Kevin run, and stayed out of the heat. In the early evening my son Kevin reached 100 miles so we both packed it in and headed to a motel for the night. After a good night's rest, I dragged Kevin back out to the track in order to run a few more miles. I finished with 135 miles, 3rd place male and in 4th place overall out of 42 runners.



Awards from Across the Years

North Coast 24-hour

North Coast 24-hour is one of the premier 24-hour events in the country. It is held at a park in Cleveland, Ohio, on the shore of Lake Erie, on a 100% paved trail. I ran the spring version of this race in 2013.



Right before the start

The track is a 0.9 mile track and has a gentle hill going up on one side of the course. But the hill really never bothered me, was a welcome change.



The start



When I got to the park Saturday morning, the wind was terrible, about 20 mph. Then, with just 30 minutes to go, a snow squall moved in and it was a blizzard for about five minutes. Wow! The snow went away but the wind never did, blowing off of Lake Erie.



At 9:00 a.m., we were away. I immediately discovered that my pace time goals were not going to work because of the wind. The headwind was on the side of the course where there was a gentle uphill, and the tailwind where a slight downhill was. So I treated the course like it had two sections and I adjusted my pace accordingly. While others tried to keep a steady pace, I slowed a little with the headwind and then tried to push 7:00-8:00 pace on the tailwind section. That seemed to work great for me much of the day.

I hit the marathon distance at about 4:05. Around noon, it really started to blow, probably more than 25 mph. It was COLD. But I enjoyed it and was just glad it wasn't hot.

I hit the 50K mark at about 5:00. For the first time I left the course for about 50 feet to check the screen for the standings. I was in 8th place, but there were a cluster of 3-4 of us who were on the same lap. It looked like the top four would be tough to keep up with, so I set a goal to finish in the top 5. I hit the 50-mile mark at 8:38. Despite the wind, I was still cranking along just fine with only minor problems to deal with.



The sun went down after a long windy day. The wind also died down a little. The waves from Lake Erie were no longer crashing as hard as usual. At the 12-hour mark, I had reached about 66.6 miles, 2/3rds of the way to 100. I was now in 6th place, doing well.

I started walking stretches at about mile 75. Because I was going slower, my body temperature went down. By mile 78, things started to really fail. I was becoming hypothermic, stumbling around, getting very drowsy, and struggling to keep a pace quicker than about 18-minute miles. The track seemed deserted. I wasn't alone in my struggles. Finally, I had no choice but to go warm up. I grabbed the keys to the car and went to recover. I first told myself to only stay 10 minutes, but that turned into 20 minutes. I noticed that many others were doing the same thing.

Back out in the cold, things improved for a while. The miles clicked by slowly. Miles 80-100 seemed like a crawl. I soon noticed a serious problem. My eyes seemed to be freezing up. I think they were becoming wind-burned. My eyes wanted to close and that doesn't work well when you are so very tired. Finally, I had to go warm up again. This time it was for about 15 minutes. When I went back out, I decided to grab my sun glasses and wear them for protection, in the dark. My long stops probably totaled about an hour.

I went to check the standings and saw I was in 11th place. That was disappointing. But, there was still a group of runners close to me. 100 miles finally arrived at 21:48. Dawn arrived and the wind finally died down. I had only traveled 30 miles during the night. After I did a lap past 100 miles, I stopped to check the standings and it looked like at least three runners ahead of me packed it in at 100 miles and quit. I was now in 8th place. Could I climb higher?

Finally, without the terrible wind, I felt like a new runner. There were 90 minutes left, time to run like crazy. And I did run crazy, the only one running hard out there. I was now in 6th place. The 5th place guy was more than a mile ahead of me. Could I catch him? Yes, I could. At about mile 105 I passed him. What about 4th place? A half hour earlier that guy was three miles ahead, but he was walking. I lapped who I thought he was. I was now a full lap down. I continued to push pretty hard. It turns out that I finished just 0.2 miles out of 4th place. I almost caught him. I ran at total of 107.7 miles in 24-hours, finished in 4th place out of 52 runners, and won my age group. Most of the top 10 runners were much younger fast guys. Not bad for an old mountain runner.

Laramie 24-hour (Happy Jack)

My next fixed-time race was Laramie 24-hour, with its new name Happy Jack. The course is a tough six-mile loop that involves 500 feet of climbing during each loop. There wasn't much flat running. Most of it was up and down.

This more technical running was what I was more used to. By afternoon it got somewhat hot and I was about three miles behind the leader. But as evening approached it started to cool and I started to run fast at about 30 miles. I caught up with the leader Catherine Speights of Colorado and enjoyed chatting for a while. But after that lap, a terrible thunder storm came in with a roar. I came across a girl in tears. The lightning terrified her. I stayed with her, waiting out the worst of it, including pelting hail.



The start of the 24-hour race at Laramie

The rain continued and really poured. I took a break in my car, recovered, rested, and prepared to go out into the storm again. A bunch of runners were waiting out the storm under the tent and as I went back out, for fun I sprinted past all of them out into the storm, back onto the course. They all cheered loudly. After about four hours the storm finally ceased, it and then the stars came out.

The storm took its toll and many runners quit for the night. I continued on. When I finished a loop, I finally checked the standings. I discovered that I had a huge lead, about 10 miles. My motivation to really push the pace went down because I had such a huge lead and I knew I no longer would reach 100 miles before the 24-hour mark because of the storm delay. Throughout the rest of the night my lead grew, reaching 18 miles. When dawn arrived I saw Catherine again on the course, the second place runner. I decided that I would stop early in order to clean up, get a snooze, so I could drive back home after the awards. So I stopped at 21.5 hours with 78 miles, good enough for the win by 12 miles.

2013-2014 Across the Years 72-hour race

In November 2013 after a long training run that involved pavement I felt familiar pain in the leg. It was very minor but with each week it became a little more painful, likely a stress fracture again, in the same leg. Things improved and I decided to go ahead and run Across the Years 72-hour run, but the leg bothered me much of the time and kept me worried. I had other issues and was disappointed that I “only” ran 163 miles, for 15th place out of about 70 runners.

But Across the Years that year was great fun to watch. Along with the 24, 48 and 72-hour races, they introduced a 6-day race that attracted some the best in the world including Yiannis Kouros, arguably the best track ultrarunner in the world. I set up of my personal aid station next to his and watch him run for three days. He was very focused, not very friendly and really yelled at his crew often. His crew was amazing and was always there to help him. Yiannis ended up running 550 miles, but five fewer than Joe Fejes.

I reached about 96 miles on the first day which was a big disappointment because I typically have been able to reach about 117. My brother Bob ran the 24-hour on the second day. I really struggled on

Day 2 and had to take long rests. During the night I did have very strong periods and had fun running fast with Bob for several laps. I climbed the standings well during that time but ended out Day 2 with only about 136 miles. My leg was swelling at little and my lungs were sore from the dust.

On Day 3 I sat out the entire warm day. I just couldn't face three days of heat. I started running again, but my leg and lungs could only take about ten miles at a time. Once I started to limp, I decided to stop and head to a motel for the night. I was at about 154 miles. At the motel I felt thrashed and sick. At 2 a.m. I woke and considered going to run again but when I tested out my legs I said no. At 5 a.m. I again woke and this time felt much better. By 6 a.m. I was again running and running pretty fast. But when I reached 163 miles, I was again limping. I still had an hour to go, but I decided to quit. It was a disappointing race but I still had a great time with good friends.

1000 miles at Across the Years

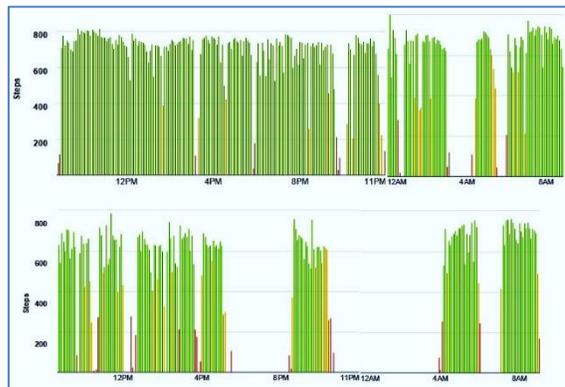
For the 2014-15 race, I ran the 24-hour race and did fine, coming in 7th place. When I finished, I noticed that I was just 132.24 miles short of earning my 1,000 mile ATY jacket. I groaned, knowing that if I wanted it in one more year that I would need to enter the 48-hour race for 2015. After an injury-free year, and solid training, I decided to go ahead and enter the 48-hour race.

That year, it was a cold year and I just couldn't find the determination to go slowly during the nights and kept stopping to warm up or rest. With the rests, including a long rest at a motel room, I reached 100 miles in 23:24. The second day I just wanted to reach 132 miles by dusk and then go to sleep. At 5:00 p.m., I stopped at 125 miles, packed up my things and went to a motel. I feared that I was seven miles short of my goal. I took a warm bath and shower, totally cleaning up, and then took much needed rest. Sleep didn't come, but after three hours, I felt much better and really wanted to go finish off those last seven miles. In the evening I returned to the track, running fast again and quickly reached my 1,000-mile goal.

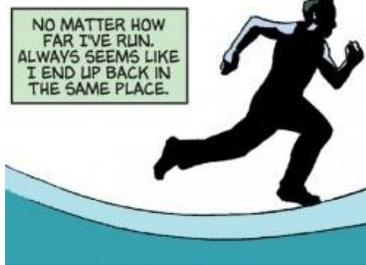


I then returned to the motel, cleaned up again and set my alarm for 6:00 a.m. Sleep came. At 3:15 a.m. I decided I was ready to run again. I was back on the track at 4:00 a.m. I ran hard for a while, took another hour rest, but piled up a total of 151 miles for 5th place. These was indeed the strangest race I had ever run because I had rested for a total of 16.5 hours during the race.

Fixed-time races can be great fun and they are an important part of my ultrarunning. I always look forward to them. With some good training on the flats, mountain ultrarunners can do very well in them.



Running Around Mountains and Lakes



To make some adventure runs even more interesting to me, I enjoy running around big things. Running around is fun. I also like to give people the runaround. I started that crazy practice back in 2005. I can't explain my fascination for running around stuff. Perhaps as a child I enjoyed getting dizzy. But there is some level of satisfaction looking at a giant landmark like a mountain, lake, or city and knowing that you have run all the way around it.

Here's a list of my runarounds:

- My house – 2001 – out of breath
- [Lake Mountain](#) – November 13, 2005 – 32 miles
- [Mount Timpanogos](#) – May 30, 2006 – 38 miles
- Landrock – Apr 13, 2009 – 26.2 miles.
- Schofield Lake – July 11, 2009
- [Utah Lake](#) – October 15, 2012 – 82 miles
- Sanpitch Mountains – November 23, 2012 – DNF – 65 miles
- [Brown Duck Mountain](#) – July 3, 2013 – 35 miles
- Mount Nebo – October 13, 2013 – 47 miles
- [South Oghirrh Mountains](#) – November 30, 2013 – 62 miles
- Saratoga Springs City – October 25, 2014 – 39 miles
- Lehi City – January 17, 2015 – 33 miles
- American Fork City – January 19, 2015 – 20 miles
- [Onaqui Mountains](#) – March 12, 2016 – 48 miles
- [Simpson Mountains](#) – May 21, 2016 – 49 miles

[Lake Mountain](#) – November 13, 2005 – 32 miles

Behind my house on the west side of Utah Lake is a large mountain that rises about 3,300 feet above the valley floor. I hatched the idea in my head to run all the way around that mountain using the foothills which would be about 32 miles. My first attempt was aborted at 24 miles because I ran out of time, but a week later I accomplished the deed. Surely I was the first person to ever run around that mountain because of the distance and because it is just



a silly thing to do. The east side has a spectacular view of Utah Lake the entire time and the east side is in an expansive, remote valley with very little civilization. The mountain towers above it all. After finishing, I just gazed at the mountain and was amazed that I had really accomplished the feat. As of 2017, I have

run around that mountain about sixteen times. A few times I've invited others to come with me, introducing them to ultra-distance for the first time.

In later years, some of my runs around the mountain would be very long loops. The above run was a 44-mile run in 2013. This one caused another stress fracture in my tibia because of all the pavement running on the east and north. In 2016, I discovered dirt bike trails on the east side to avoid a long straight dirt road.

Mount Timpanogos – May 30, 2006 – 38 miles

As of 2016, I've been on the summit of 11,749-foot Mount Timpanogos in Utah 80 times, but one day I also ran around it. Trails exist all the way around the foothills of the mountain except for about an 8-mile stretch of paved roads. I wasn't at all familiar with these trails so this was truly and adventure. I started at 2:15 a.m. in Provo Canyon. I tried to take the Great Western Trail but very quickly lost it, so I used my GPS to get me on other trails to make my way around the eastern side, some down on the Bonneville Shoreline trail near the base of the mountain.



I came across groups of young adults camping and partying. One group asked who I was, and I just said, "I'm the green light guy." I didn't try to explain what I was doing because they wouldn't believe me. Much of my navigation was a comedy of errors because I didn't know the trails, but I used the Dry Creek trail and eventually made it up to the Great Western Trail where the entire area was buried in deep snow. Using my GPS I linked up with the Timpooneke Road and finally was able to make better progress. I made my way around the north side of the mountain, reached the Timpooneke trailhead and was in much more familiar territory.

As I was heading down the trail near the Alpine Loop road, I ran into my mentor, Phil Lowry who had been running but stopped to do a little adhoc trail work to keep the runoff away from the trail. He had just completed his first Timp summit of the year using mountaineering gear. The rest of my loop was mostly downhill and pretty uneventful. I finished up on the Provo River Parkway, a paved trail that runs down Provo Canyon along the river. I finally reached my car and completed my long 38-mile loop in a slow 10.5 hours, taking many, many wrong turns. But it had been a great adventure. I experienced beautiful forests, basins, creeks, raging rivers, cliffs, snow-covered peaks, early spring wildflowers, aspens with new leaves, and snow-covered trails. I saw it all in one morning!

Landrock – Apr 13, 2009 – 26.2 miles

Behind my house is a hill called Landrock (also called Rattlesnake Ridge). Around the ridge is an old dirt road loop of about 1.035 miles. I got the wild idea to get up early one morning before work to run loops around the ridge, enough for a marathon. The loops were fairly smooth except a rocky section where some new development was dumping rocks. The entire loop has about a 50-foot elevation climb/descent. The loop road is about 250 feet above the Utah Lake shore below, so I got some great views along the way. I left my house at 1:30 a.m., and brought up some fluid and food. I decided I would alternate the direction of each loop which also helped me keep track of loop numbers. I worried about attracting attention up there in the middle of the night with my bright green flashlight and I tried to hide its beam from the police station nearby. I ran the first 12 miles almost entirely by moon light. By 5 a.m. I could see the homes below lighting up as people woke up for the day. I soon finished in 4:17:47. Not bad for a marathon before work. I enjoyed this so much that I repeated it a couple more times on other days.



Schofield Lake – July 11, 2009 – 18 miles

I found myself at scout camp with my son at Scofield, Utah. One morning I got up very early and quietly left camp. I was working on three hours of sleep but looked forward to a long run around Scofield Lake. I first needed to run about eight miles of pavement to the town of Scofield. Only four cars passed me. Scofield was still very much asleep even though it was 5:15 a.m. On the east side, I finally reached a dirt road and several fishermen drove by. To finish my run, I had to zig-zag up some roads and then decided to save a mile by doing a short bushwhack directly toward the scout camp. I descended a steep slope and then quickly connected to a trail the scouts had pounded out with their feet in a grove of trees where they did wilderness survival a couple nights earlier. I ran past the rifle range and waved at the camp staff who were all picking up trash in an open field. It had been a great run and certainly a good activity when you have to go to scout camp.



Utah Lake – October 15, 2012 – 82 miles

I started running about 2 a.m. and ran counter-clockwise all the way around massive Utah Lake, an 82-mile adventure run. About 3/4ths was rural country. Many cyclists do this every year, but I'm the first to do it on foot in a day.

The first 26 miles were in the dark. These were some very straight miles on the west of Utah Lake. I could look south and see the lights of Elberta and Goshen 20 miles away. It really messed with my mind. I watched the highway mile markers ticking down, 17, 16, etc. Mentally I had a rough time with those first 30 miles. It was very cold, dark, and lonely. I had decided to turn back several times. At mile 24.5 I concluded I would turn around at the 25-mile mark to make the run and even 50 and be home by noon. But for some reason at the 25-mile mark, I just kept running forward. By mile 30, after all that investment, I knew I should just keep going. When I arrived into a small town, I would stop and use a convenient store as my aid station.

On the east side, there are no direct routes like there were on the west. I ran some railroad tracks to reduce miles but it didn't help reduce the time. It really took some good navigation to minimize the miles. I found some creative routes which made it even more fun. The sun went down and I just grinded out the final hours. My last few miles near the lake in Saratoga Springs were nice and quiet. I was glad to finish and it felt like I really accomplished something pretty amazing.

This [video](#) tells the whole story.

I enjoyed this run so much that I [repeated it](#) on December 5, 2015. I again started very early, a little before 1:00 a.m. This time I didn't run any railroad tracks and went through old Spanish Fork downtown. My route was 84 miles yet I did it faster, in 19:28. As I finished in the dark, I gazed across the massive lake with lights flickering miles away and thought about all the miles I covered to run around it. I actually couldn't comprehend it. It didn't seem possible, but I did it again.

In 2016 I again attempted this run but blundered and fell into an icy, muddy canal at about mile 20. I continued on and with the low lake level, cut off a few miles on the south end. But once the sun descended near Provo, I quit for the day. I came back the next morning and finished the run.



Sanpitch Mountains – November 23, 2012 – DNF – 65 miles

I did a very crazy Black Friday run. I attempted to run around the San Pitch mountain range, about 97 miles. These are the mountains to the west of Sanpete Valley where the city of Manti sits. You can also see them as you travel down I-15. They are to the east as you drive south of Nephi. I started at the little town of Levan, about 12 miles south of Nephi, at 1 a.m. I ran thirty very cold and dark miles south to the little town of Gunnison. It was a terrible mental exercise to hang in there and not turn around. I



seriously almost turned back three times. My water bottles with warm diluted Ensure turned to ice cream, not a great treat when you are so cold already. At dawn I had new life. I ran around the south end of the range and made then started running north through Sanpete Valley, reaching Manti and Ephraim. I had to give up the adventure at mile 65, at Moroni, for two reasons: 1. My knee stiffened up pretty badly. 2. The road from Ephraim to Nephi has an unsafe narrow shoulder and cars flew by at 70 mph. I was on pins and needles for the ten miles.

This [video](#) tells the whole story:

Brown Duck Mountain – July 3, 2013 – 35 miles

Brown Duck Mountain is a high mountain on the south slope of the Uintas mountain range in Utah. I was interested in trying something new and decided to go run the Brown Duck Mountain Loop. The trailhead is north of the towns of Duchesne and Mountain Home, at Moon Lake. It was an easy drive, 2:45 from my home, all on pavement. I arrived about 11 p.m. and slept in the car. I woke up at 4 a.m. to get ready, but there was a big windstorm going through with a little rain. I had no desire to run in terrible wind, so I went back to sleep and waited until 7 a.m. For the rest of the day the weather was great.

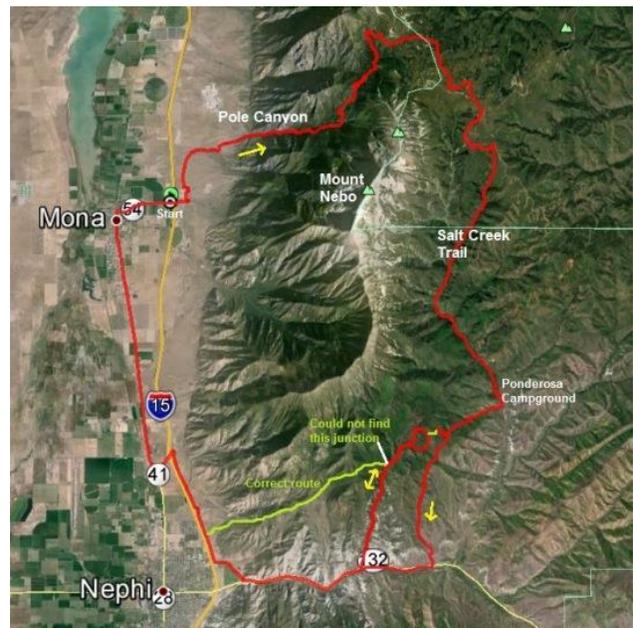


The rain from the previous day and night was nice because the trail was soft and not very dusty. It took several miles to reach the loop and then I ran counter-clockwise around the mountain. The views were fantastic and the forest runs were great fun. This [video](#) tells the whole story.

Mount Nebo – October 13, 2013 – 47 miles

For years, I had wondered if it was possible to run all the way around Mount Nebo, the highest mountain in the Wasatch Front. After a couple visits to the mountain, I noticed many trails and eventually figured out a route. This would truly be an adventure run because I had never run on any of these trails before.

I started before dawn and made a massive climb up Pole Canyon on the northwest end of the mountain above the town of Mona. I hit some deep snow but trudged on and connected with trails that ran down the east side of the mountain. My big trouble was on the southern end. I just couldn't find the trails I had planned to run on and made wrong turns, but eventually made my way to



the city of Nephi. From there it was mostly a frontage road run on the west side all the way back to Mona and my car. If I had found the right routes, the mileage around the mountain would be less than 40 miles. I'm sure I'm the first person to run around Mount Nebo. This [video](#) tells the whole story

[South Oquirrh Mountains](#) – November 30, 2013 – 62 miles

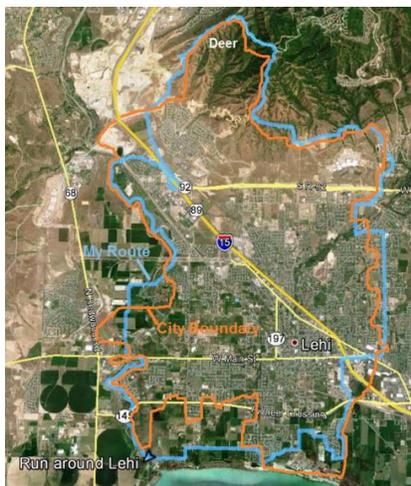
I accomplished my 4th 100K+ training run in 22 days, for a big mileage month of 441 miles. I started at 2:00 a.m. in the little town of Cedar Fort, and ran clockwise around the southern portion of the Oquirrh Mountains. Dawn came around mile 23 on the west side of the mountains. I reached the city of Tooele and then ran up Middle Canyon to the top of Butterfield Canyon. There was some early season snow in the higher country. I then made my way on familiar trails above Herriman, behind Camp Williams and back to Cedar Fort.



This [video](#) tells the whole story:

City Boundary Runs – Winter of 2014-2015

In 2014 to keep my motivation for running high during the winter, I hatched the idea to run around the borders of my city, Saratoga Springs. This required careful research and planning to try to follow the boundaries as close as possible without too much crossing over private property. Many of the boundaries cross across rural grazing lands, so in those cases I tried to keep the city property inside my large loop. It turned out to be great fun and a navigation challenge. The run around Saratoga Springs turned out to be 38.7 miles.



Run around Lehi

Next, I ran around the city boundaries of Lehi, Utah. The boundaries were even more difficult to navigate. On the northern end I had to climb up and run high ridges with snow and hundreds of deer. The east side was urban running but all the streets change names on the boundaries so it was a fun game to figure out the right route. This run was 33 miles.

Finally, I ran around the city of American Fork, Utah for 20 miles. All the city boundary runs introduced me to roads and trails I had never been on before and there was plenty to see and experience. It made winter running interesting.

Onaqui Mountains – March 12, 2016 – 48 miles

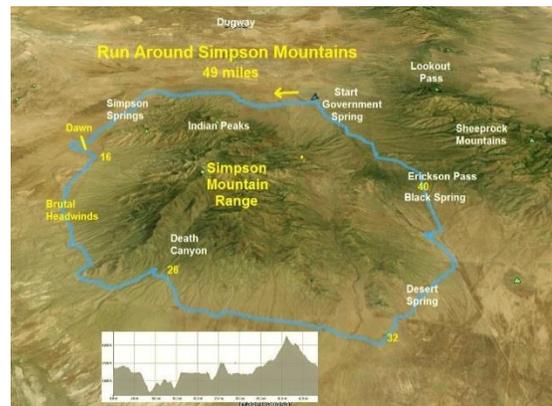
The Onaqui Mountains are in the west desert of Utah. These mountains lie south of the Stansbury Mountains (Deseret Peak) and north of the Pony Express Trail. I began my run around the mountain range at 1:44 a.m. about two miles east of Lookout Pass on the historic Pony Express route. It was about 47 degrees out, warm for this time of year. All was quiet as I ran up and over Lookout Pass and by the starting location of my Pony Express Trail 50 and 100. After four miles I turned north, running on a dirt road all the way to the little town of Terra. I could see the faint lights of Dugway ten miles off to the northwest as I ran north.



As I ran by the ranches near Terra, I woke up all the dogs who cheered me on. From there I ran on the paved road up and over Johnson Pass where I was greeted by the sunrise. After passing through the little town of Clover, I headed south on the east side of the mountain range using a series of dirt roads, wild horse trails, and just bushwhacking at times to complete my loop all the way around the range.

Simpson Mountains – May 21, 2016 – 49 miles

The Simpson Mountains are a mountain range in the remote west desert of Utah that rise nearly 4,000 feet above the desert floor. They are about 13 miles long and ten miles across. They are named for explorer Captain James H. Simpson, a topographical engineer who explored the routes near this mountain range in 1858-59. I began my run at 2:42 a.m. from the site of Porter Rockwell’s historic ranch from the 1850s, near Government Creek. My run all the way around took me just under 12 hours and I had to run against some brutal headwinds while going south.



Running Repeats



Somehow years ago I got into my head that it was cool to run repeats of high peaks. I do recall probably in 2004, seeing a guy run up and down Mount Timpanogos twice in a day. I was very impressed. But he only went up to the saddle (not going clear up to the summit) and back twice. I convinced myself that this was not quite right, that you needed to go from trailhead to summit and back, then repeat.

My crazy repeats started on Mount Timpanogos, two, then three, then four, then five summits, and finally six summits on July 5, 2016. About every month I meet someone who has heard about my running and the conversation starts, “Are you the guy who...” I think, “Oh no, here it comes again.” I get embarrassed and reply, “Yes, I’m that guy.”

I like repeats because it is sort of a controlled environment on a consistent trail. You return to your car every few hours to resupply and continue on. They are easy to plan for. But they also is a tough mental exercise that seems to help develop mental strength to continue on in races when I face trials. I believe they have been helpful to mentally avoid DNFs. Pushing yourself out of your warm car to face another climb up to a summit can be a daunting task. But the challenge of it all gets me excited to try to accomplish it.

My hope is that I have helped inspire others to do repeats. Many others have done repeats on Mount Timpanogos. In 2016, runners doing repeats in Utah seem common on Grandeur Peak and Mount Olympus above Salt Lake City. In 2015 a hiker in his 70s, Ben Woolsey climbed to the top of the block Y above Provo, Utah (one mile, 1,000 feet) at least ten times in a day, and did 100 climbs in a matter of a few weeks. During that year he climbed to the top of the block Y above Provo 500 times. In 2016 I created quite a stir by breaking my ten-year record of five consecutive summits on Mount Timpanogos with six. Just a few days later Scott Wesemann tied my record.

Some of the crazy repeats I have accomplished include:

- [Quint Mount Timpanogos](#) (70 miles, 22,500 feet)
- [Double Kings Peak](#) (52 miles, 8,500 feet, accomplished three times)
- Quad Lake Mountain (36 miles, 11,400 feet)
- [Quad Y mountain](#) (27 miles, 13,800 feet)
- [Quad Squaw Peak](#) (30 miles, 11,500 feet)
- [Sextuple Mount Timpanogos](#) (84 miles, 27,000 feet)



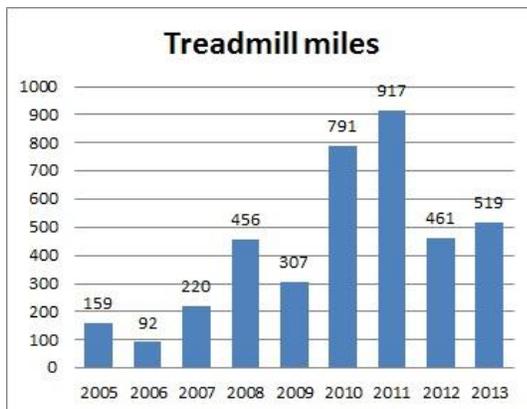
All of these are likely records. Among the most challenging repeats were the Kings Peak repeats on the highest peak in the state of Utah. Three times I attempted to do three trips. For the first two attempts, both times after the second trip, thoughts of going home were too strong and I quit. In 2016 I tried again, went out on the third trip, but about a mile from the summit had to abort because my lungs were too congested due to the altitude. I would run out of breath after just a few steps until I descended. I went more than 75 miles. It was disappointing, but I learned a lot about my congestion/stomach issues.

Treadmill Training



You would probably expect that trail ultrarunners avoid treadmills like the plague. Yes, I have been known to refer to running on them as wimpy, when I could be running outside. I called that machine the “dreadmill” or the “hamster machine.” I watch shows like *Biggest Loser* and yell at the people on the television telling them to go outside, to get out of the stupid fitness rooms.

In my housing development we have a small fitness room and a 25-meter pool that I have access to. It opens daily at 4:30 a.m. When the sun is up, out the window as I run I can see beautiful Utah Lake and the snow covered Wasatch Mountains. I have a few friends who have worked out there year-round in the morning for the past ten years. I usually only see them there during the “winter” months when the trails start turning muddy and the mornings become very cold. I make my appearance in November and bid good-bye in May.



I still run plenty in the outdoors during the winter months, but the crazy treadmill helps me continue my training even during long periods of bad weather or poor winter air quality. Since 2003, I have never taken a winter off from training. Some years, I have my highest mileage months during the winter. This helps to be in top form for the early spring races.



I looked back and added up all my treadmill miles 2005-2013 and was surprised to see that I had run nearly 4,000 miles on that hideous machine, or about 15% of my running miles during that time. By 2009, I started to notice that with effective treadmill workouts, my race performance improved significantly. I started to set personal records at every distance from 5K to 100 miles.

- 5K - 19:51 – 2010
- 10K – 42:04 – 2010
- 1/2 Marathon: 1:29:13 – 2011
- Marathon – 3:23:43 – 2010
- 50K - 4:38 – 2010
- 50-mile – 8:07 – 2010
- 100K - 10:49 – 2010
- 12-hours 67.1 miles – 2010
- 100-mile 19:40 – 2011
- 24-hours 117.8 miles – 2011
- 48-hours 187.033 miles – 2010

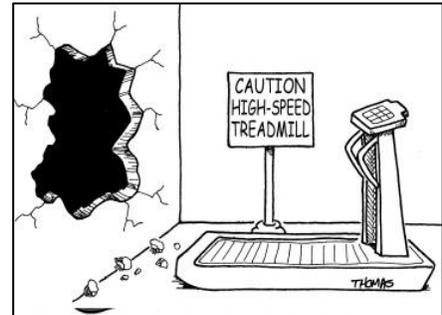


In 2015, I finally bought a nice incline treadmill and put it in my basement. It had been increasingly hard to get out and run the nearby trails in the morning that now bore me. Going to the clubhouse was becoming a pain because machines were often broken and people would give me disappointed looks when they came in and I was on “their machine.” So now, with my own convenient machine I can really pile up the miles. I have a nice setup to watch TV, Netflix, YouTube, etc. Instead of sitting on a couch to watch a ball game, I can run while I watch it.

The benefits I see from treadmill workouts include:

- Using a controlled soft-surface running environment when overcoming injury. I use the treadmill to ease back into running. Also, with the reflection off the dark windows in the morning, I can observe my running form and test out shoes to see how they affect my pronation issues.

- An effective way to increase my foot speed. If I only train on tough trails my foot speed declines. I’m leery about running on pavement, especially because of recent stress fractures, so the treadmill is the place where I can push the pace up to 6:00 miles at times.



- A great facilitator in doing tempo and speed runs. As I introduced some long but speedy runs into my training, it helped me finally achieve that sub-20-hour 100-miler, even at my advanced age of more than 50-years old. I’ve done a 40:00 10K with a treadmill pulling me along.

- A torture machine to do incline training. We have a great incline treadmill that I will really crank up to steep angles. My steep workouts are pretty legendary at the room and I always get comments or people mention to my wife about the crazy things I do with the treadmill. The term “nuts” is always included in the description.

- Mental training. Hey, if you can run a marathon on a treadmill, you can practically do anything.

- Power walking training. During 100s when I walk, my pace tends to be too slow. But if I have recently used the treadmill to force me to powerwalk faster, I find that I do much better in a race.

- Heat training. To me, 70 degrees is hot while running. Treadmill running in the warm room helps me prepare for a hotter race.

My workouts will vary depending on what I’m training for. If I have an upcoming fixed-time race that will involve continues miles on a flat surface, I will do plenty of long, mostly flat, workouts. As spring approaches, I shift to develop my hill strength and start cranking up the incline and slowing the speed.

I find that my mind can tolerate the treadmill much easier if it is done the first thing in the morning when I’m still sleepy. If I’m alone at the fitness room, sometimes I will even run with the lights out. I never have an issue with holding on to the front of the treadmill. I prefer that so I can close my eyes, keep my balance, be able to look away, and don’t have to focus on not falling off the machine. Yes, that makes it easier, but I simply offset it by increasing the speed or the incline. I usually use a towel to cover up the indicators on the machine. Watching those crazy numbers click by makes the mental challenge even tougher. Also having a towel handy is great when the sweat flies. I usually listen to sports radio in the morning as I run and then shift to music when that gets boring.



An example of a typical workout is what I call 10x10x10. Ten miles, at 10:00 pace, at 10% incline. That is 100 minutes of good torture. The incline machine I use estimates the number of feet climbed.

During a 12X10X10 the machine thought I climbed 6,400 feet and burned 2,500 calories. During some very long workouts I have been able to turn over the dial, climbing more than 10,000 feet.

In 2010 as I was training for Rocky Raccoon 100, I decided to run 20 miles on the machine, the same distance as one loop at Rocky. I ran the first 16 miles at marathon pace and then backed off and threw in some inclines. I finished it in 2:45. The guy who was cleaning the rec center came back into the room and asked, “You still here? How far are you going?” I replied that I didn’t know but had gone 16 miles so far. I then heard gasps from a couple other people in the room.

A week later I continued the mental torture by running 28 miles. I would see groups of people come and go all morning, but I was still running. I hit the marathon mark at 3:40 and then cooled down from there. Four hours on the crazy machine. I ran my fastest of my five Rocky Raccoon finishes that year, in 21:07.

During November, 2010, I ran my first 50K on the treadmill. Six groups of people came and went during my run. I brought a little drop bag with things in it just as if I was running a real 50K. I reached the marathon distance at 3:37 and 50K at 4:16. That was pretty speedy. Using my treadmill shorthand, it was a 31×8.5×1

During November, 2011, was my highest treadmill week. I ran a total of 75 miles on it. Including the previous Saturday, I ran 109 miles on the treadmill in eight days.

I ran what was my longest treadmill run to date in November, 2013. I was on the machine for five hours and ran 34 miles. I hit the 50K mark at 4:31. It was good workout because I added in plenty of hills along the way. The machine thought I climbed more than 10,000 feet, but I think 5,000 feet was more realistic. After five hours I just couldn’t handle it anymore. My mind was going numb. I went out into the cold rain and ran a few more miles to bring some sanity back. In 2016 I ran 38 miles on the treadmill one day.



This shows the track of my 34-mile run.

I have to admit, that one of the few amusements to do while on the treadmill is to observe other people’s workouts. Here is a list of some of my favorites and the names I’ve given these people. (Hopefully no offense, all in fun):

- “Hand talker” This is a lady who would walk on the treadmill and yak very loudly to her mother the entire time. It was fascinating to watch her hand gestures while on the treadmill. They were sweeping and amazing. When she was on the machine next to me, I feared that she was going to eventually slap me. She would also slap her hands together hard while talking for emphasis. I was impressed how she could do that while walking fast.

- “Heart rate checker” One guy would come in pretty consistently, but only for about 15 minutes. He would run fast on the treadmill for about 30 seconds, have the machine check his heart rate and then walked for a couple minutes. Then he would repeat that a few times. He did all of this with the fan blasting on him (and me). He even had a water bottle with him and took frequent drinks. I’m not sure what he accomplished. He would leave after those 15 minutes without any sweat. Well, at least he’s doing something.



- “Slow walking weight lifter” This guy would do a few simple reps with the weights and then walk around very slowly for five minutes, take a drink, look at himself in the mirror and then slowly set up the next easy exercise. During his 40 minutes there I once timed him. He only was actually working for about seven minutes. No sweat, no pain, no work.

“Weights watcher” This guy would actually would stand and stare at the weight machines for long minutes, doing nothing else. I guess by just looking at the weights he thought he was working.

- “Sweatshirt Lady” This lady would come in, get on the treadmill, and then take off her hoody and tie it around her waist like she is going for a hike in the woods. (There are plenty of hangers nearby for coats.) I guess she puts it there in case it suddenly gets cold in the room and she might need it? She has to do her ten minute treadmill walk with a fan blowing full speed on her (and me). I just can’t understand people who do anything to avoid the littlest amount of sweat.



- “Stretch Guy” This guy would come in, spent more than ten minutes stretching out his legs and then did five minutes on the elliptical at its easiest level. Then more stretching followed by five minutes of slow jogging on the treadmill. No sweating was at all involved. (I never stretch. I think it just wastes time when I could be running.)



“I did a 30-minute workout today: 15 minutes looking for my sneakers, 10 minutes looking for my sweat pants and 5 minutes on the treadmill.”

- “Cardio Lady” This lady would work very hard. She was only about 100 pounds and would do a tough 90-minute cardio workout each day on the elliptical and incline treadmill. She would weigh herself before and after every workout.

- “Foot slappers” Frequently someone runs next to me who has terrible running form and slaps their feet very hard, doing hard heel strikes. I’m so tempted to offer advice and help them do more mid-foot striking, but I never have the nerve. I’m just a sweaty old man. One girl even does some barefoot running. You would think that would help improve the form. Not in this case. Her heel strikes are so hard and loud that I have to push the ear phones in deeper and turn up the tunes louder.

- “Twitter Lifter” This guy cracked me up. He was obviously addicted to his iPhone. He would do a set for a minute or two and then his hand would quickly go into his pocket, pull out his phone and then he would read and text for a few minutes. Perhaps he had an app he was using to record his workout but I highly doubt it. I looked like he was on Twitter. He would do this over and over and over again.

- “Girl band walkers” Instead of using ear phones, these ladies would actually bring in speakers for their iPod and play the same sort of pounding girl-band music that everyone had to listen to. They never asked permission from anyone, and would do it even if the TV was on.

- “A.D.D Ladies” These two ladies had Attention Deficit Disorder for their exercise routine. They would go from one exercise to another, circling the room. The problem was, they would only spend a couple minutes with each machine, elliptical, treadmill, etc. at low intensity. Their routine was impossible to get the heart rate up. They would quit a machine so early, rest, and then go to another. It got me dizzy watching them.

- “New Years’ Crowd” A few days after New Years’ Day, just like clockwork, new people would appear in the fitness room. It tends to get crowded, but 90% of them last only about two weeks.
- “Grunting old man” This guy is always using the machine I want, stays on it for hours, grunts and groans, and drips sweat all over. He runs so long and far that he even needs to change shirts. Oh! That’s me.



Oh, the silly things that can entertain you as you run on such a boring machine! All these people are doing some good. I’m glad to see the room used. My buddies who are there year round work very, very hard, mostly weight-lifting. They give me a hard time about my workouts. They joke about them to everyone. On Saturdays, they know that I’ll do a three-hour workout and it won’t surprise them to see me later in the day running in the neighborhood.

Treadmills have their place in ultrarunning training. I’ve discovered they really help my performance both mentally and physically. However, if someday I end up in a mental hospital, you will know what put me there.



Pace to Race



In 2004, at the start of my first 50-mile race, I listened to a runner giving advice to our small group of early starters about pace. This runner was trying to finish his 50th ultra in 50 states and he sported the bib number 50. Clearly he was experienced. He advised us to use a run/walk strategy – running for a set distance and then taking scheduled walks. We started and ran all together but after a mile all the others slowed down to walk. I just couldn't do it. I pushed on and was soon far ahead of everyone. I wondered if I was doing it wrong. Later most of this group took a wrong turn, so I was glad I didn't stick with them. But I was left wondering what the right pacing strategy is for an ultra.

One of the best places to turn for advice is ultrarunning pioneer, David Horton. “When the runners line up for the start of the race, get near the back of the pack. DO NOT get near the front; if you do you'll pay dearly sooner or later. You will start out too fast even though it feels very easy. . . . When should you start walking in the race? If you wait until you feel like you need to walk, you've waited too long. You should start walking from the start, when you hit your first hill. (Horton, “Ultimate Running Experience: Completing Your First Ultra-Marathon.”)

This advice is probably very good, especially for the first ultra, but I have to admit that I've never followed it in all for my more than 120 ultras. Well, one year when I was at the start of Rocky Raccoon 100, I was messing around with my stuff and when I looked up, everyone was already gone, so I certainly did start at the back of the pack. But I then had “fun” during the first few miles trying to pass several hundred runners on dark trails.

Another ultrarunning expert, Marshall Ulrich, gives this advice: “I recommend starting out at about an 80 percent intensity level. Trust me, the excitement of the start and all of the other runners around you will force you to run at least this fast. Resist the impulse to run even faster to keep up with the pack, as all you will do is burn yourself out early! Keep your pace at no more than 80 percent for the first few miles of the race. You should feel like you are moving at a comfortable pace, capable of more.” (Ulrich, “Pace Yourself for Ultrarunning Training and Racing.”)

This approach is closer to what I adhere to if I'm trying to compete and seek a good finishing time. I've never been an elite ultrarunner and never will be, so it is better to turn to one of the elites for advice if you are in it to win it. But I always strive for a strong showing and enjoy running near the front of the mid-pack.

For my first year of running ultras, my focus was only on finishing, but by my seventh start, I was in it to truly race. I came away surprised and pleased that I was able to push the pace well and finish in the top 20 among 90 starters. For 100-milers, I generally start pretty fast, near the front, and run the early miles at



“It happens to a lot of runners at this stage of the marathon, George. It's called ‘hitting the wall.’ Your body basically just disintegrates.”

about an 80 percent intensity level. As an old guy, going out at that pace, I breathe pretty hard for the first 15 miles or so and then back off to a longer sustainable pace.

Why do I go out pretty fast rather than slow? One reason is mental. If I would start in the back with the slower runners, I would mentally get comfortable with the pace and fool myself into thinking that I'm moving pretty fast because I'm keeping up with those around me. I would get lazy and before you know it, I'm miles behind those near the front. I tend to excel if I can be pushed by those around me at a more aggressive pace as long as I never red-line.

Some races when I'm feeling great and have trained well, I can keep up that faster pace for longer. Being toward the front further motivates me and helps push me ahead. If I was toward the back, I would wonder if I lost precious time. This sounds like a recipe for crashing and burning. We've all seen the young rookie runner who starts very fast and by mile 50 is collapsed in a chair, done. To me, it is a balance that can be found through experience.



As I am running in the early stages of a 100-miler, I try to always keep in mind these thoughts:

1. The real race starts at mile 60. Don't try chasing everyone in sight.
2. Most of these runners around me who are pushing so hard in the morning will be walking by sunset.
3. Don't get lazy. Compete.

The real race starts at mile 60.

While I like to start rather fast, I keep this in mind to hold myself back just enough. I chuckle as I watch runners who I am catching up to during the first half of the race, look behind, worried about me catching up to them. There will also always be that runner who you are trying to pass that kicks it into gear just because you are there. It is fine to be motivated, but I don't fret about my overall position in the race before mile 60 as long as I've been running my best.

My goal for mile 60 is being able to run relatively fast while others are starting to walk longer stretches. If I've held back just enough, I know that for me, something happens around mile 60, and I frequently start feeling fantastic. This high point usually corresponds with cooler evening temperatures and also my joy in running during the night. So, I try kicking it into gear. I know that I'm having a good race if I can run up mild hills fast after mile 60 while others are walking them.

If things are working well, after mile 60, I can still start climbing the standings dramatically. At Cascade Crest at about the 55-mile mark is a long six-mile climb up to Keechelus Ridge. For me, it is close to midnight and I look forward each year to be able to really run up that hill fast. I always pass at least a dozen walkers and then I am energized for the next long fast downhill. If I've managed my pace well during the first half of the race, I'll be able to find speed in the second half. But I don't purposely run slowly near the start.



View of Marlette Lake from Tahoe Rim course

But some races I just go for it. At the 2010 Tahoe Rim 100, I found myself in 2nd place overall at mile 11. At the aid station at that point a lady saw me in a big hurry to fill up my bottles and eat. She said something about quit trying to rush, that 100 miles was a long way. At first my thought was, “but this is a race!” But she was right. I reminded myself that the real race starts at mile 60. In 2011 at Buffalo 100, a few miles into the race I was running with Karl Meltzer. I knew that was wrong but I hung closely to the front runners for a few more miles and later backed off. I finished well that year, in 3rd place and set my 100-mile race PR at 20:27. My fast start did not damage my overall race.

Runners pushing too hard in the morning will be walking by sunset

The Bighorn 100 course is an interesting case for me. This course starts with a mild climb for the first few miles which I can run fast and I usually stick with the second pack of runners. But after that is a monster climb. I hang on for the first 1,000 feet or so but then back off and am content to let others pass. I watch them push hard but I don't fret. I make sure I'm not going at max, closer to that 80% effort. What I keep telling myself during this crazy climb is, “Half of these people will be out of gas and walking by mile 30.” One year I even reached to the top of that monster climb at the same time as David Horton, both of us pushing pretty hard but not maxing out.

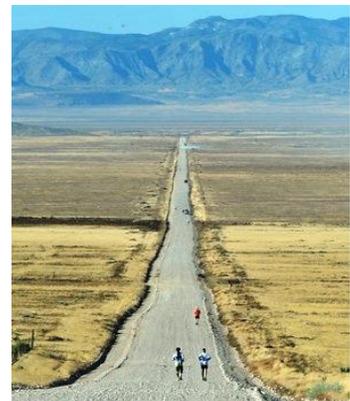


Long morning climb at Bighorn

At Bighorn, starting at mile 30 is a very long 18-mile climb. My goal is to run most of that 18 miles while others are walking. I'll even run uphill portions fast and recover somewhat on the flat portions so I can run the next uphill. I love the challenge and overall the pace is faster than walking the hills and running the flats. Yes, that seems backwards, but it works for me.

Pony Express Trail

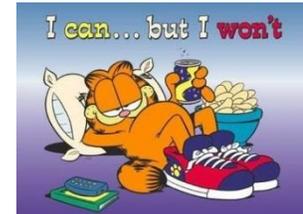
What about a flat course? You hear many cautions about resisting the temptation to run fast on a flat course. I've ignored that advice on flat courses because of my preparation. If I have flat races coming up, I make sure I train very hard doing long fast training runs on the flat lands. If my legs can handle it, why not run fast during the race? With a very fast and flat course like Pony Express Trail 100, I have usually run the first 26 like a slowish marathon, reaching that point in a little under four hours, with very little walking up to that point. A fast start like that hasn't appeared to damage my ability later on in the race. I've observed mountain 100 veterans try to do the same thing without the training investment on the flats. Many of them do crash and burn.



At Across the Years 48-hour, I've set all my ultra distance PRs by going out fast and then able to make it well beyond 100 miles without crashing. The scatter chart shows my mile-pace for each 0.5K lap for an entire 187 miles. I started fast at 8:00 pace but obviously my pace degraded over time, especially as you add in sleep deprivation. But notice the very fast pace laps very late in the race between 150 miles to the finish. In fact my fastest lap was a nearly 7:00-minute-mile lap around mile 150. With my fast start I reached the marathon point at 3:50, the 50K mark at 4:38, 50 miles at 8:07, 100K at 10:49, and 100 miles at 19:46, then ran 87 more miles.

Don't get lazy, compete

To keep my pace up, I have to keep reminding myself not to be lazy. It is so easy to slow down just to feel more comfortable, losing focus on the pace needed to reach my goals. But there will usually be unforeseen problems that will appear due to mistakes or some bad luck.



When things go wrong

Eventually in all of my 100-mile races something goes wrong. Is my pace to blame? One of the big dangers of pushing too hard is causing the stomach to go south and then stop functioning. When the stomach revolts, it slows down your pace. When you try to push harder, the stomach fights back. Other things that can destroy your pace are dehydration, low carbohydrates, blisters, sore muscles, and other problems. It takes experience to know how to bounce back.



During 2011, I finished ten 100-milers, but it was a rough year for me. Continually at night during my 100-milers, my stomach was shut down, stop processing food, and force me to slow my pace. During Bighorn 100 it lasted all night and was pretty much torture. What was to blame? Pace? Dehydration? Electrolytes? Carbohydrates? Age? It took me most of the year to figure things out. The cause: Altitude and body temperature. During the higher altitude races, I would get chilled during the night and my body would transfer my blood flow away from my stomach. It wasn't getting enough oxygen and would just shut down. Deeper breathing, a slower pace, or dropping to lower altitude would help. The solution now is better altitude training and making sure I am dressed warmly enough at night. It was a pretty simple solution and once understood, my pace in future races improved.

When things go wrong for long hours which cause a slower pace, once I pull out of it, I discover that I feel rested and have a ton of energy. That is then the time to salvage the race and run like crazy to the finish.

Other approaches

Will other approaches work? Certainly, it depends on what works best for you. Take the case of Matt Watts of Colorado. Matt keeps a nice steady pace throughout his 100-milers. In my early years, despite my faster starts, I could always count on Matt catching up by mile 70 because he runs so steady and is in and out of aid stations in just a minute. I knew what his normal pace was because we had run many miles with each other. In many races I would think, "OK, Matt is probably about six miles behind now but moving steady. I'm now moving slower than he is, I better pick it up." One year when Matt ran the Pony Express Trail 100, a few miles into the race, he was pulling up the rear with no one in sight. He wasn't worried, and he had the last laugh



Matt Watts

finishing in 3rd place that year, passing nearly everyone, and he almost caught me too.

The pacing chart

In the 2009 Bear 100, at mile 20, a friend who would pace me later on was helping at the aid station. I told him to expect me at the 4:10 mark. I showed up within one minute of that pace. The next year, another friend who was managing that station knew that I was planning on arriving at 4:00. He laughed when I showed up exactly as predicted. I joked that I had been hiding behind a tree waiting until the precise moment. (Actually I would have arrived sooner but I took a bad fall with just a half mile to go). I've become very good at predicting my pace. How do I do it?

Before each race I construct a pacing chart. I study the course, where the climbs are, how technical the trails are and then predict and set an aggressive goal to reach each aid station. I take into account the likely mile-pace at that point, factor in that I start rather fast, and make sure I add in some time for aid station stops. If I've run the course before, I include the checkpoint times in past year so I can gauge how I'm doing.

Below was my pace chart for the 2012 Bear. Using this chart is another tool to motivate me. In 2008, I had some bad foot problems after mile 50 so my race fell apart. In those cases, I stop referring to the pace chart and just do my best to hold on. But if my race is going well, this pace chart is a better motivator than a pacer.

	miles	clock goal	2012 goal	2008	2009	2010
Start	0	6:00 AM	0:00			
Logan Peak	10.5	8:30 AM	2:30	2:42	2:33	2:23
Leatham Hollow	19.7	10:00 AM	4:00	4:20	4:10	3:59
Richards Hollow	22.5	10:35 AM	4:35	4:58	4:44	4:33
Cowley Canyon	30	12:20 PM	6:20	7:15	6:38	6:23
Right Hand Fork	36.9	1:50 PM	7:50	9:01	8:06	7:51
Temple Fork	45.2	3:45 PM	9:45	11:12	10:09	9:48
Tony Grove	51.8	6:00 PM	12:00	13:18	12:17	12:04
Franklin TH	61.5	8:30 PM	14:30	16:30	14:51	14:37
Logan River	69.5	10:50 PM	16:50	19:42	17:12	17:09
Beaver Lodge	75.8	1:00 AM	19:00	22:17	20:15	19:27
Gibson Basin	81.2	2:45 AM	20:45	24:52:00	22:15	21:10:00
Beaver CG	85.3	3:50 AM	21:50	25:52:00	23:28	22:10:00
Ranger Dip	92.2	6:10 AM	24:10:00	28:21:00	25:57:00	24:22:00
Finish	100	8:00 AM	26:00:00	30:51:00	28:21:00	26:30:45

Pace chart for Bear 100

I've become pretty proficient at developing these charts and a few times have even developed them for other runners once I understand well their abilities. One danger is setting goals too low. I make sure I'm never content just to reach my marks. If I have a good race, I should be exceeding them.

The pace chart is also very handy to plan where to put my drop bags including my flashlight and night clothes. Knowing that I need to reach these points before dark is another motivator. In recent years I've also used a GPS watch to help manage my pace. In the early stages of a race it doesn't help as much because I'm pushing hard and don't need to push any faster. But in the later stages of a race it can help me keep my pace up to the levels it should be at. There is so many times when it feels like I'm running a 10:00 pace late in the race feeling good, but then I see that I'm actually running closer to 13:00 or 14:00. In those cases the watch can give me a kick in the pants to work harder.

With each 100, using my pacing charts, I usually have a clear, starting game plan for the first 25-50 miles. After that, I know that I have to adapt my pace to the circumstances presented to me. For example, when I run Wasatch Front 100, I push the rolling first three miles pretty hard and then fall in line with a fairly aggressive group who help pull me to the top of Chinscraper. From there, I back off the pace until the long downhill to Francis aid station where I run very fast if the legs feel good. At Tahoe Rim, I want to run nearly every step of first eleven miles to Tunnel Creek. That means a bunch of uphill running and some blistering fast downhill on the switchbacks into Tunnel Creek. I want to arrive there fast because the next section gets hotter the later in the morning that you go through it. All five years there, my starting game plan and worked great.

Having a good strategy for your pace is important in running ultras. But remember that everybody is different. You need to figure out what works best for you.

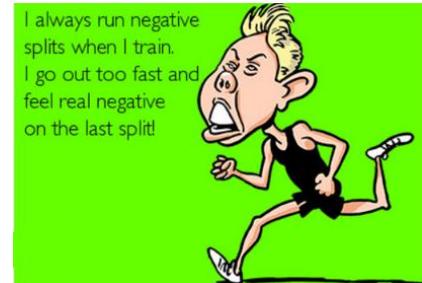
Negative 100-mile Splits



In running, a negative race split is when the second half of a race is faster than the first half. Runners generally strive for negative splits in road races -- marathon or shorter. Most world records at these “shorter” distances have been achieved with negative splits. Galen Rupp set the American record in the indoor 5K of 13:01:26. His mile splits were 4:14, 4:12, and 4:04. Some coaches feel that negative splits should be achieved not only by elite runners, but also by the recreation runner.

Achieving a negative split doesn't mean that at the halfway point you need to speed up, but at some point in the second half of the race you do speed up.

A Runner's World article stated, “Anyone can and should run negative splits. Unfortunately, most runners don't. Instead they start in a near sprint, hang on through the middle and resort to a survivor's shuffle at the end.”

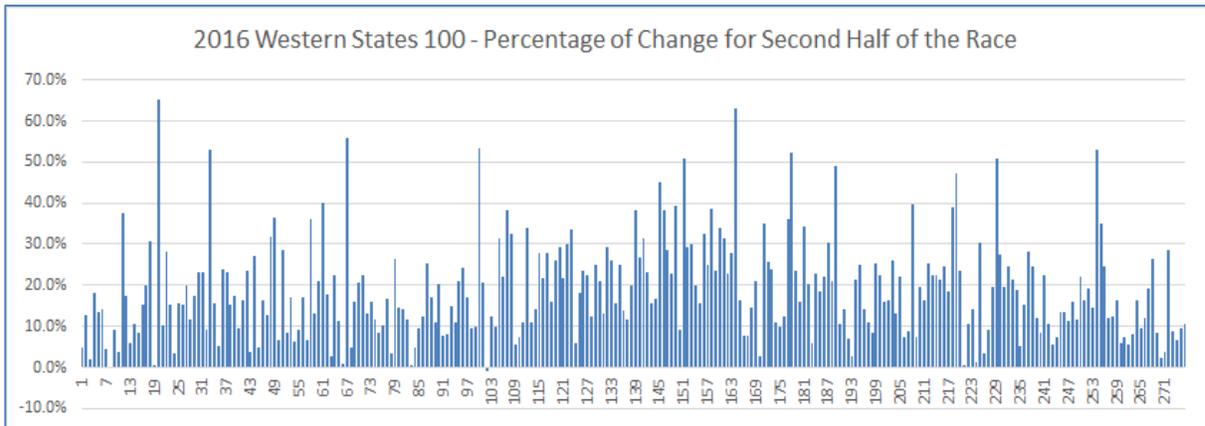


Should you try to achieve negative splits during a 100-miler? I've seen many do that survivor's shuffle at the end and in a few races I've done it too. Certainly it is possible to do a negative split 100, but I have never come very close to achieving it in all my 89 100-mile finishes. I believe I could do it if I purposely held back significantly during the first 50, but I believe my overall time would end up much slower.

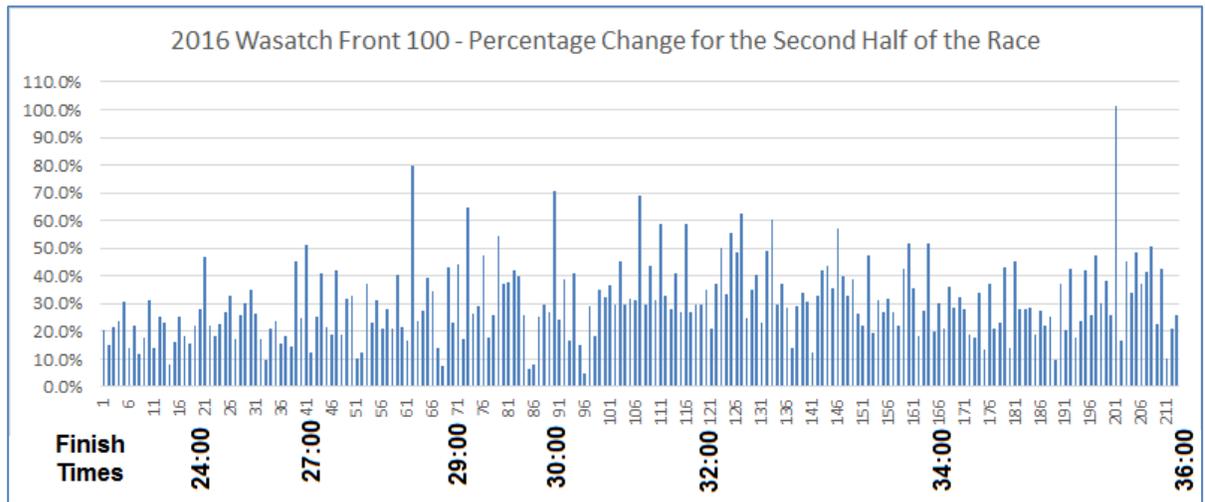
Some factors that make negative splits hard or unrealistic for me in 100-milers:

- Inconsistent difficulty throughout the course. (Second half harder than the first half). Certainly this can be true for mountain 100-milers, but not for loop courses.
- Running at night vs running during the day. Despite all the thousands of miles that I have run at night, my speed at night always decreases vs. running in the day even with great lighting. Most 100-milers have the night hours in the second 50. I have run a couple 100s that started near evening and my first 50s were surprisingly slow. Something about the daylight gives me increased energy.
- Changing weather. Heat during the day, cold at night. That can hurt or help making that second half faster.
- Length of time in the elements. I find that my body can withstand heat, cold and rain very well for about 12-14 hours, but after that I'm more affected by it and things can go wrong. It usually involves the stomach.
- Sleep deprivation. The second half of a 100 nearly always involves fighting to stay awake and alert. As drowsiness arrives I slow significantly until I can make it go away. I never have this problem during the first 50 miles.
- Altitude. On the higher altitude courses, during the second 50 miles, I usually develop some sort of sports asthma causing congestion in my lungs. With the decreased oxygen getting into my system, my stomach starts rebelling. For me this only happens in the second 50 miles.
- Mental. If I purposely hold back significantly during the first half of a 100-miler, I eventually trick myself mentally into thinking I'm going at a good fast pace because I am matching the pace of the runners around me. Before I know it, I get too far behind to compete.

Negative Splits for 100-mile races?

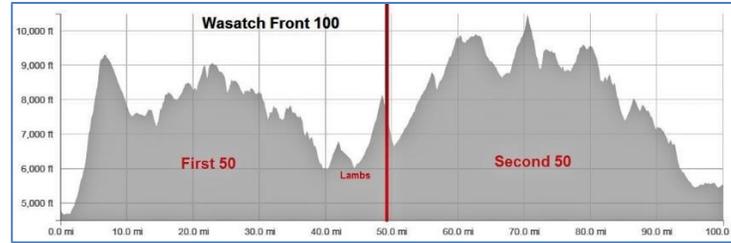


Do elite runners usually run negative splits in 100-milers? The answer seem to be that they can run close to even splits. At 2016 Western States 100, a net-downhill course, just one of the top runners had a negative split, Kyle Pietari, who came in 8th, but his second half beat his first half by only about one minute. One other finisher also had a negative split. The winner, Andrew Miller came close, but had a slowdown for his second half of only 4.8%. He ran 7:39 for his half and 8:01 for his second half. Jim Walmsley who came in 20th was on course record time but in the later stages of the race took a wrong turn and got lost. He eventually finished, but had a slowdown of 65%, the largest percentage of slowdown in the entire field. The average slowdown for all finishers was 19%.

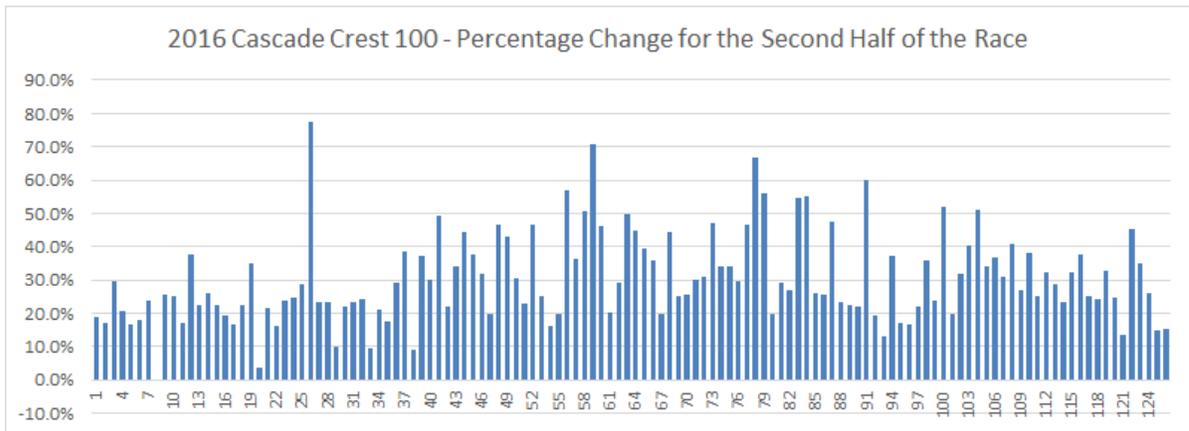


What about a much tougher 100-miler? I took a look at all of the finishers for 2016 Wasatch Front 100. No runner had a negative split. The runners who went sub-24-hours averaged a slowdown for the second half of the race of 20%. The entire field averaged a 30% slowdown. One runner even managed a slowdown of more than 100% and still finished. That was Dan Ruch who was on pace to finish in about 25.5 hours, but after Pole Line Pass slowed down significantly and finished in nearly 35 hours. That is determination!

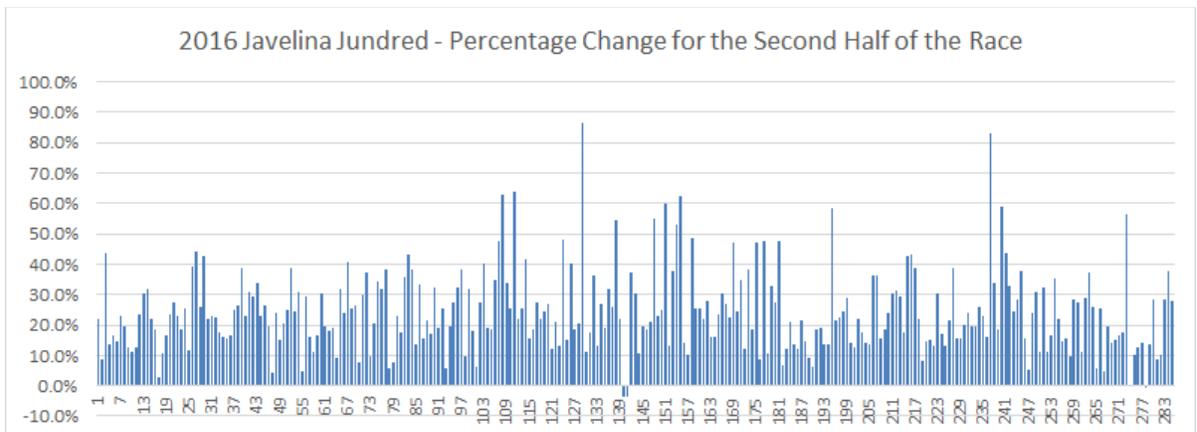
My Path to Ultrarunning – Davy Crockett



A key reason why the top runners don't come close to negative splits at Wasatch is because the second half of the course is quite a bit harder and higher than the first half, and even the elite runners run a good portion of the second 50 in the dark.



There was just one runner who finished 2016 Cascade Crest that had a negative split and just barely. The 8th place runner, Ihara Tomokazu ran 10:49 for the first half and 10:47 for the second half. You can see a spike for the runner in 26th place who went out fast and later slowed down significantly. The average slowdown for the entire finishing field was 30%. I slowed down 25%.



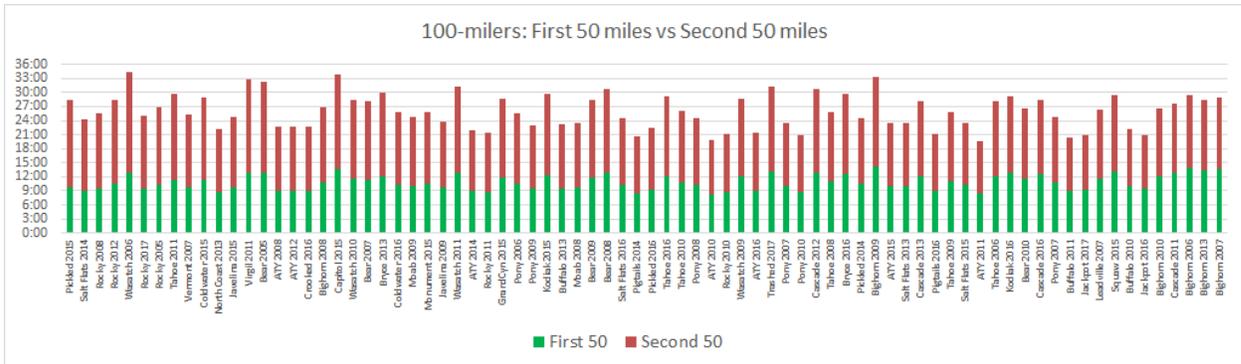
For the 2016 Javelina Jundred, a few runners ran the second half faster than the first half including two runners who probably ran together. 2016 was a hot year that slowed many runners during the first 50 miles.

Some races impose cutoffs that force the very slowest runners to have a positive split. For example, Leadville 100 imposes a 14-hour cutoff to reach the 50-mile turnaround at Winfield. In reality, few runners who reach Winfield after 13 hours go on to finish. For Wasatch the cutoffs around the 50-mile

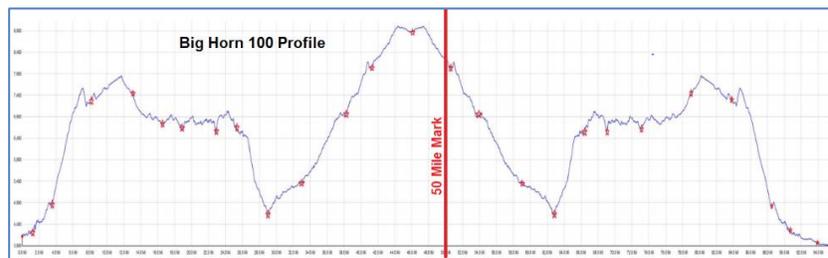
mark are more forgiving and does allow a runner being chased by cutoffs to run a negative split, but few running that slowly can pull it off.

Taking a look at the four races that are part of the Grand Slam of Ultrarunning, if you run right at cutoffs around the 50-mile mark, Western States lets you run about 50%/50%. Leadville requires the first 50 to be faster, 46.7%/53.3%. Vermont and Wasatch allow you to do the first 50 slower, but then you will need to do a negative split in order to finish. Vermont: 53.4%/46.6%, and Wasatch: 52.8%/47.2%.

My 100-mile splits

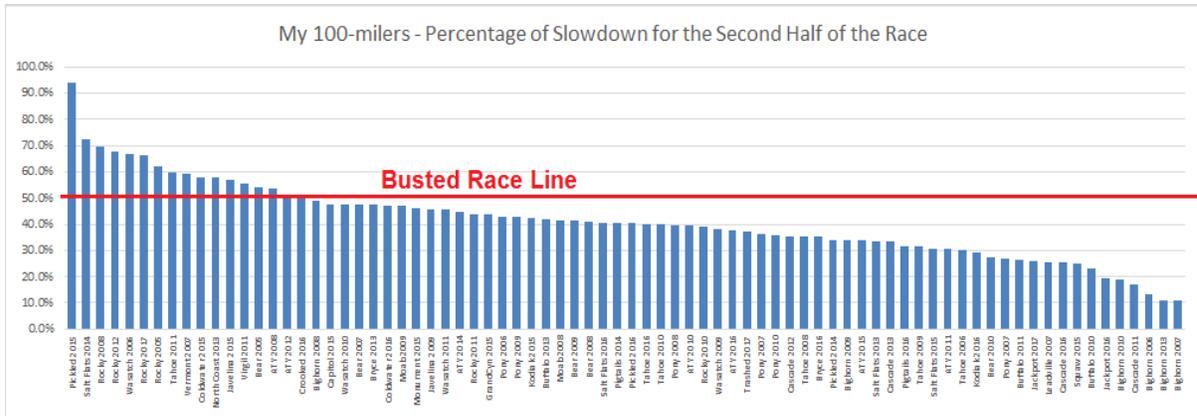


In all my 100-mile finishes, how close have I come to a negative split, or just an even split? I did the analysis and was surprised to find out that the closest race to even splits was Bighorn 100. Why? The first half of the course is significantly more difficult than the second half. This race also starts in the late morning so most reach the night section sooner, in the first 50 when they are still moving well. The last 12 miles for that race are fast downhill and I usually can push them hard. I think it is an ideal course for doing negative splits. At Bighorn 2007, my first 50 was 13:45, and my second 50 was 15:15. That is the closest I have ever come to an even split in a 100-miler, but my overall time was slow for me at this race, 29:00.



In fact four of my top five closest races to even-splits were all at Bighorn: 2006, 2007, 2010, and 2013. 2010 was a good race for me, with 12:10 for the first 50, 14:28 for the second 50, for a finish of 26:38.

My Path to Ultrarunning – Davy Crockett

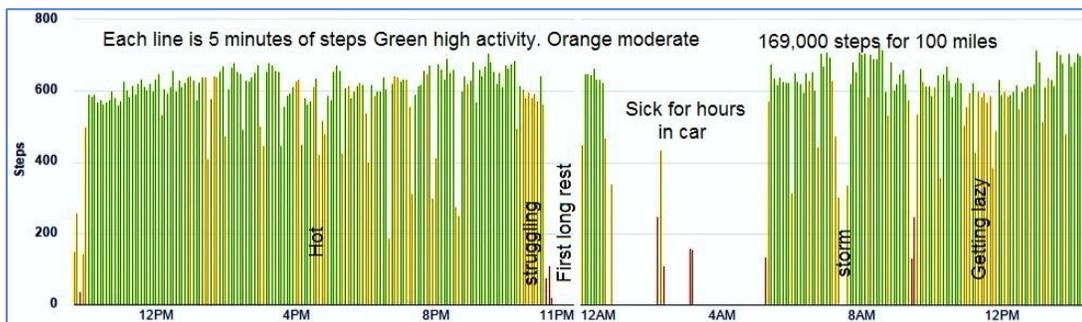


This chart shows the percentage of slowdown for each of my 100-milers that I have good statistics for. A higher percentage is a greater slowdown for the second half. The races at about 50% slowdown were all “busted” races that somehow I still pushed to the finish. These are the races near or above the red line. The lower percentages are closer to even splits. You can see the Bighorn is usually the closest to 10% because of the nature of its course. The course forced me into a more even pace.

My Worst Slowdowns

What races for me had the worst slowdown? The worst were a group of about 15 races where things just went wrong because of poor fueling, sickness, injury, or weather. Once things went wrong, the second half of these races were a bust, but I still finished. In all these races I slowed down more than 50%. I had significant issues in these races including: High winds, chilling cold, grueling heat, a terrible sick stomach, chafing, and even a broken leg. But somehow I pushed to the finish. Nine other 100s were truly busted, DNFs, all after 75 miles.

My worst slowdown was at a 2-mile loop course, Pickled Feet 100 in 2015. I ran the first 50 strong in 9:40. But my last 50 took 18:46 for 94% slowdown. The heat during the day made me terribly sick at night and I stopped for about six hours total to rest and nap until I finally got over it.



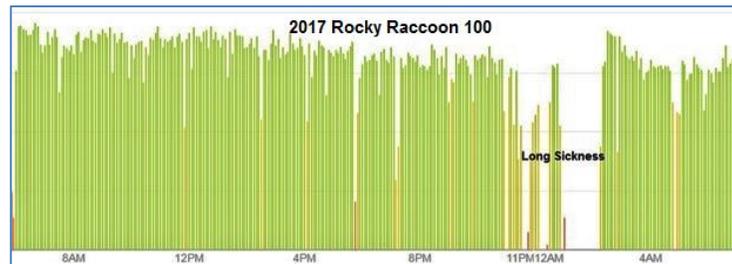
The next worst slowdown race was 2014 Salt Flats 100. At mile 26, I found myself leading the race. This pushed me to run even harder and I held on to the overall lead until the grueling mud flats at about mile 44. I ran the first 50 in 8:54. But during the entire night, a cold rain fell and I got drenched because of poor rain gear. I had to stop multiple times just to get my body warmed up again. The second 50 took 15:21. I still finished in a respectable 24:15 so it wasn't a bad race, but it could have finished so much faster if I was better prepared for the rain.

My first Wasatch 100 in 2006 is listed as one of the worst slowdowns. I did pretty well for the first 50, getting close to Lambs Canyon in 12:50. But late at night I was sick and stopped at Brighton (about

mile 75) for multiple hours. I was low in electrolytes. Eventually I pulled out of my problems and finished the last 50 miles in a staggering slow 21:25 (including my stop), the only race I ever went over 20 hours for the second 50. I finished in 34:15.

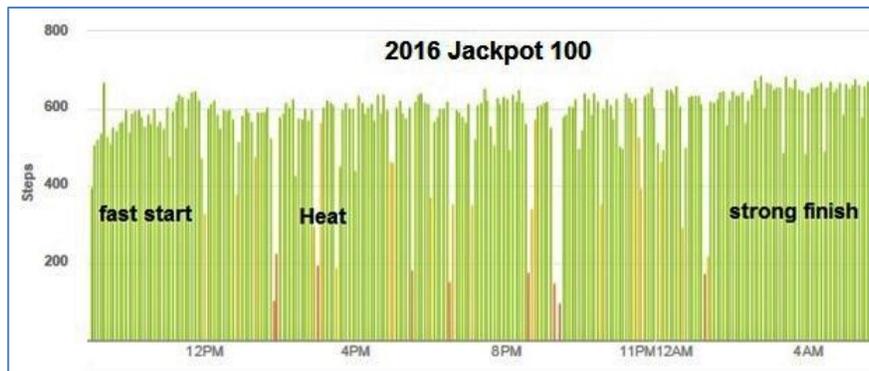
Three of my “busted” races were on the easy course, Rocky Raccoon. In 2012, I didn’t realize that I had a terrible stress fracture in my tibia and it kept breaking more, the further I went. I finished, but ran the first 50 in 10:36 and the second 50 limping all the way in 17:47. I didn’t run another 100 until nearly seven months later.

Most recently, 2017 Rocky Raccoon was another “bust.” I had a very good race going, but the stomach shut down hard, again because of low electrolytes, and I had to stop for nearly three hours. The first 50 was 9:25 and the second 50 was 15:39. I finished in 25:04. Again the Fitbit report really shows what happened:



If I exclude the clearly “busted” races, the worst positive splits for me tend to be on tougher mountain courses including Wasatch, Bear, Bryce, and Capitol Reef. The course and higher altitude all wore me down.

My Best 100-mile splits



For the flat loop courses, 2016 Jackpot came out on top with a 54.4% rate. It was a good steady race for me and I pushed the last 20 miles hard. I ran the first 50 in 9:30 and the second 50 in 11:21, for a finish time of 20:51. In 2017 I again ran well there, beating my 2016 time.

For my top 11 finish times, all faster than 22 hours, the average slowdown was 34% or average time of 11:50 after a speedy first 50. All of those were on easier, forgiving courses. My best time for a second 50 has been 11:08. For all my 100-milers, my average slowdown has been 41%.

Most of my races that were closest to even splits were all great experiences with good fueling, good cool weather, and no sickness. For many of them my first 50 miles were quite fast: 9:30, 9:12, 9:02, 8:32, and 9:06. In those cases going out fast went well for me and I was lucky to have a pretty good second 50 time too.

This analysis has convinced me that striving more toward even splits is a worthy goal to finish a good 100, even if it means holding back a little more during the first 50 miles. I am always very careful to hold back enough so I can always run mild uphill the entire 100 miles. At age 58, my age now holds me back during the early stages of a race whether I like it or not. Holding back more can also decrease the number of “busted” races and DNFs by fueling better and resting more.

I think the trick to feeling more comfortable about negative splits is to practice it on long training runs. Monitoring heart rate is certainly a great approach to gravitate toward even or negative splits.

Blunders and Trail Comedy



I've probably spent nearly 7,000 hours out on the trail. I wish they could all be proud moments, but blunders happen and I do enjoy laughing at myself. Here are a collection of short stories that demonstrates that ultrarunning isn't always a serious sport.

Wrong Turn at Zane Grey 50



One of the toughest 50-mile races in the country is Zane Grey 50, held in central Arizona below the Mogollon Rim. One year, the direction of the course was reversed. I was running a pretty good race and with a mile to go, I wasn't paying careful attention, being pretty tired and hammered by the heat. I took a wrong turn. Finally after a half mile, I noticed there weren't any footprints on the trail and no trail markings. I went on and tried to figure out how to make it to the finish. I could hear music and other sounds from the finish line over a small hill.

As I approached, I stopped. If I continued to take this route, I would come in from the wrong direction and face the laughs and ridicule of my friends who had already finished. I couldn't face that. I turned around and kept trying to find a connecting trail that just wasn't there. Finally after wasting 15 more minutes, I decided that I would just face the music. In I came, from the opposite direction. I ran into the finish area and then wrapped around the finish line. Everyone was pointing and laughing. Yes, I had gotten lost with a mile to go.



Lost in Capital Reef



During my second visit to Capital Reef National Park, I decided to run Mule Twist solo, in the opposite direction as most hikers go, for a different perspective. After an hour of running, I turned into what I thought was Mule Twist Canyon. Because Mule Twist makes so many turns, it is pretty easy to lose all sense of direction. But as I continued I only saw one set of footprints and I had to keep convincing myself that I was in the right canyon. Finally after another hour, I was in a stream bed and noticed more foot prints. The big problem is that I soon recognized the familiar footprints, mine from two weeks earlier going in the wrong direction. I popped out of the creek bed, looked to the north, and saw my car at the trailhead. I had run for two hours in a complete circle. A couple weeks later I bought my first GPS.

Lost on Great Salt Lake



Going off course happens fairly often during an ultra. During the first year of the Antelope Island 100K, I was running fast and strong and found myself in first place overall at about mile 15. I was leading a small pack down onto the mud flats of the Great Salt Lake. It was still dark and I had a very difficult time picking out little red flags to mark the way. Sure enough, I went the wrong way and behind me were about a half dozen other runners following my light and blunder. I angled back toward the island in hopes to find the correct route and a little later all of us were bushwhacking together through brush, totally lost, trying to figure things out. Eventually as it got lighter we saw other runners out on the flats going the right way.

Follow the Map Guy



During the Bear 100, I was with others following behind Phil Lowry, assistant race director and the official mapper of the course. We were climbing up a canyon for about a half mile when Phil let out a yell. He had led us up the wrong canyon. We all laughed at the irony of this. We had been following the one guy who knew the course the best and we still got lost.

Surprise for Phil



Running 100-mile races is by no means as serious as running road marathons. Because you are out on the trail for some many hours, you have to find ways to entertain yourself. During a Wasatch 100, near mile 20 in thick bushes, I could hear Phil catching up to me. I decided to get his attention. I ran ahead and hid behind a thick tree. As Phil caught up, I jumped from behind the tree, screamed, and laughed as Phil jumped out of his skin. Jokes are plenty during a 100-mile race.

Distractions for race leaders

LOOK!
A Distraction!



There are always stories about funny things that happen to a leader of an ultra race. One year at Bighorn, Karl Meltzer encountered an angry moose that came after him. In another race, the leader stopped to help an older couple change a flat tire. My story happened while leading the 2009 Pony Express Trail 100. I was worried about Matt Watts catching me, a few miles behind, but I still stopped at mile 80 to conduct a radio interview. You can [listen to it here](#). I still went on to win the race.

Stolen Car



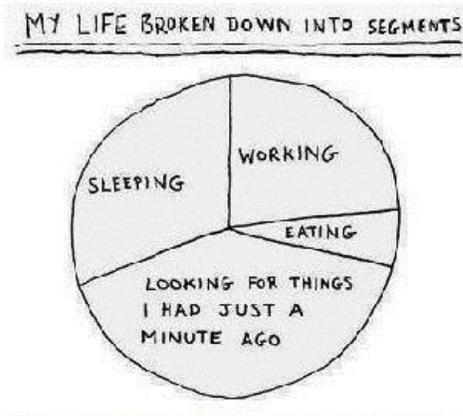
Years ago I took a few friends with me to do a winter run in southern Utah through an amazing petrified forest. We had a great run, but when we returned to the trailhead at the highway, my friend’s vehicle was gone! We reported it stolen and then tried to figure out how we would get home. I thought about all the things I had lost, my wallet, my keys and my cell phone. We flagged down a car, asking them if they had seen the car. They had not, and drove on. A few minutes later, they returned and were laughing like crazy. Just around the next corner was another trailhead and pullout. Our car was there. We had come out to a different place. We went home laughing but very relieved.

Lost Wallet



One year, just one hour before the start of Across the Years, where I would be running for the next 72 hours, I discovered that my wallet was missing. In a panic, I drove as fast as I could back to the motel where I had stayed and searched the room in a very hurried state, watching the clock tick down to the start. There was no sign of it. I stopped at a Subway, the last place I had used my credit card, but it was not there. I became convinced that I had left it on the counter and someone must have stolen it. How would I get back on the plane without my identification? I returned to the race with just 15 minutes to spare. It was a very stressful way to begin a race. My wife helped, cancelled the credit cards and emailed me copies of my ID. My brother loaned me a credit card. Two days later, still during my run, the motel finally called to say they cleaning crew had found my wallet in my room.

Losing stuff on the trail



As I get older it seems that I lose stuff on the trail more often. I used to mock my older brother when he would seem to lose half his pack on the trail, but now it is happening to me more. I feel bad about dropping or forgetting things. In races I’ll often forget a water bottle at an aid station and need to run back once I notice it gone. Once on a backpack trip in the Uintas, after setting up camp, we ran up to Dead Horse Pass to take pictures. On return, I noticed that I didn’t have my camera. So I simply ran all the way back up to the top of the pass searching all over but returned without the camera. A couple weeks later I received an email. Some guy had found my camera, looked at all the pictures on it and somehow figured out it was mine and returned it.

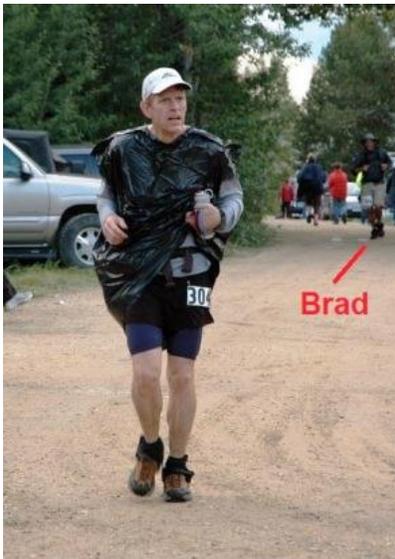
Marketing in Maroon Bells



David finds the Frisbee, I laugh behind him

In 2007 I backpacked with my buddies in Colorado, on the Maroon Bells loop. When Carl and I picked up David at his office in Salt Lake City, he left us alone for a while. He should have known that leaving two mischievous friends is dangerous. We decided to pull a prank on him. David was in charge of marketing in his company, so we decided to borrow a small marketing Frisbee with his company logo on it. Several days later, high up in the mountains of Colorado, I ran quickly ahead of the group, deposited the Frisbee on the trail and then ran back and rejoined the group. As we progressed, David was flabbergasted to find this marketing item right in the middle of the trail. We congratulated him on his fine marketing skills that even made it to the high mountains in Colorado. We privately laughed and laughed, and it wasn't until a couple years later that he admitted that when he returned home, told his wife the amazing story, that she talked some sense into him and convinced him that he had been tricked.

Dropped at Leadville



A few days later, my backpacking buddies helped pace to a successful finish at Leadville 100. I joked with my buddies that even after 50 miles, that they wouldn't be able to keep up, that "I would drop them like a bad penny." Coming back down from Hope Pass in the mud, I discovered that I could really run fast. Brad just couldn't keep up. Soon he was far behind me. As he approached Twin Lakes alone, a spectator pointed and laughed at the pacer without a runner. I did slow enough coming in that we were able to take photo evidence of me arriving with Brad far in the background. Carl was next up and he dared me to drop in on the road going into Fish Hatchery. His mind trick worked and I came in running at 8:00 pace. We had great fun. Who would think that leaving buddies far behind would be a great motivator?

Help



I enjoy singing out loud while running in the middle of the night. During the 2011 Wasatch 100, high on the Wasatch Crest trail, I was singing at the top of my lungs a Beatles song. “Help, I need somebody, Help!” Finally it dawned on me that this just was not an appropriate song to be singing at night, high in the mountains.

Helicopter Search



I’m not proud of this story. Years ago I started to run across frozen Utah Lake. I gained good experience on the ice and learned how to avoid areas that looked risky. Late in the season I decided to do one more run on a warm morning. I took off from our neighborhood recreation center to run 11 miles across the lake to Provo and back. When I was in the middle of the lake, about five miles away, I heard a helicopter off in the distance in the direction of my starting point. I didn’t think anything about it. When I returned back several hours later after my 22-mile run, a fisherman on the shore said, “A bunch of people were looking for you.” That is all he said. I had no idea what he meant. I returned home and later the phone rang. It was a guy who knew me, but he didn’t tell me his name. He just wondered if I was safe and said he didn’t know I was such an extreme runner. That was a curious phone call. A few days later I learned that this guy had watched me run out on the ice. I must have been moving fast because he lost track of me and was convinced that I fell through the ice. He called the authorities and they sent up a search helicopter for me but found nothing (because I was miles away). That was pretty embarrassing.

Nap in the Cascades

Yes, people get concerned about me at times. One year while running Cascade Crest 100, I became very drowsy. I decided to take a quick catnap beside the trail. Later a couple of runners come up as I was trying to snooze. One of them said softly to the other, “Should we check his pulse?” I later learned that to avoid this problem, I needed to go hide off the trail to avoid being asked if I was OK by every passing runner.

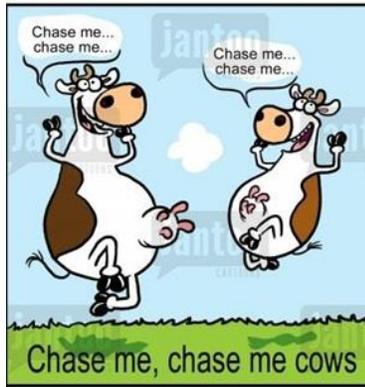
Hered by Dogs



One evening, while running the Katcina Mosa 100K course solo, a huge bear ran across my path. I stopped and heard him running away through the brush. For the next mile as it became dark, I kept checking behind me, making sure I wasn’t being chased. I soon came upon the largest sheep herd that I had even run through. It went on for more than a half mile. While making my way through, I heard some dogs barking at me. I thought, “great, now I have to worry about dogs chasing me.” As I continued on, passing by sheep who were really spooked because of my green light, I suddenly felt a nudge from behind. That scared me to death. Was it the bear? No, it was two dogs. They first started to

herd me, pushing me around, but then started to push their noses against my pocket. It took me awhile to understand that they smelled the bacon I had in my pocket. Finally as I exited from the herd, the dogs went back to work and left me alone.

Herding Cows



On the very same run, about 20 miles later, wee into the night, I started running down into a narrow canyon and in my path was a cow and calf. I hoped to get around them but it was impossible. Instead both started to run ahead of me pretty fast. Each time they would stop, look back, and here came my green light again. They just wouldn't get off the trail. This repeated for nearly three miles until both of them were just too tired to continue running. I approached, trying to get around them, but the cow would not let me get anywhere close to the calf and would start charging toward me. It was then slow going and I truly had to play cowboy to herd them along. Finally the cow got a little smarter and went off the trail a little. I took a route around them and finally was free.

Chased in the night



Reenacting the chase

On my first night running on the Pony Express Trail in the middle of nowhere, I called my wife to pick me up. When she arrived, my young son wanted to run with me for a mile or so. He jumped out of the van and we ran ahead of the van using its headlights to light the way. Eventually a truck passed by but kept slowing, and just wouldn't continue on. It finally turned around, passed by, and then turned around again and pulled up beside us. He asked, "Are you OK?" He had been convinced that we were being chased by some bad people in a van out in the middle of nowhere. Certainly no one would be running on purpose out there in the cold night.

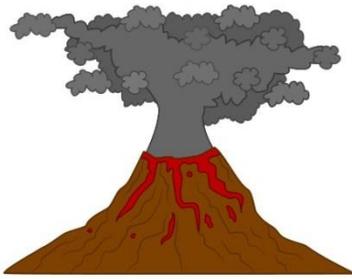
Aliens on the Mountain



that they could only keep up for about 100 yards.

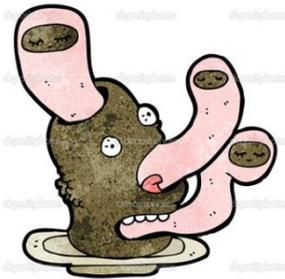
I often run up Mount Timpanogos in Utah during the night. On weekends there can be more than 100 college kids on the trail trying to reach the top by sunrise. My green light gets a lot of attention. I have fun chasing the lights on the mountain and trying to quickly catch groups who are obviously tracking my progress as they shine their headlamps down to me. On one particular night, I was also using a red headlamp, giving myself a Christmas tree look. When I finally caught up to a slow-moving group, they at first had panicked looks on their faces. They actually thought I might be an alien. After all, nothing could move that fast up the mountain. They were stunned. I invited these young guys to keep up with me. They tried and I chuckled

She's going to blow



As I run down Mount Timpanogos very fast, I get strange reactions. Usually I get a “deer in the headlights” look as young hikers see me coming and just can’t figure out that they should simply step aside. But other times, people think there is something wrong and ask, “Why are you running? What’s wrong?” I now answer that question with a quick comment, “She’s going to blow! The mountain is going to blow!” They give me a shocked look and I run on, hoping they can figure out that Mount Timpanogos is NOT a volcano.

What the . . .?



Other times, I’m the one wondering if I’m being chased. When you get very tired on 100-mile races or on long adventure runs, hallucinations start kicking in. This has affected me the worst down in the Grand Canyon after being awake for about 48 hours. As dusk approaches, the rock formations start turning into houses, water tanks, and even people. I’m convinced that they are there and puzzled that I had never noticed them before. It finally gets so bad that I force myself not to look up, but to just stare at my feet on the trail because it is so disturbing. Many times my mind detaches itself from my body. Thoughts like, “We need to make him eat something” go through my mind. My mind starts having a dialogue about the best things to do for the body that is trying to keep moving. It’s like I’m two beings, a mind suggesting actions, and a body that it takes care of. It freaks me out when I finally wake up enough. I yell out loud, “stop it!” Another time in the Grand Canyon in a sleepy fog, my mind was telling me that the steep trail without switch backs that I was going up was constructed by a friend purposely to torment me.

Busted Hand



Accidents happen. One year during Bighorn 100, at about mile 30, I was trying to quickly run down a slick grassy slope. My shoes had poor traction and soon both feet flew forward and I fell on my rear putting out my right hand to catch myself. I was mostly embarrassed because I had just passed another runner who saw me fall. I picked myself up, continued to run. Several minutes later as I was taking inventory of my injuries, I noticed my hand hurt a little bit as it swung back and forth. It didn’t think much of it but it became worse. Eventually I discovered if I gripped a stick, the pain would go down. Ten miles later as I reached a major aid station, the medical staff looked at it and guessed that I broke it. They weren’t alarmed, taped a couple fingers together and said they would see me again in 36 miles. When I returned, it had swelled a bunch more, but I was determined to finish. Three days later at the doctor office, the X-ray told the story. The technician asked how I busted it, and didn’t believe me. He said it looked like I had punched something. Well, yes, I had punched a mountain.

Midnight Pitty Party

One year while running the Wasatch 100, my stomach was in knots and as happens, I was throwing up above Desolation Lake. On the switchbacks up to the Wasatch Crest, I sat down beside another runner having the same problems. As we watched other runners approach, I kept inviting them to join our party by the side of the trail – just two guys trying not to puke their guts out.

Frozen Feet

At times, laughing at the pain is about all you can do. One year running the Bonneville Shoreline Marathon, the course was covered with snow and we had to climb up a creek flowing with ice cold water. Phil Lowry was with me and we were both screaming in pain and laughing. It didn't work for another runner. I came across a girl sobbing because of her painful frozen feet.

Crushed toes

One of my big blunders during a 100-mile race occurred one year while running The Bear 100. I met my crew and told them I would be changing my shoes. I asked if they could switch out the insoles, I wanted to keep the custom insoles I had in my current shoes. But it was late and I was very tired, and not clear. As I went on for the next 35 miles, my feet hurt terribly. My toes were being crushed. I was in agony but continued on. As morning arrived, I took off a shoe to tape a crushed toe and screamed with pain trying to put my shoe back on. But I went on and finished slowly. After I returned home, a couple days later I looked at my shoes and discovered that in each shoe, I had two insoles in them. No wonder my toes got crushed!

Stopped in my tracks



One morning I did a very long adventure run of nearly 50 mile in the desert not far from my home. I ran out into a very remote section of a valley without fences, along a power line road. Soon I came upon an obstacle I had never faced before: piles, and piles of tumbleweeds more than six feet high. There was no way to get around them. For the next half hour I stumbled and plowed through piles and piles at a very frustrating slow pace. I would get through one terrible section and then face yet another. I wished I had my camera with me. I've never seen anything like it before.

Stabbed



While on a long run in the Grand Canyon I felt a very sharp pain in the ball of my foot that felt like I had been stabbed. What was that! Was it a rock? I limped on for another 100 feet trying to figure it out. Finally I had to stop and take off my shoe. Wow! A thorn had gone all the way through the bottom of my shoe, through the insole, and deep into my foot. I took my foot out of the shoe and spied a point sticking up from the insole. I couldn't get it out of the shoe but with some effort broke it off. Feeling better I ran on and thought about minimalist runners trying to run down there, bonding with the

ancients. “Good luck with that,” was my thought, “I’ll stay in my shoes.” Another needle story in the Grand Canyon: As I was running suffering from a blister, I was wishing I had a needle or a safety pin to pop a blister. Hours later it finally dawned on me that I was surrounded by millions of needles on cacti.

Kicking the Cacti

Speaking of cacti, while running Zane Grey 50 in Arizona I wasn’t paying careful attention to the trail and ended up kicking a prickly pear cactus. That is really painful. For the next 15 minutes I sat by the side of the trail carefully getting my foot out of my shoe and all the needles out of my shoe, socks, and foot.

Face Plants



Falling down is a frequent activity that is part of ultrarunning, at least for those trying to push the pace fast, or for those of us getting up in years. I call these face plants. Face plants are embarrassing to ultrarunners. When I fall, I’m hopeful that no one saw it. If someone does, I quickly jump up like nothing happened regardless of how much blood is now flowing. I recall doing that while running down the steep North Rim trail of the Grand Canyon. I crashed right after passing a couple of hikers. I jumped up and waved, no problem. But actually I was pretty beat up. When I run Mount Timpanogos in Utah, I fall frequently running down fast because I take my eye off the trail to pass oncoming hikers. I’m sure the hikers are thinking, “Boy is he stupid running, he deserves what he gets.” Once while running Rocky Raccoon 100 on a wet year, I took a true face plant as I was trying to run through a mud bog fast. I ended up head to toe in mud, including my face. I didn’t stop to clean up for seven more miles and got funny complements. At Salt Flats 100, I was feeling great and fast around mile 65 at night and crashed very hard on sharp rocks. That took the wind out of my sails and I ran into the next aid station with a very bloody arm that they kindly helped me clean up. Sometimes dribbling blood down a leg is a sign of toughness.

Stuck in the Mud



One early morning I was doing a rural 80-mile run around Utah Lake. As I was at about mile 20, running south near massive farms in the Mosida area, I wanted to get off the highway pavement and run on a farm dirt road that parallels the highway. As I ran along in the dark, the dirt road branched and I took the wrong branch. I soon detected that I was angling away from the highway. To avoid more distance, I thought I better get back on the right road. I climbed over a berm and in the dark saw what looked like a lightly snow-covered field. If I ran across it, I would reach the right road. After a few steps, I crashed through ice and fell up to my knees in thick icy mud. I tried to take steps to continue on, but that only made me sink lower, just like quicksand. I had fallen into a farm canal full of mud. The mud was doing its best to pull off my shoes. I kept sinking lower. Finally I laid down on my back (which also broke through the ice into the mud) but kept weight off my feet. Little by little I was able to free my feet and crawl back to canal shore. I was a total mess but continued on my run for about 45 more miles.

Hopefully the reader is convinced that ultrarunning can be a lot of fun, but also involves pain. In the end I look back and laugh at myself.

all the way to the city of Provo, about 11.5 miles away.

The temperature when I started was about 10 degrees. I found a good rhythm as I started my run heading southeast across the ice-covered lake. I ran about a half mile south of the duck hunters, not wanting to disturb their efforts. I had excellent footing. The ice was covered in about a quarter inch of snow/frost. If I brushed away the snow, the ice was dark and smooth. My feet crunched in the snow as I ran forward.



Saratoga Springs disappearing behind me



were lots of clumps of ice covered with snow. I crossed over some amazing cracks with ice sheets pushed up that were about 5-6 inches thick. The landscape was incredible and ever-changing. I never dreamed that there would be so many interesting things to see running across a frozen lake.

The surface was generally smooth with some periodic cracks that extended for miles. I cautiously crossed them. To the south I could see what looked like an ice beach extending east/west across much of the lake and I could see that ice had been pushed up with pressure. There



The “person” I saw from a distance – an icy headstone



Ice mounds

I thought I saw the figure of a person on the ice about a mile ahead so I set my sights on it in attempt to catch up. But as I came nearer, I discovered that the object on the ice wasn't a person but was ice pushed up by tremendous force where plates of ice thousands of feet across pushed together.

over a mile away because it took me many minutes to finally arrive at the mounds. They turned out to be some pretty amazing ice mounds pushed up arranged in beautiful patterns.

I next set my sights on two curious mounds of ice far to the horizon. In this way I could keep my run across the ice in a relatively straight line. I misjudged the distance. They must have been

I arrived at what appeared to be the east/west center of the lake. Miles to the southeast, I could see the tower for Prove airport. I changed my course to head in that direction. I started to hear some alarming cracking going away from my feet. The ice wasn't moving, but it was still wearisome enough to slow me to a cautious pace. The cracking sounds continued as I crossed a large area. I then started to hear some loud booming sounds that I have heard during past winters from the shore in times of freezing. The sounds were loud "CHOOOOOM, POOOOOM" sounds. Every couple seconds I would hear the sounds all around me.

My feet still pushed against solid ice and I could not see any new cracks appearing. I could peer down into the lake through some clear ice and see that the thickness was at least 5-6 inches. The sounds made me feel very uncomfortable. I concluded that they were noises caused by powerful stress pressure in the plates of ice. I continued on but adjusted my course to head more directly to the shore across the lake.

The cracking in the ice continued, but the stress booms were left behind and decreased. The cracking sound would occur more often when I approach junctions of existing cracks. But still, the ice felt solid and never moved. The east shore continued to come closer. I noticed giant ice-flow mounds on near the shore and set my course to approach the largest ice hill. All cracking sounds soon went away and I again picked up my pace.

I soon arrived at a massive crack in the ice where the ice plates had pulled apart instead of being pushed together. It appeared to be pretty recent because there was water on the surface. I kept my distance and carefully crossed over the

After a couple hours and about nine miles, I arrived



Huge crack with water



Ice hills near the eastern shore

at the eastern shore and explored the huge ice hills there were created by ice flows pushing against the east side of the lake. The hills were massive, about 20 feet high. Huge ice slabs piled on top of each other.



I had fun climbing the massive mounds, exploring the formations, and taking pictures. It was an remarkable sight. The forces of nature were impressive. I soon came across the tracks of a sled and many boot prints that were leading toward a peninsula about a mile further to the south. As I approached the shore again, I could see a man on the ice. He approached me as I arrived at the shoreline. He was curious where I had come from. I

pointed to a location far across the lake that was barely visible through the ice haze. He asked how far away it was. I told him about 12 miles. He was stunned to consider that I had crossed the entire lake. “Are you being picked up?” he asked. “No, I’m going to run back across,” I replied. I asked him where I was. He explained that I was near Center Street in Provo. I went up off the ice and could see that I was on a paved trail, part of the Utah Lake State Park.

Three hours had passed since I began my crossing. It was time to return. Through the icy haze I could barely pick out a landmark on the far shore that was near my home. I decided that I would try to return along a direct line. I was now confident that the ice was solid and I could make better time. I went through a large section where the snow cover had been swept away by the wind

I next came upon a truly amazing sight. Instead of snow cover, the ice was covered with billions of ice/snow crystals that were 2 inches high. The massive field went on as far as my eye could see! I had never such a sight before. The crystals crunched under my feet. I hated to disturb the remarkable sight.



Ice crystal field

I soon came upon a significant crack that extended south across the center of the lake. Water had seeped up through the crack. It refroze, looking like a river of ice and presented a beautiful reflection in the setting sun



My route continued at a straight line. Despite my quick pace, it seemed like my home shore just wasn't coming closer. I looked back and could see my tracks extending straight to Provo. I was getting close to the mid-point between the shores. The sun descending



toward the horizon and I wanted to make sure I was off the ice before dark because I knew the temperature would take a nasty dive.



My tracks coming from Provo

As I neared the shore, the upheavals and cracks appeared with more frequency. The snow was also becoming a little deeper and

I crossed a curious snow drift along a crack. As I neared the shore an incredible flock of geese filled the sky overhead. There were hundreds in dozens of formations. Honking noises could be heard for miles as this flock flew over the lake, heading to the southeast. The final crack I crossed was a very new one. I was very surprised to feel the ice on both sides of the crack dip down about an inch as I crossed over. When I approached Eagle Park, I could see someone on the hill watching my progress closely. When I finally arrived, the guy asked me if the ice was safe. I told him that it was pretty safe because I had just run to Provo and back. I could tell that he had difficulty comprehending what I had just said.



Frozen crack with ice crystals

This 23-mile training run far exceeded my expectations. Seeing the effects of Mother Nature on the ice was amazing. Viewing the cracks and upheavals from the massive ice sheets made me think how similar these effects are compared to the land floating on magma. In a much lesser degree I saw cracks, canyons trying to form, and mountain ranges being pushed up. It was a thrilling experience.

50-miler on the ice

A week later I was back out on the lake, this time with a fellow ultrarunner, Brent Rutledge. We would be attempting to run 50 miles on the frozen lake.

I came up with a fun quad crossing of the lake extending from the north to the south. It would truly be one of the flattest 50-mile runs in history. I dropped off some aid station items at what would be about our half-way point on the short near Soldier Pass road.

We drove to Eagle Park and were off and running at about 6:20 a.m. Our visibility through the fog (inversion smog) was about 5 miles or so. I was immediately alarmed at how many fresh cracks there were for us to carefully stride over. There were many more than on Monday. It was only 5 degrees, yet during the night water had seeped up through large cracks that had opened or reopened at some point. We were very cautious and it slowed our pace. Our flashlights would see the cracks and we would hope each time that they would hold our weight. After a little while I suggested that we spread out a little more to keep our weight distributed better. It was a freaky experience in the dark.



Then, we heard our first loud boom, “Chooooommm.” “What was that!?” Brent asked. I chuckled and explained that we would hear plenty of that. The booms continued for awhile until we left them back to the north. Brent commented that he could never get used to those eerie, frightening sounds. The dawn was approaching but there were no landmarks for us to see through the haze to set our course by. We had to “fly by instruments” and trust my GPS to keep us on a straight line. We immediately learned what a difficult task this was. We started wandering to the left and right, getting off course quickly. As the hours went by, we became much more skilled in keeping a straight line. At times it would be impossible

without the GPS because sometimes there was not even a chunk of ice sticking up for us to set our sights on, just the flat horizon fading into the haze.

We then noticed that we both would very naturally drift our course to the left, toward the sun until I checked the GPS and corrected our route. This happened over and over again. Our bodies wanted to go toward the warmth of the sun. Brent would sometimes go ahead and it was funny to watch him drift off course without the help of a GPS. He would eventually look back and see me heading in a different direction.



Brent, a little off course heading toward the rising sun
Note the large frozen crack

The variation of the surfaces we ran over throughout the day was amazing. We ran over:

- Dark slick ice covered with about a half inch of snow
- Exposed slick ice with patches of thin snow cover
- A snow/frost covering that looked like styrofoam
- Dark ice covered with crystals
- A long tiring section of snow 2-4 inches deep

As we ran in what was about the middle of the lake, we commented to each other how amazing this experience was. Some would find the empty landscape boring. We found it to be exciting and fascinating. It seemed like we had been transported to Antarctica. It was quiet, desolate, empty, and frozen. Yet I knew full well that there were tens of thousands of people within only 10-15 miles. Amazing!

After about 3.5 hours and 15 miles, my GPS took us to our east shore destination, Spanish Fork creek. By roads, it would have taken us 35 miles to travel around the lake by car to this point. We explored the ice rubble collected near the shore and then quickly headed toward our next destination – Bird Island.



Me, near Spanish Fork Creek



Bird Island was over three miles away. Soon I was able to pick out a white object toward the horizon in the direction that my GPS was pointing. I concluded that it must be the island, so I put away the GPS and enjoyed following a landmark.

Bird Island became larger and larger. We pushed the pace and soon arrived. We were

amazed at ice piled up. We didn't stay long and set our course toward West Mountain to the south which we could see through the haze.



Brent, running ahead toward West Mountain



Rubble ice on Bird Island

Our run toward West Mountain was the most frigid portion of the run. The breeze kicked up in our face and a chill went right through our bones.

Thankfully it only lasted for about a half hour. We crossed over some curious tracks in the snow. We stopped to examine what was clearly a snow

angel created by a large bird. We could see the brushes made by the wings. The bird left behind many feathers. Why it did that, we did not know. As we approached the shore we ran by frozen round holes in the ice left behind by ice fisherman.

At the park at Lincoln Point, we climbed up onto the shore to check out the park and to sit down for a couple minutes for the first time during our adventure. We didn't stay long. We knew that we still had 30 miles to travel before the day was done. As we left the shore, we watched a lone ice fisherman drilling in the ice. I'm sure he thought we were a curious sight as he watched us disappear over the icy horizon.

After a couple miles, we entered into what must have been another unstable section of the ice. The surface was a very runnable styro-foam looking surface. At times we would stop dead in our tracks as we both heard and saw small cracks appear in the ice near us. Soon the booming sounds started again. One series of booms traveled along a huge crack that must have been similar to a fault line. Then, I experienced an amazing feeling, an icequake! It only lasted a couple seconds, but I could feel the ice "roll" under my feet, similar to the feeling felt in an earthquake. We could feel that the ice below us was thick and solid, yet the sounds and vibrations really freaked us out. A very loud traveling booming sound seemed to travel within only twenty feet of us. We both stopped and said, "Wow, that was close!" We were anxious to get away from there and finally left it those amazing effects of Mother Nature behind us.



An incredible "fault line" full of rubble

Next up for us was a very long section of deep snow, 2-4 inches. It was like running in sand. This section quickly started to wear on us and our feet ached from the challenging surface. Finally the shoreline came into view. We climbed up on the shore, followed my GPS and went right to the cooler that I dropped off in the early morning. We sat down and enjoyed drinking hot soup and water that wasn't freezing cold.



Brent running through snow, nothing on the horizon

After a wonderful lunch, feeling much stronger, we again set out along the snow-covered ice to return to Bird Island. We again traveled through the “icequake” section. After passing by Bird Island, the sun finally broke through the fog and dramatically warmed our backs. As the eastern shore came into view we crossed over our tracks from the morning, 23 miles earlier. During this section we really had a difficult time keeping our line straight. With the shore in view, we discovered that we naturally kept drifting to the right, toward the shore which our minds knew would be our next destination. Over and over again we had to correct our course toward the left.

Finally we arrived at Utah Lake State Park in Provo. It was time to head for home. I aimed my GPS to the final waypoint, 11 miles to the northwest. The ice surface for the next couple miles was very slick. Several times we both almost fell. Our route zigged a little as we tried to find stretches of snow to increase our pace. The sun was setting and peeked through the overcast one last time giving a marvelous display of light. As we ran through the middle of the lake, we couldn't see the shore ahead and I commented that without the GPS we both would probably travel in huge circles for the entire night. That was an uncomfortable thought.

As the dark arrived again, the lights of Saratoga Springs could be seen blazing on the horizon. With a better running surface we both really kicked it into gear. We now felt refreshed and rested. Certainly the totally flat surface had been quite a challenge for the 50-mile distance. I longed for hills! The lights on the shore came closer and closer. We soon were again slowed by more frequent wet cracks that caused us to carefully tip-toe across. The ice booming sounds again greeted us, but I noticed that I was finally getting used to the strange sounds and didn't pay much attention to them.

After about 13.5 hours, we again returned to our starting point. We had planned to run in quicker but didn't anticipate the slower cautious pace through many sections. I checked my GPS odometer which read 50.06 miles. We did it! 50 miles on the ice. What a remarkable experience!

End-to-end run on the lake

Two weeks later, I ran the entire length of Utah Lake north to south, about 30 miles. I started at the Saratoga Springs development marina and ended out at the town of Goshen.

I began my run in the dark at 4:30 a.m. The fog was gone and I had a great view of the lights across the lake. The moon was out, casting welcome light across the ice. Many times I turned out my light and ran only with moonlight. With the recent snow, the entire length of the lake had at least an inch



of snow. This blanket insulated the ice and only a very few large cracks were exposed and wet. The surface was the most solid I had seen. I didn't hear any cracking or ice booming. It was a nice quiet morning run without any worries about thin ice. The ice was much smoother away from shore (fewer ice chunks to trip over) and I was able to keep a good pace going. A few cars and trucks drove south on the highway near the western shore. I shined my flashlight toward them, letting them wonder what the light was doing out on the frozen lake.

I used my GPS to set my course toward the far south end of the lake. I had a long run ahead far out on the ice. As dawn approached, the temperature continued to dive. Finally the sun started to light up the sky, but it would be a couple hours before the rays would provide me any warmth. After about three hours, I was very surprised to see two sets of tracks heading east. They were the tracks Brett and I made a couple of weeks ago. Despite the newly fallen snow, the tracks were very distinct and undisturbed.

I watched with envy the warm line of sunshine as it touched the western shore. Slowly it crept toward me and when it finally hit me I let out a cheer. The snow made amazing sparkling reflections as its low angle hit the surface of the snow. Little by little the snow became deeper the further I ran to the south until it was over four inches deep. The deep snow slowed my pace.



My tracks extend straight from the north



As I neared the southern end of the lake, I ran across many tracks. ATV tracks and cross country ski tracks. I worried if I would have difficulty finding my way through tall reeds to exit off of the lake. I decided to follow the skiing tracks in hopes that they might lead me to my to an exit point without having to stomp through reeds. As my route skirted vegetation sticking up through the ice, I would run on much thinner ice. Several times it started to crack and sink down an inch or so. I wasn't too concerned because I knew the lake wasn't very deep here, but still I wanted to keep my feet dry.

The skiing track ended and turned back the way they came. The open ice also ended and I had no choice but to make my way through some brush. After a half mile winding through branches sticking up through the ice, I again reached an open field of snow/ice. The problem now was that the snow was about a foot deep. The going was slow, tiring and difficult. I plodded on until I reached the tracks of an ATV. From there I was less than a mile from the road to Goshen. At that small town my wife came and gave me a ride home.



That first year, I ran across the lake and back two more times and added some morning runs near the shore for a total of about 120 miles. The next year, the lake didn't freeze as solid and I didn't dare go out on in but in 2009, I ventured out with my dog to test of the ice with my dog. I discovered that she loved to run crazy back and forth on the ice. In 2013 I put my GPS watch on her to see just how far she would run and how fast. [This video](#) shows how crazy she is running on the ice.

In the following years, I made other trips on the lake. [This slide-show video](#) presents a wonderful afternoon doing a loop on the lake to American Fork.

[This video](#) show a run I made to Bird Island and back.

In 2014, the lake never truly froze over and in 2015 it only froze hard for a few days. I heard about only a couple runners running the lake during those years. I've lost my desire to run out there because of the danger involved.

Training Strategy



As more runners desire to be able run ultramarathon distance, they frequently ask if there is a training plan available to help them achieve that goal. Very structured training plans are available on the Internet that seem to feed the appetite of those who seek a prescriptive plan to achieve their goal.

I have never subscribed to such an approach, using somebody's chart telling me what I "have to run" in order to prepare for a race. I consider such approaches silly. It can lead to both injury and burn-out. I'm shocked when I read this advise in a typical training program: "If you need them, take

recovery days." Of course you need recovery

days! My approach to training is pretty simple. At the beginning of the week, I set a goal for how many miles I would like to run that week. It will vary depending if I'm recovering from a recent long race or adventure run, or if I'm starting to taper a bit for the next race. In general I'll build up the weekly miles between races and then decrease at least a week or two before the next race.

As far as training each day during the week, I believe it is foolish to map out exactly what I should run each day. Instead, I listen to my body. If I need rest on a particular day, I rest. Weather will often dictate things. A busy life will often dictate my schedule. But in the end, if I come close to my mile-goal for the week I'm stratified. I chuckle as I hear people say, "I'm supposed to run ten miles today," as if they don't, that their training will be totally off.

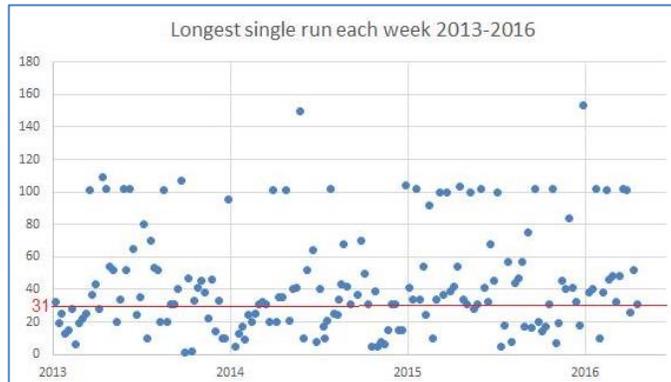
Marathon Training Schedule - Advanced							
Week	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
1	Short - 3mile	Short - 4mile Strength	Fartlek - 3mile	Short - 3mile Strength	Short - 4mile Race pace	Rest	Long - 10mile
2	Short - 3mile	Short - 5mile Strength	Interval 2 x 1600m	Short - 3mile Strength	Short - 5mile Race pace	Rest	Long - 12mile
3	Short - 3mile	Short - 6mile Strength	Hill - 3mile	Short - 3mile Strength	Short - 6mile Race pace	Rest	Long - 13mile
4	Short - 3mile	Short - 6mile Strength	Fartlek - 4mile	Short - 3mile Strength	Short - 6mile Race pace	Rest	Long - 12mile
5	Short - 3mile	Short - 6mile Strength	Interval 4 x 800m	Short - 3mile Strength	Short - 7mile Race pace	Rest	Long - 14mile
6	Short - 3mile	Short - 6mile Strength	Hill - 4mile	Short - 3mile Strength	Short - 5mile Race pace	Rest	Long - 10mile
7	Short - 3mile	Short - 7mile Strength	Fartlek - 4mile	Short - 4mile	Short - 7mile Race pace	Rest	Long - 16mile
8	Short - 3mile	Short - 7mile	Interval 6 x 800m	Short - 4mile	Short - 8mile	Rest	Long - 18mile
9	Short - 3mile	Short - 5mile	Short - 3mile	Short - 3mile Strength	Short - 9mile Race pace	Rest	Long - 12mile
10	Short - 4mile	Short - 6mile Strength	Fartlek - 5mile	Short - 4mile	Short - 8mile	Rest	Long - 20mile
11	Short - 3mile	Short - 6mile	Interval 7 x 800m	Short - 4mile Strength	Short - 10mile Race pace	Rest	Long - 10mile
12	Short - 4mile	Short - 6mile Strength	Hill - 5mile	Short - 5mile	Short - 8mile	Rest	Long - 20mile
13	Short - 3mile	Short - 6mile	Short - 4mile	Short - 5mile Strength	Short - 10mile Race pace	Rest	Long - 12mile
14	Short - 5mile	Short - 9mile Strength	Interval 8 x 800m	Short - 4mile	Short - 7mile	Rest	Long - 22mile
15	Short - 4mile	Short - 7mile	Hill - 6mile	Short - 4mile Strength	Short - 5mile Race pace	Rest	Long - 12mile
16	Short - 4mile	Short - 6mile Strength	Fartlek - 5mile	Short - 3mile	Short - 4mile Race pace	Rest	Long - 10mile
17	Short - 3mile	Short - 5mile Strength	Hill - 4mile	Rest	Short - 4mile	Rest	Long - 8mile
18	Short - 3mile	Short - 4mile	Rest	short - 2mile	Rest	Rest	Race

Charts like this make me laugh

I never train on Sundays so that always makes sure I have a needed day of rest. I'm frequently asked if I run every day. During 2010, one of my highest mileage years, and also one of my most successful racing years, I averaged running 3.5 days per week, running 3,400 miles that year. In 2013 I concentrated on running very long runs on Saturdays. During that year I ran 3,200 miles and averaged running only 2.5 days per week. Those who believe in those daily running charts are skeptical. But I point to the results at how many ultras I have run, many placing very well despite my age.

Some ultra "coaches" insist that to be successful in running ultras that you must add long back-to-back runs. This is the practice of running two long runs (25+) on two consecutive days. Those who promote these insist that the value is getting time on your feet and stressing your body to perform even when you are tired. Perhaps these have value, but I have never included them in my training so don't believe those who claim this practice is a "must." Again, I would rather listen to my body, recover when needed and try to avoid injury. Instead I will strive to do a long run about once per week.

What about tapering? Certainly there is value in tapering your miles off before an event, but I have seen inconsistent results when I taper very much. To me, life is short. I would rather be running. In 2013, with all those frequent long runs, I discovered that I started to recover faster and faster between them as my body became more accustomed to running them frequently. Thus I believe my need for tapering was less. I had some good performances in 2013 even though my rest between 100s were at times just a week or two. I continued this practice in 2015 and ran at least a 50K run 40 of the 52 weeks that year. In 2015 with this solid mileage base I finished two 100-milers with just five days rest in between. In 2015, I ran 4,564 miles.



Is stretching part of my training regimen? For me no, unless it is before and after a tempo or speed training that tends to tighten up the muscles. I would rather get running than spend a bunch of time stretching. I find that after running a few miles, I'm warmed up nicely. For me muscle strains have been very, very few. In 2013 early in the year I pulled my hamstring and it did affect me for a year, but that happened running a silly 20-minute 5K. I should act my age and not try to run that fast anymore.

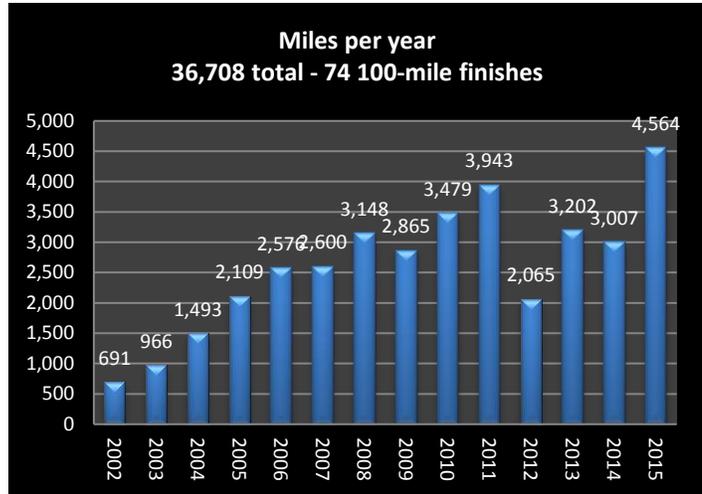


In 2012 I had a serious stress-fracture injury. No, it was not due to improper training, or too much training. It was due to running with improper shoes and a pronation problem. Stress on the medial side of my leg eventually started a fracture. Then, not understanding the injury, I raced and finished a 100 during which it continued to fracture it further. A poor decision that caused me to stop running for months.

Without running for all those months, what did it take for me to again finish a 100-miler? I once had fun mocking the structured, prescriptive training programs and charted two such plans against what I actually did to successfully train for a Cascade Crest 100 finish.

Week 25 I successfully finished Cascade Crest 100. A month later I also finished Bear 100. I think this illustrates a couple important points. First, no you don't have to follow those formal training plans and can still succeed. Second, once you build up a good mileage base, even taking 15 weeks off doesn't mean that you have to start back at square one.

I run for the love of it. I have more fun training than racing. If training starts becoming boring, I always seek ways to make it interesting by doing “crazy” new things like running across a frozen lake, running a marathon before work, finding new trails, or accomplishing something no one else has tried doing such as running all the way around Utah Lake. Mixing it up is very important. I very, very rarely run a same trail or route on consecutive days. I watch local road runners, running the same route each morning on the shoulders of a busy highway and shake my head with wonder. They usually don’t have a smile on their face. I now rarely run up Mount Timpanogos anymore after accomplishing 87 summits. The reason I don’t, is that because I have run it so many times, I have every turn and almost every large rock memorized. It has become generally boring and not the best use of my training.



Training on a similar terrain as an upcoming race is very important. During the winter and early spring, most of my races are on flat trails or dirt roads. Thus my training during those months are on similar trails. During the summer months I shift to steeper mountain training. I usually know exactly what the next race terrain will include and I seek similar trails at a similar altitude.

Heat training can be very important to get ready for hotter races. I now just avoid hot races because what they do to my system. But if I am going to run a race that will be 80 degrees or above, I need to do some heat training. I do not believe that this takes many weeks. My experience has been that the body can adapt with heat training in just a couple weeks if it is consistent. No, I don’t train in a sauna, but I have exercised in a hot tub, getting the heart rate up, and that seems to help. I’ve also driven around with the heat on in the car when it is very hot out. These silly things have made a difference.

Altitude training can be very important for higher altitude races. But again, I’ve seen good results with just 2-3 weeks of consistent altitude training. My best Leadville 100 finish was accomplished by backpacking for four days before the race staying above 10,000 feet. The week before that I also would sleep in the mountains at 11,000 feet several times and then head into work.

To increase my speed, periodic tempo runs are critical but also risky. They significantly help increase foot speed and also get me used to running with a higher heart rate. But the risk at my age is muscle or further bone injury. They can be painful but I wish I could do more of them.

I look back fondly on my training over the years. Eventually I’ll probably give up the races, but I hope I can keep doing the training.

The Frequent Long Run



What is a long run? Obviously the answer varies for each runner. As a boy, I remember my first “long” hike in boy scouts, a five-mile walk from close to my home, to Salt Water State Park on the Puget Sound in Washington. It seemed like it took all day and was so very far. To me back then, a one-mile run was long. As a teen, as I began to do some regular one-mile runs, three miles seemed long. As I again tried to run regularly in college, a very long run became eight miles.

As I discovered ultrarunning, a long run in my mind was ten miles. A 50K run (31 miles) seemed to be a very long event that took careful planning to do. In 2005 I would look at the race calendar and started to think about traveling to participate in 50K runs which to me back then, was still a mega-distance. But as I gained a longer mileage base, and with more experience, that 50K distance seemed to grow shorter and no longer seemed to be a massive run. 50K eventually turned into my definition of “the long run.”

By late 2010, I had finished 35 100-milers and I was training for a new challenge in my ultrarunning experience, a 48-hour run. Running well past the 100-mile distance in an event seemed very daunting and I was very nervous about it. To get ready for it, I decided I would try something very new for me, a weekly run of at least 50K. This seemed like a crazy idea, but as it progressed, I felt myself become stronger and the runs became easier. To finish out 2010 I ran ten consecutive weeks of at least a 50K run. They included some pretty tough runs: [Pony Express Trail 100](#), [Antelope Island 100K](#), [39 miles down in the Grand Canyon](#), and [42 miles in Capitol Reef National Park](#).



Capitol Reef National Park

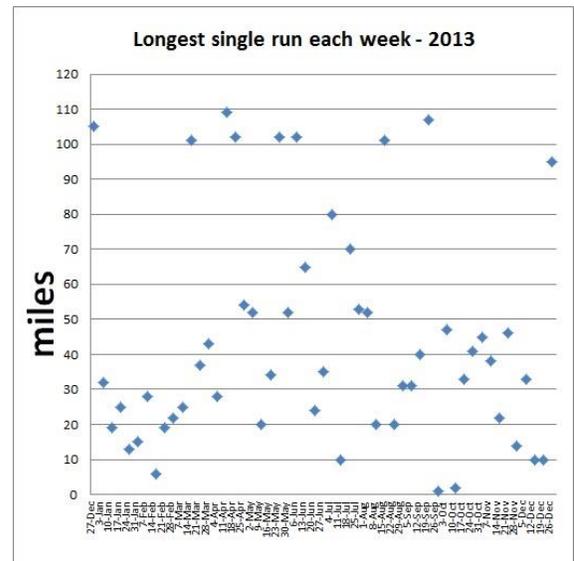
I discovered that with this consistency, I recovered very fast from these runs and the pain decreased during them. How did I do on my [Across the Years 48-mile run](#)? I was pleasantly surprised. During the first 24-hours I covered 116 miles, by far the furthest I had every run in a race. When 48-hours arrived, I had run 187 miles and won the race! I became a strong believer of the benefits of doing the frequent long run.

I finished off 2010 with 25 runs of at least 50K during the year. In 2011, I repeated that with another 25 long runs, and in 2012, a year of injury recovery, I completed just nine. In 2013, I specifically started concentrating again on doing the frequent long run. Getting older, my motivation for doing many mid-week short runs was greatly decreasing. Pushing myself out of bed in the morning before work became increasingly difficult. So, instead I looked forward to the long Saturday run and I piled up 20 consecutive weeks of at least a 50K run, and a total of 31 such runs that year. That 20-week stretch included five 100-mile finishes.

Most reasonable people probably consider that crazy. What about tapering for those 100-milers? Tapering and long recovery is required, right? No. My experience is that if I am consistently doing frequent long runs, many at a comfortable pace, that a long taper does nothing to help my race performance. Yes, I will rest 2-3 days before a race, but I’ve seen no real difference between a short rest

and a long taper. I've had most of my best race performances with no tapering at all. At my age, life is short. I would rather be running than resting.

Taking a look at that stretch in 2013 with 20 consecutive weeks of 50K runs, I ran a solid 21:48 100 miles at [North Coast 24-hour](#) and five days after finishing, ran [Salt Flats 100](#). I knew that I would feel fatigue after just five days of rest, and I did for the first 20 miles or so, but then everything came together I still went on to set a personal record on that course of 23:28 for 8th place. All this at age 55. Would I have performed better with a long taper instead? Perhaps, but I've run that race with and without tapering, and my best finishes have been without tapering.



What about recovery time? I discovered that with these frequent long runs, my recovery time between each of them started to decrease to the point that usually I wasn't even sore on the next day. My 100-miler recovery time decreased from two weeks to about 4-5 days or less. After some 100-milers I'm baffled that I end out with very little muscle soreness. The body adapts.

Some ultra “coaches” insist that to be successful in running ultras that you must add long back-to-back runs. This is the practice of running two long runs (25+) on two consecutive days. Those who promote these insist that the value is getting time on your feet and stressing your body to perform even when you are tired. Perhaps these have value, but I have never included them in my training so don't believe those who claim this practice is a “must.” I would rather listen to my body, recover when needed, and work to avoid injury. Instead I strive to do a long run about once per week.

What do I do to recover from these frequent long runs? I rarely go out and run the next day. I usually take off at least a couple days to recover and rest. I listen to my body and know when it is safe to run again without incurring injury. This means I probably run on average fewer days than most runners. In 2013, I ran only on average 2.5 days per week, but still reached 3,200 miles and finished eight 100-milers. Some people think 100-mile runners need to train nearly every day to finish well in 100-mile races. The secret truth is: you don't have to. By running only 2.5 days per week in 2013, I had more time to spend with my family and kept a good balance of life. Yes, I did still averaged 62 miles per week that year, but most of those miles came in a big chunk.

Once I became a believer in the frequent long run, I continued in 2014 with 24 weeks of long runs. But that was nothing compared to 2015, when I ran at least a 50K run in 40 of the 52 weeks that year. I finished eleven 100-milers and ran a personal record 4,564 miles, averaging 88 miles per week. All this and avoiding any injury at age 57. I believe the frequent long run helps me avoid overuse injuries.

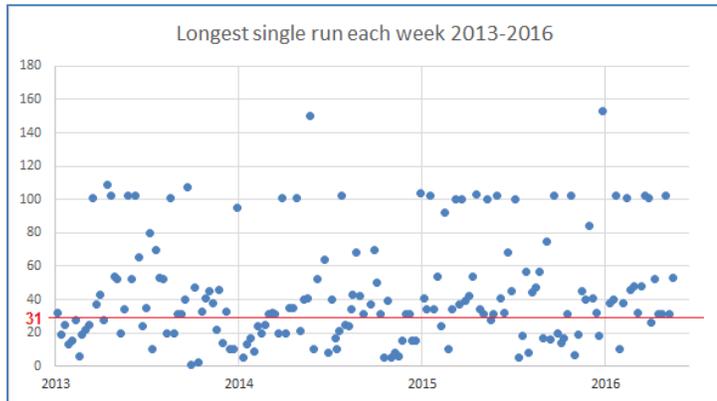


Running Monument Valley 100 in 2015

As of this writing in 2016, I've continued the long run strategy and have run at least a 50K run for 17 out of the

first 19 weeks in 2016. I finished five 100-milers in that span. In 2015, I was starting to believe that my advanced age had finally caught up to me, and maybe this long run strategy was slowing me down. But much to my surprise, thus far in 2016 my 100-mile times have been: 20:51, 22:22, 23:24, 24:28, 24:50, and 25:43. It had been six years since I had a stretch of good times like that. The 20:51 time has been the best 100-mile time in the world so far in 2016 for ages 57+. My point here is that I credit the frequent long run for this consistency (not my shoes, not some backpack, not some gel, no silly product hashtags here).

By 2016, the frequent long run became pretty routine. I had great fun planning my long Saturday runs. To keep my interest and passion high for running, I tried to find creative runs to do. Many of my runs were far more interesting than running a local 50K or 50-mile race. I simply invented my own courses. Dreaming up these runs is part of the fun. I would look at the maps, search Google, check Strava heat maps, and eventually come up with a run that looks very intriguing and within 31-50 miles.



I've learned how to carry very little on these runs. I will usually only carry two handheld water bottles, some gels and candy in my pocket, and in a small camelback, a couple burritos, more gels, candy, my phone, and some foot-care products. For my chosen courses, I need at least 1-2 water stops, springs, creeks, or stores to fill my bottles back up. For some, I'll drive and drop something off at a strategic point.

In 2016 some of my creative long runs included:

- [Cathedral Valley Loop](#) – 47 miles. This was one of my most spectacular runs in the rarely visited northern section of Capitol Reef National Park. I ran by amazing mini monoliths and wonderfully colored red cliffs all day.
- [Onaqui Mountain Loop](#) – 48 miles. I ran around a remote mountain range in the Utah west desert. It included running on random trails made by wild horses.
- [Remote run in San Rafael Swell](#) – 32 miles. This run was in a totally new area for me, on Sid Mountain and included lots of exploring. I did a tough descent in to canyon and a long run along a river.
- [Golden Spike Run](#) – 51 miles. This was the most amazing historic run I had ever experienced, running for the first time on this historic transcontinental railroad bed. There was so much historic evidence to see and explore along the way.
- [Quad Squaw Peak](#) – 31 miles. For this run, I did tough repeats to climb to the top of a local peak four times.
- [Sanpitch Mountain Range](#) – 52 miles. I ran a mountain range end-to-end, most of it above 8,000 feet. It was a navigation challenge and I ran into a bobcat and two rattlesnakes.

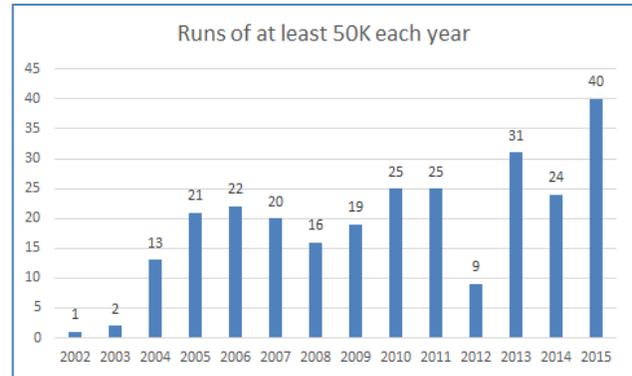


Cathedral Valley

- [Run around Simpson Mountains](#) – 49 miles. I ran around another remote mountain range in the Utah west desert. I had to push through some brutal headwinds.

I will typically start these runs very early in the morning and finish by noon or a little later on Saturdays, still giving me time to travel home or get other things done.

For 2015, I only ran in one race of 50 miles or less, a chance to run in an area normally closed to public. I can now invent my own 50-mile or 50K run, usually with just a few days' notice. Why pay a race fee or travel a long way to run only 31-50 miles? I now save that for 100-milers. That is why when you look at [my race results on ultrasignup](#), in recent years they mostly include only 100 miles or fixed-time races.



285 long runs lifetime (as of 2016)

How much does the frequent long run benefit younger runners? I wish I knew. Perhaps it benefits the elderly runner more by maintaining the muscle and joint strength. Other runners in their 50s are now trying it, hoping that it can help them continue to finish 100-milers and enjoy long runs for years to come.

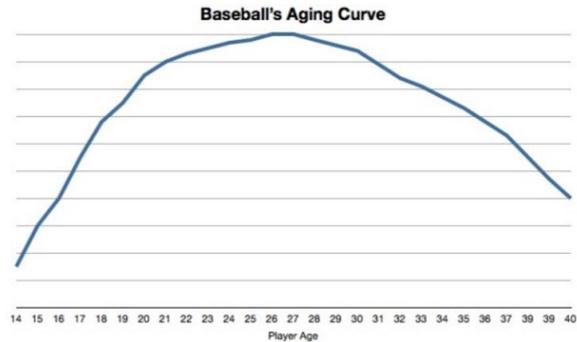
Running Against the Aging Curve



I attempted to run my first 100 at the ripe old age of 46. It was a failure full of introspection. I had experienced enough early failures ultrarunning (finishing nearly last or not finishing) that it caused me to conclude that I was probably too old to become an ultrarunner. But in reality, the average finisher age for those who ran my first 100-miler was age 44.

So at age 46 in 2004, I mistakenly considered myself too old to be a serious runner. After all, I knew that for most professional sports you are over-the-hill by your mid- 30s. I was still recovering from a torn meniscus and believed that I would always be a back-of-the-pack runner because of my age, and my knee.

As I started to love the sport of ultrarunning, I wished that I could have found the sport when I was much younger, wondering how well I could have performed without an aged, broken body. I wished I didn't have a bad knee, believing that it would always limit my speed and distance.



But as my experience progressed and my fitness improved, I learned to manage my knee problem. My performance started to surprise me. Could I actually be somewhat good at this sport in my old age? The first indication came to me when I started to add some road running to my races, including 5Ks, 10Ks, and a few marathons. As I ran them, I would look around me and see that I was running with youngsters in their 20s. I started to place pretty high overall and routinely placed in my age group.

Older can be faster

One of my problems early on was that I had set my expectations too low. I believed that my age and late entrance into the sport was a real barrier. My message to the runners in their late 40s and 50s is that they shouldn't believe that it is too late. I learned that the sport of ultrarunning is indeed a sport for the older runner.

You generally will not find too many 100-mile ultrarunners who are in their 20s. Ultrarunning needs patience and time to be able to finish 100-milers. Young runners are typically very busy with their early careers and family life. They don't have the time to put into the training. With our fast-paced world, they may lack the patience to be part of an endurance sport.

In 2016, at the age of 57, during one of my 100-milers, I observed a 27-year-old runner who was trying to keep up with me. With all the time to think on the trail, I enjoyed watching this young runner who was desperately trying to keep ahead of the old man. He indeed had some good young speed and strength, very physically fit, but I could tell pretty early on that he lacked the patience and endurance to

succeed. Sure enough, as the miles went by, he slowed significantly and eventually had to quit. This is fairly typical with young runners; they can use their youthful speed early, but too often crash and burn before the race is finished. Ultras are for the elderly.

Cheating Father Time

My running turned into a constant fascinating experiment for one who is aging. I share my elderly experiences and performance, not to boast, but as an example of what is possible for the fairly average older athlete. Don't short-change your capability.

By age 48, with a couple years of slowish long distance running under my belt, I started to get faster instead of slower. I never believed that I could one day run a sub-24-hour 100, but it happened. Then, at age 49, when I finished 60th at Leadville 100 out of 590 runners, my eyes were opened. I wasn't yet nearing the peak of my running performance, it was only starting. I soon believed that I could still get better and better. Age 49 wasn't too old for the 100-mile distance.

At age 49 I actually won my first 100-mile race with a small field of 25, and that greatly increased my confidence. At age 50, I won the Utah State 5K for age 50+, and won my age group for the USATF 100-mile national championship. I also went and ran the Boston Marathon with very little road race training, finishing in 3:24. Just a couple years earlier, I never dreamed achievements like that were possible for me. I became convinced that I truly was now a runner, and even at age 50, a very good runner.

As I entered my 50s, I wondered when "Father Time" would catch up with me. Would this next year be my plateau? Instead of improving, would I would start declining? With each year I was puzzled, a significant decline that I was expecting, didn't arrive.



Declining Runner Performance



There are various studies that take a look at declining runner performance. Some look at typical marathoners, others look at highly trained world record holders. They all seem to indicate that runner performance starts declining by the mid-30s. Overall from age 35-60, runner performance declines about 0.5-1.0% percent per year for highly fit runners. For those doing successful vigorous training, it is believed this could be cut in half for many years.

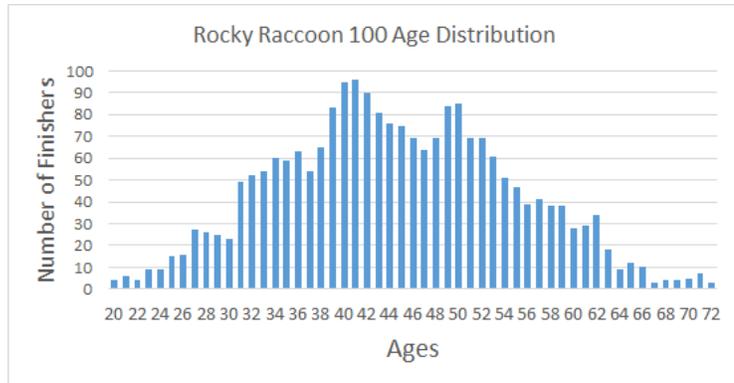
Examining results from the Chicago marathon, there was a 4.3% decline from runners in their 30s compared to the 40s. There was an 8.2% decline from the 40s to the 50s. And finally, there was a 10.3% decline from the 50s to the 60s

These runner studies generally apply to marathon runners. What about 100-milers? Do the same statistics apply?

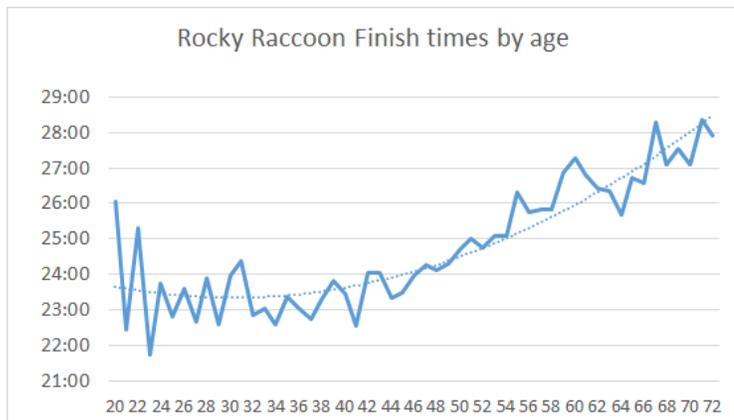
100-mile Case Study – Rocky Raccoon 100

I took a look several cases of 100-milers to see the comparison of finish times by age. First, I wanted statistics from a course that has been relatively the same over the years and generally has consistent weather conditions. I chose to look at Rocky Raccoon 100 near Houston Texas. I pulled finisher data for the past 15 years. I didn't want to go back too far in time because times can be affected by improved runner technology and fueling. I also took a look at only Male finishers. The amount of data used, was 2,206 finishing times for runners age 20-72.

First, let's take a look at the age distribution for these finishers. The average finishing age for this data was 44.5 years old. It shows that younger runners don't typically run or finish 100-milers and finishers certainly tail off after age 62. Age 31 appears to be the age when more young runners start to finish this 100-miler.



Next, what is the average finishing time by age? This chart shows that the peak performance age is in the early 30s. This corresponds with marathon studies that identifies age 30 as the peak. Runners of 100s in their 20s are much fewer, but those who do finish can have great results.



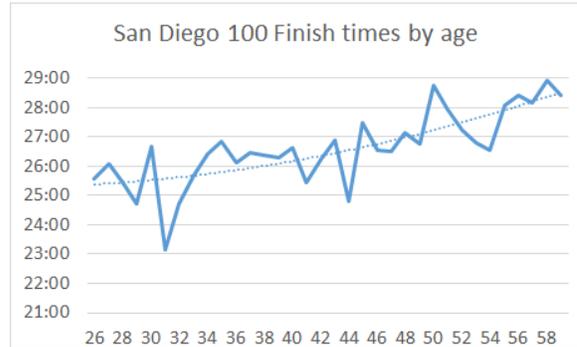
Decline in average 100-mile performance starts in the late 30s but is not significant. Decline during the 40s is 3.7% total or .37% per year which is a somewhat slower decline compared to marathoners.

Using the trend line further, decline during the 50s is faster, about 5.6% total or .56% per year. However, this is a much slower decline than marathon studies that pegged performance decline in the 50s to about 10%. Decline for those who are still able to finish 100s in their 60s, was about 7.7% total, or .77% per year.

I conclude that runners of 100s should expect the decline in performance to not be as rapid as their marathoner friends.

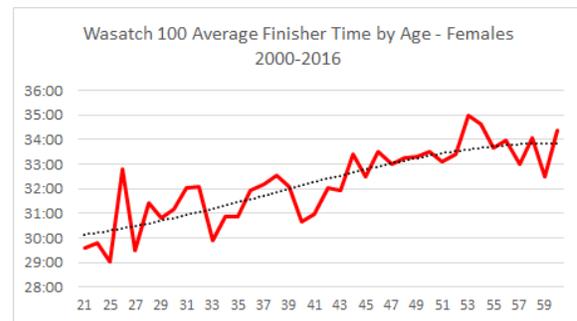
100-mile Case Study – San Diego 100

Here’s a check to see if a similar trend line exists for another race, the San Diego 100. Using 750 finish times, the trend is a bit different. I believe the reason is that this race is quite a bit more difficult and the 32-hour cutoff time is harder for older runners to achieve, making the trend line more linear. The decline in performance from age 40-60 is about 0.4% per year

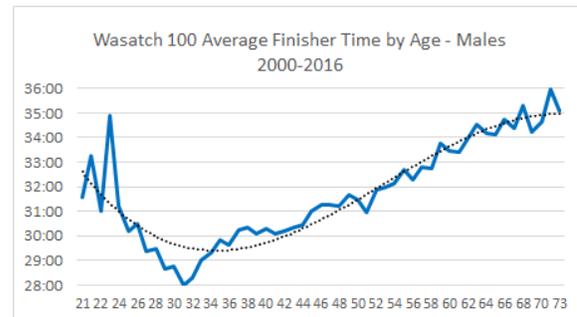


100-mile Case Study – Wasatch Front 100

Now let’s look at a more difficult 100-miler run at altitude, Wasatch Front 100. For 460 Female finishers from 2000-2016, the trend line for time vs. age is fairly linear, the younger, the faster. The average finisher age is 41.1 years old.



Next, looking at male finishers. The sample size is larger, 2,382 finishers. The aging slope is more similar to the Rocky Raccoon slope. The peak performance age is in the early 30s. Younger runners in their early/mid 20s who face Wasatch likely have not yet had enough experience or a large enough mileage base to bring their finish times below 30 hours on this difficult course.



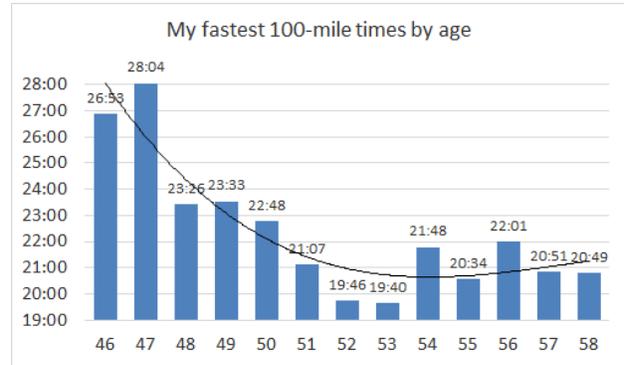
With the 36-hour Wasatch cutoff, an increased number of slower older runners can finish compared to San Diego 100 with its 32-hour cutoff. Performance decline during the 40s is 4.4%. Decline during the 50s is 6.1%. The average finisher age for the men is 42.6 years old.

My Performance Decline

At age 48, I was starting to perform well, probably in the highly fit category by that time. Over the next ten years, I should have expected to decline between 5-10%. With vigorous training that decline could possibly be decreased to only about 2.5%-5% total over that ten-year span.

For me, how much has my runner performance declined during my 50s so far?

I believe this chart is a great indicator of my performance against age. Because I run so many 100-milers, there is enough of a sample size to compare performance year to year. At age 46-47, I was just getting experience, running in the back of the pack, and fighting against cutoff times. But at age 48, my experience had arrived, my skill as a runner had been developed and I started to believe that my age should not be a barrier to running 100-milers faster. My performance drastically improved during my late 40s as fitness and experience increased. I experience about a 5% performance improvement each year.



Clearly my 100-mile times greatly improved as I arrived into my 50s and that honestly stunned me. The performance plateau still didn't arrive as I broke the sub-20-hour barrier for a 100-miler, a time that most ultrarunners never achieve, and I did it at age 52 and 53.

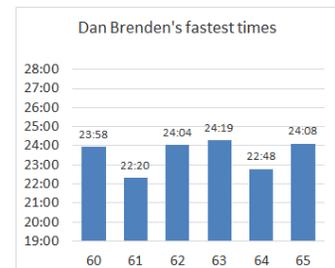
I saw improvement for about eight years before an age-related plateau or decline started to show up. I've been told that a seven-year improvement period, instead of age decline, can be typical depending on what age you enter the running sport. You should expect improvement if you train hard and stay healthy.

In 2012, at the age of 53, I suffered a serious stress fracture in my tibia that sidelined all my running for about six months. I learned the reality that with older age, bone strength is decreased and I needed to be much more careful to avoid injury. Because of my new leg injury, I no longer could run fast sustained shorter road races (5Ks, 10Ks, marathons) because of the stress caused on the healed bone injury. But I was fine with that. With age, those fast-paced races would often cause muscle strains anyway, which I wanted to avoid. I needed to stick with the age-friendly 100-mile distance.

From age 55 to 58, the chart shows my performance has been pretty steady with the trend line starting to go up (declined performance). Through my 50s, I bucked the aging decline curve and actually have improved about 8% total. But in recent years, the trend line is indicating that I've finally started to decline, perhaps at a rate of about 1% per year.

At age 57, in 2016, according the realendurance.com, I achieved the 5th, 6th, and 8th fastest 100-mile times in the world for runners age 57+. Also for 2016, my 110 miles in a 24-hour race was the 2nd furthest in the world for runners age 56+. At age 58 I beat my 2016 time by a few minutes. I've concluded that for me, I really can't expect any better than to among the best in my age group for this long distance. I'm probably doing the best I can. Working harder would probably decrease performance.

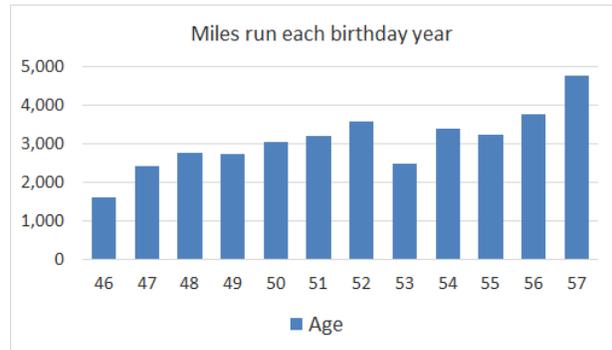
What might be possible as I get into my 60s (if I continue running 100-milers)? Will the decline be huge? One example to look at is the runner who has the most 100-mile finishes in the world, Dan Brenden. Even in his 60s, he has been able to maintain 24-hour 100-miler speed.



Increased training

Runner studies indicate that the yearly decrease in performance can be delayed somewhat with vigorous training. I believe my training has been accomplishing this.

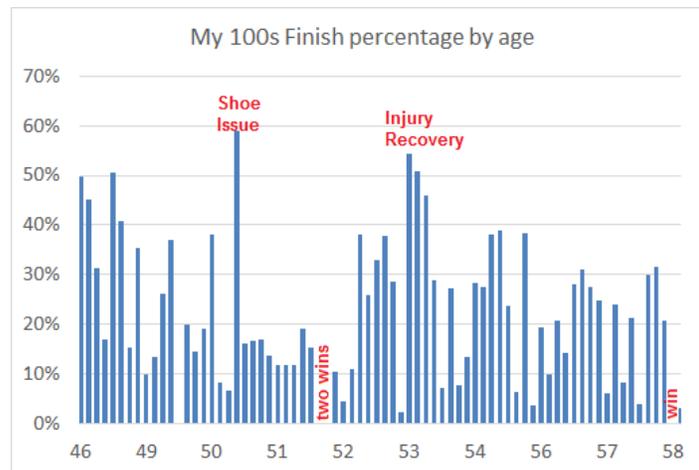
Countering the effects of age takes some hard work. Instead of decreasing miles as I get older, I have increased them. Compare this with my previous chart to see that what increased work has been needed to sustain my performance in my late 50s. At the time of this writing, I'm 58 and my weekly miles so far rivals what I did at age 57. (Note that age 53 was affected due to my significant injury.)



Measuring race performance

The ultrasignup website uses an odd method to compare how well you perform in your races. A percentage of time behind the winner time is scored for you. I dislike this method because all it takes for a low score is for a very elite runner to be in the field. It measures who showed up to race rather than how you really did. Also, your lower scores early in your running career live with you forever.

Instead, I like to know: Did I finish in the top 10%, top 20%, etc. for all runners who started?



This chart includes my 100-mile finish percentage. I didn't include races with small fields of less than 25 runners. A lower percentage is better. It indicates that I finished higher overall in the standings (example: Top 10%). For a win, I finished in the top 0%.

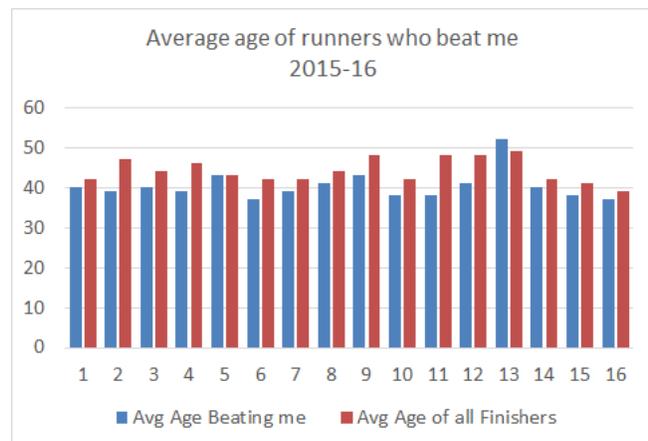
This chart shows that I had peak 100-mile performance from age 50-52 when I was regularly finishing around the top 10% of the fields. But even so, into my late 50s, the overall performance has been generally sustained. I now place quite a bit lower on mountain 100s compared to flatter courses. Runners into their late 50s should believe they can still perform well with good hard work.

Beating the Youngsters

As an older runner, frequently I look around me while running and see that I'm running with many younger runners. Thoughts go through my mind that I have no business running up with these youngsters. I get called "sir" a lot by young runners respecting their elders. If I start walking, they look at me concerned and ask a question that always bugs me, "Are you OK?" But it is always very satisfying to look at the race results and see my old age in with many of those youngsters.

At the end of 2016, I ran Across the Years 24-hour race and finished at a respectable 6th with 110 miles. I was surprised that most of my competition near the top of the standings were runners in their early 30s. The average age for the five runners that beat me was age 35. For an old man of 58, that made me feel young.

This chart takes a look at the average age of finishers (in blue) who beat me in 100 milers when I was age 56-57. The red lines indicated the average age for all finishers in that race. In this case, to clearly out-perform my age, I like to see those low blue lines into the 30s. In most of my 100-milers, there is no one older than me, who finishes ahead of me. That helps me believe that I'm still performing near the top of my age group.



Beating the Aging Curve

What can be done to do better beat the aging curve? For me, beating it to some degree each year is a great personal victory. To compete against the decline, the factors that contribute toward it need to be understood.

The typical reasons for age performance decline are:

- Reduced Aerobic Capability (VO2 Max)
- Reduced training volume and intensity
- Injury

Aerobic Capability (VO2 Max)

The primary factor for lower performance by age is likely a declining VO2 Max, the aerobic horsepower. I've never had mine measured, but I can tell that over the years my max heart rate has declined. It becomes harder to keep the heart rate high during tempo runs.

Some believe that older runners should reduce the number of longer runs and concentrate on working harder at 5K pace, running with a heart rate close to maximum, and to race these shorter distances frequently. Perhaps this is true if your only goal is to chase marathon minutes. But for 100-mile performance, the long run is required. Instead of fast 5K tempo runs, I now incorporate periodic faster

long runs with some shorter (6 mile) tempo runs sprinkled in. For me, it isn't only helping VO2 Max, but it also is training my old feet to still turn over fast.

Another factor for me that is related to VO2 Mas, is a chronic congestion problem that occurs during runs of 50 miles or more. My older brother also has this problem. Perhaps it is a form of sports asthma or just a chronic sinus problem. My lungs start filling and I can notice that less oxygen is making its way through my system. When my stomach gets less oxygen, it starts shutting down and processing less calories. As I compare notes with other older runners, many also suffer from a similar condition. Courses at altitude makes even less oxygen available and thus causes me to suffer even more. My solution is to treat the congestion as I can, and to just understand that I will have greater difficulty with high altitude courses like Leadville, Bryce, Wasatch, etc.

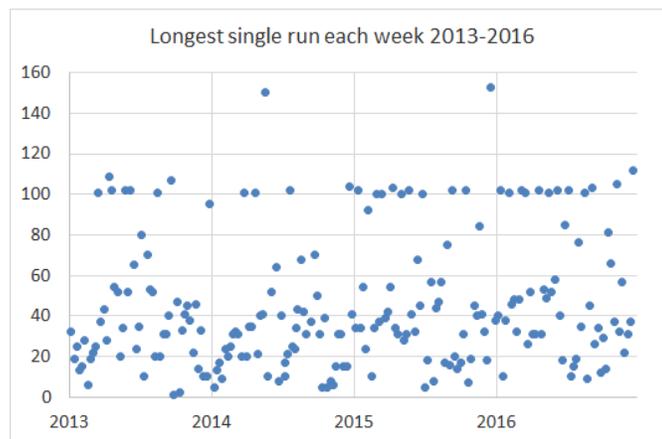
Training volume and intensity

As I have gotten older, it has become harder to get out and train. Cold and hot weather affect me more. It becomes difficult to motivate myself to go out into the elements. Reduced frequency and intensity of training will obviously cause the aging performance to decline faster.

In my early 50s, I needed less sleep and it seemed easy to get out for a morning run. In my late 50s, more sleep seems to be needed and I battle the alarm clock much more.

One easy solution has been putting an incline treadmill in my basement. Sure, it can be boring, but with all the multimedia available, it can be tolerable. It also helps train me to be mentally tough, an aspect required to consistently finish 100-milers.

I now concentrate on the weekly very long run instead of daily runs. Aging affects recovery, but I've discovered that if I do weekly very long runs that my recovery time is significantly reduced as long as I avoid muscle strains. My recovery time in my late 50s is far, far faster than it was in my early 50s. I can go out and run 50 miles and feel no soreness or fatigue a couple days later. I can easily battle the mental barriers of getting out to train by planning creative long and interesting runs each week.



This chart shows the longest single run each week across four years when I was age 54-58. As can be seen I have greatly increased the number of runs that are 50K or longer each year. This increased intensity of training has helped me delay the age-related decrease in performance.

Injury

Once I turned age 40, I noticed that my basketball-related injuries started to take much longer to heal. I knew that I was getting old. I retired from the sport I dearly loved in order to avoid injuries. With age, avoiding injury is critical. I watch reckless young runners doing stupid things in the mountains and think that they will be very lucky if they can still run at my age. Because I started running at age 46, I believe I saved many miles on my body that I now can use. I also avoided injuries pretty well in my youth. My bad knee was the result of a torn meniscus while skiing. After that, I gave up my other love, pounding the moguls on skis. I now ski only occasionally and am pretty cautious.



Earlier in my running career I learned how to run trails downhill with very good speed. I think all my skiing experience helped me to be fast and confident pounding the downhills with good technique and balance. But as I aged further (losing some balance and coordination), and because of my leg bone injury, my downhill speed has greatly declined. To counter that, I have concentrated on my uphill speed. At 58, I have trouble keeping up with younger runners on steep uphill because of declining VO2 Max, but I can run mild uphill with pretty good speed during an entire 100-miler. That has taken some good incline training to produce. During a mountain 100-miler, I will fall behind the steep early miles, but with patience, I am passing most of those runners on uphill beyond mile 60.

As you get older, the connective tissues between muscle and bones become more rigid. Range of movement decreases along with a reduced running stride length. Poor flexibility increases the risk for injury. Muscle mass also starts decreasing faster. To counter these factors I've had to start to do more core exercises and introduce some weight training. I know I probably will need to start adding more stretching. But these other activities are frustrating, taking time away from running.

As you age, you have got to listen to your body much more carefully. You need to know when recovery is needed and avoid at all costs any rigid training programs forcing you to train instead of listening to your body. You need to learn to recognize well the difference between discomfort and injury. For me, an injury is something that affects me for more than ten days. Most manageable discomfort will still go away in under ten days.

You need to know when to go to the doctor for help. I'm really bad about this. Early in my running career when I didn't know the difference between discomfort and injury, I would go to the doctor and get those weird sideways looks when I would explain my difficulties and what I did to cause them. In several instances they would go off in the wrong direction, cause worries, and provide no real help. Thus, over the years, I have tended to just avoid doctors unless I really know that I have an injury that needs help. I then usually tell them specifically what it wrong and they agree. The best solution for me is probably to find a good doctor who is also a distance runner.

Old is Cool



Around 1984 when I was about 25, while working for IBM in upstate New York, I became acquainted for the first time with a serious marathoner, a man in his late 40s, Ron Breon. This guy was amazing. I considered him to be old, but he could outrun everyone I knew. How was that possible? Ron would lead a small number of runners several times a week for a run after work. This group would run what I considered a very long loop of four miles around our town. One day I decided to join in, thinking I was in pretty good shape. Ron ran with ease, never tiring. I struggled terribly to keep up and fell way behind but completed the run. I was humbled and never joined in again, but I always remembered watching Ron run. He put in my mind the amazing thought that someone who was “old” could be in such outstanding fitness, outrunning others in their 20s. Ron once said that the secret to being in shape was to never get out of shape. I had not learned that yet, but eventually did when I arrived at his age.

The running aging curve is real, but you can beat it with careful hard work. As you do, you can explore the world in amazing ways late into your life.

Miles and Miles

Venus	25.8MILLION
Mars	48.6MILLION
Mercury	57MILLION
The Sun	93MILLION
Jupiter	390.6MILLION
Saturn	777MILLION
Uranus	1.69BILLION
Neptune	2.7BILLION

In 2002, I started to keep track of the number of miles I ran, starting with my very first Mount Timpanogos hike in Utah. That kicked off my desire to stay fit and run on trails. At first when recording miles, I was somewhat of a trail snob, only keeping track of miles run on trails. Somehow I put in my mind the thought that unless the miles were on trails, they didn't count. But I soon came to my senses and kept track of all my miles. For that first year I ran 691 miles. As I strived to lose weight, I also kept track of swimming miles and over the first three years swam 333 miles.

People have attempted to find the person who has run the most lifetime miles. Because proof with running logs are not very good, the best documented record probably is held by Dr. Herbert Fred of Houston, with more than 250,000 miles by the age of 85 in 2014. He kept many logbooks. His biggest year was in 1966 when he ran 7,661.5 miles. In 2011 he ran 2,886 miles at the age of 82. In April 2014, he surpassed 250,000 miles. That is further than running all the way to the moon (238,900 miles).



Herbert Fred

How many miles is the most ever run in a year? Stefaan Engles of Belgium claimed to have run 9,569 miles during 365 days in 2010-11. In 2014-15, Rob Young of London claimed to have surpassed 10,000 miles in a year but he later was found to have cheated in Run Across America, so his claim is not generally recognized.

Ron Hill of England is credited for running at least one mile for the most days in a row: 52 years and 39 days, or 19,032 days. He stopped in 2017 at age 78 as he started to suffer from a heart problem.

What is the most miles run in a week? The standard for this time-span for a record is actually six days. The record is held by Yiannis Kouros of Greece, the greatest long-distance runner ever, who ran 645.5 miles in six days during 2005. I was privileged to have met Yiannis in 2013 at the Across the Years race.

What is the most miles run without stopping? There is no such record kept or officially recognized. That is an invented record. Dean Karnazes of California claimed such a record without stopping to be 350 miles in 80 hours and 44 minutes. However, there is no proof that he was in motion the entire time nor that he really covered a staggering 350 miles. The recognized record for 72 hours was set by world-class runner, Joe Fejes in 2013, 323.4 miles, during the certified race, Across the Years.

My miles

At the end of 2002, I was really proud of the 691 miles I ran that year and thought it was an incredible distance. Yes, I should have been proud of that distance given that I was still over-weight and still generally out-of-shape. But I was progressing. I had no idea what could be possible.

From that year, I increased the number of miles run each year. On November 13, 2004, while running for the first time with Jim Skaggs, I surpassed 1,000 miles for the first time during a calendar year. That was amazing to me. I had finished a 50K and a 50-miler that year, but still was looking for my first 100-mile finish. 2005 was my breakout year, when I ran 2,109 miles.

The most miles I have run in a day (24 hours) was 117.8 in 2011. The most miles I have run in a week was 210 in 2010. The most miles I have run in a month was 546 miles in December, 2015. The most miles I have run in a year was 4,742 in 2016.

Miles per week

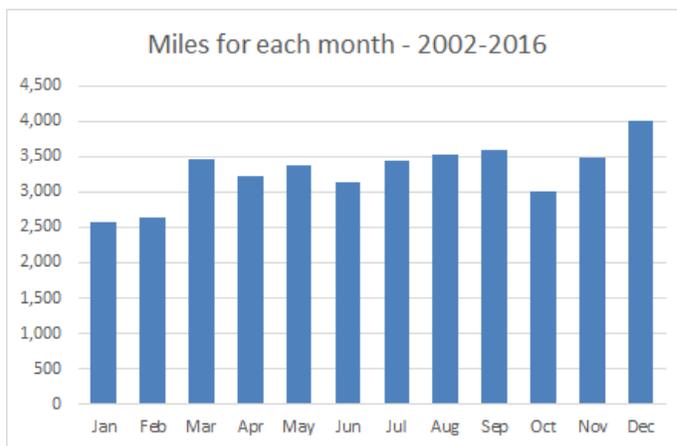
A common debate is: Should you track miles or minutes (hours) running? The “minutes camp” claims that by tracking time, it helps you resist to run faster and race against the clock since 60 minutes is 60 minutes. But for me this doesn’t make sense since I don’t run around a track. I plan a particular run of a set number of miles, usually a loop, and then go get it done. I might run faster or slower. Other times, I might just run random and do to generally have a target finish time. If I run on the treadmill, I usually quit when I’m sick of it. I have a feel for how many miles I should generally run in a particular week depending on how far away my next race is, or if I’m recovering from a recent race, so I track miles.

How many miles should you run per week. One article on runnersconnect.net gave some good advice, “Rather than thinking in terms of how many mile you can or should run, focus on finding the optimal number of miles you can run.” You need to find that sweet spot to run enough miles to train for your goals without injury and days of fatigue.

It really depends on your goals. Initially my goal was to be able to just finish 100-milers. My goals then shifted to gaining speed and competing. Eventually my goal shifted to being able to finish many 100s milers in a year. That same article stated, “There is no definitive mileage to performance correlation.” Yes, there is no magic number, for sure increased miles helps to perform better during 100-milers. As I increased my miles per week, my success in finishing 100-miles greatly increased. With high-mileage years in 2015-16, I was able to finish many 100 milers and recover quickly between them because of my mileage base. That would not have been possible if I was only running 30-40 miles per week. So it all depends on what your goals are.

I have never, ever attempted to follow some sort of ridged plan to dictate how many miles I should ran on specific days of the week including crazy approaches for long back-to-back runs. Such plans might work to run a marathon but I feel are the wrong approach for 100-miler training. I know if I followed them I would risk injury and burnout. You must listen to your body. Push the miles but rest when needed.

During 2015-16, in my late 50s I progressed to the point where it became no big deal to run more than 100 miles in a week. Most of these miles would be rather slow miles, certainly a few notches slower than race miles. Some weeks I would go four days with only power walking and then go for a long run on Saturday. All would contribute toward a strong mileage base which would pile up by the end of the year.



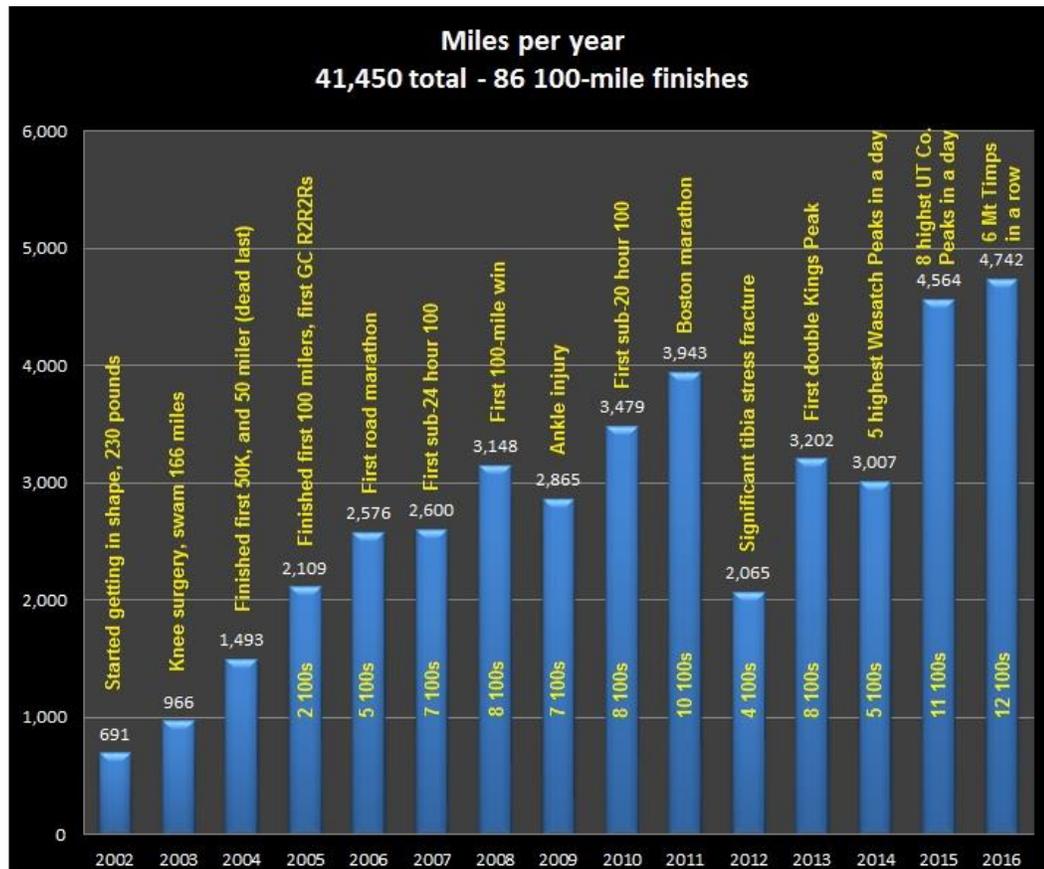
From 2002-2017, I have never taken off the winter and have continued to train. However, there are some patterns for the number of miles I run at certain times of year. As October arrives, I shift my training from the mountains to the flatlands and start increasing the number of miles. December has always been my highest month for miles before the deep cold arrives to train for Across the Years. Through the coldest months, January and February my miles do fall off as it becomes more difficult to run outside. But the miles then increase as the spring arrives to start preparing for the

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mountain races in the summer.

How many miles does it take to train for your first 100-miler? There is a lot of “depends” in that answer. Are you starting from the couch? Are you overweight? Have you learned how to run with good form? Are you doing some long runs? Just given my experience, I believe it is possible to train to finish a first 100-miler in 6-8 months if you can ease up your mileage carefully and get to a point where you can average about 35-40 miles per week which is on pace to run about 2,000 miles in a year. Throwing in some 50-mile runs along the way will help your body adapt to being out there for a long time. Less is possible, but probably more painful and subject to overuse injury during the race. More is better but subject to injury during training.

By the end of 2016, I ran 41,450 miles since 2002. 2017 started strong with three more 100-mile finishes during the first three months.



Training Playground



by noisy traffic on a pavement shoulder. They do this morning after morning oblivious to the wonderful peaceful trails nearby.

As a child in the 1960s, I recall sitting in my grandparent's living room, up on the Provo foothills, looking across Utah Lake to west and seeing the mountain on the other side. I couldn't see any homes over there. Little did I know that I would run thousands of miles there starting 40 years later.



In 1999, I moved to Saratoga Springs, Utah and my gaze immediately looked up to that mountain towering more than 3,000 feet above my house. Lake Mountain is about twelve miles long, north to south, and five miles across, east to west. In 1999, on the west side of Utah Lake, there were only a few hundred people settled on the Lake Mountain foothills. The pioneers still lived there, including Reid and Ursula Wayman who for years struggled with an orchard. They welcomed the newcomers who came out to settle in the shadow of Lake Mountain. Those of us who came from the cities, seeking the peace and quiet and amazing lake views, affectionately referred to those who were already there as “field people.” Most of those existing settlers lived on expansive farms growing various crops or raising mink. In the years to come, many of those pioneer settlers would pass on or sell their now valuable property to developers. Mike Dortch purchased and developed the historic Saratoga Springs resort which paved the way for thousands to discover the beauty and peace of living near Utah Lake.

Several years before I became a runner, in 1999 I started to explore the foothills of Lake Mountain. There are various small canyons on the north end that I hiked into, hoping to find routes that climbed to the top. But all the trails I tried ended. I discovered that the main activities on the mountain foothills seemed to be target shooting, ATV riding, and deer hunting. I came across remains of a water slide from the former Saratoga Springs resort and a giant tire dump hidden up in a side canyon. Eventually I found Lott Canyon which went in a more than a mile deep but stopped at a low pass giving views to the west. It would still take another couple years for me to venture further south to Israel Canyon which led to the top.

Lake Mountain rises to an altitude of 7690 feet. As you gaze up to its top, you notice the numerous towers that contain various antennas for radio and TV stations, Ham radio repeaters, and an important Loran station to help guide aircraft to the Salt Lake airport. Every night you can see high flying planes flying right over the mountain on their journey north.



One of the several summits on Lake Mountain

In 2002, I started to get into better shape and began to hike regularly. During September of that year I hiked up to the summit for the first time using the Israel Canyon road. Back then, there were no houses in the area and the dirt road for Israel Canyon extended all the way down to Redwood Road, the starting point. Reid Wayman's home could be seen to the south along with a cluster of new homes being built below. When I made it to the top I was very impressed by the views and I knew that I would again make the climb. I did hike up again a few months later in the snow during January, discovering that this was a great climb year round.

In those earlier years, my meager efforts to run involved running a mile stretch on a paved road back and forth in front of my house. Boredom resulted and I didn't keep it up for very long. There weren't many interesting paved roads to venture further and it never dawned on me to run the trails until 2004 when I started to seriously train. I then discovered the joy of running in the foothills of Lake Mountain and it became my primary area to run. I wouldn't see any other runners or even foot prints on those trails and roads until many years later. It became my private training ground and an opportunity for solitude.



A beautiful winter view from the top of Lake Mountain

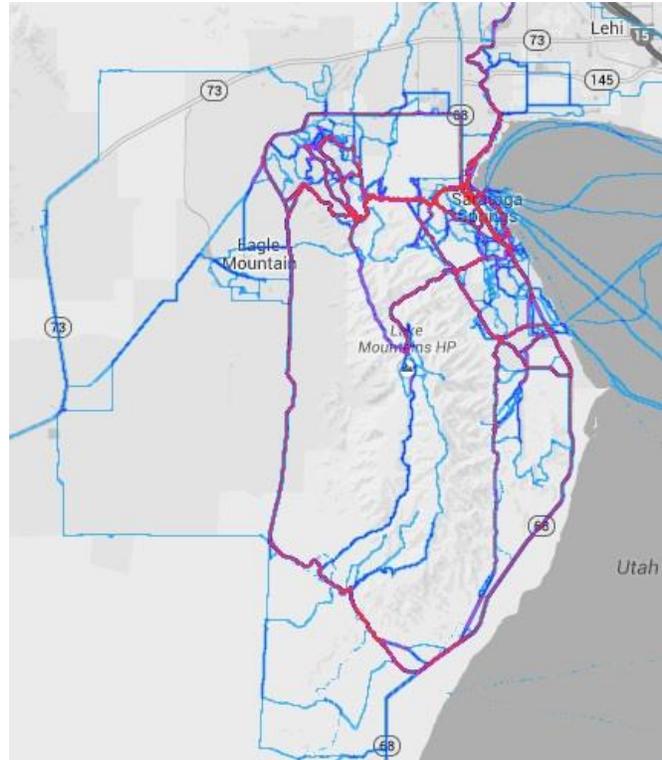


In Lott Canyon, a week after the big fire

During 2004, I ran up and down nearby Lott Canyon many times and it became a fairly regular route early in the morning before work. I loved that Canyon. From my home my fastest round trip was 1:08, a very fast time for the seven-mile round trip and 1,500 feet climbing that included blasting down in only 26 minutes. Sadly I can no longer run that favorite canyon. In 2012 the Saratoga Springs Dump fire caused by thoughtless shooters destroyed the canyon. Eventually the area was closed for revegetation. I tried to make my way up it again in 2014, but it was overgrown with high weeds, the road very faint, and it could no longer even be hiked. My PR and fastest known time will likely stand for years.

As I increased my miles, I discovered more Lake Mountain foothill trails and ran many miles on the north side on the ridges and hidden valleys, still all to myself. I discovered a network of motorcycle trails constructed on the east slopes and north slopes above the homes starting to be built nearby. There was one particular route that I loved, running along the ridge that extends to Ranches. I loved a crazy motorcycle decent on the north end. One day I took reflective ribbons and hung them on the descent trail so I could blast down fast in the dark weaving around the cedars with my bright green light. Ten years later you still might find one or two of those faded ribbons. I affectionately call that ridge, "Tickville Ridge" in honor of the original name for the area below, Tickville.

I finally got the crazy idea of running all the way around Lake Mountain which would be about 32 miles. My first attempt was aborted because of dusk at about 3/4ths around, but I succeeded in May 2004. I knew that I was the first person to ever do that because it was such a crazy idea and I was the only very long distance runner in the area. I would repeat the circumference run many times in the years to come. Later in 2004, I ran with Jim Skaggs for the first time on my second trip around the mountain. On that trip for the first time I reached the 1,000 mile running mark for a calendar year. I thought that was so far. Little did I know that I would soon be exceeding 3,000 miles each year. In 2009 I ran with Craig Lloyd around the mountain as he ventured for the first time into ultramarathon territory. I've lost track how many times I've run around Lake Mountain. By 2014, it is probably was approaching 15 times.



Map recording many of my runs on and around Lake Mountain

My runs up to the top of Lake Mountain continued. I lost track of how many times I have run up it but by 2014 I had probably run to the top about 40 times. One year in the mornings before work, I would start at the present-day trailhead above the houses and run until the hour mark up the road and then run down in time to go to work. I did this over and over again, progressing higher each time up the mountain.

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The year 2012 was a very difficult year for Lake Mountain. For years target shooters have trashed the mountain and with the increased popularity of explosive targets each year the mountain would catch on fire. Early in the dry season of 2012 about a dozen human caused fires were started, most by target shooters. Saratoga Springs incompetent mayor, Mia Love, at the time refused to do anything to protect the mountain or the city below from this danger. "I will oppose all efforts to restrict our gun rights." When the big one came, the Dump fire which was started just 1.5 miles from my home, it resulted in the evacuation of about 9,000 people from their homes for several days.

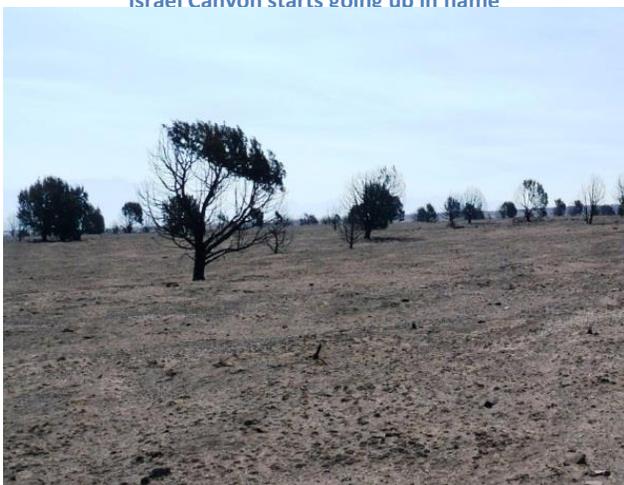


Israel Canvon starts going up in flame

The devastating fire burned about a third of the mountain and destroyed most of Israel Canyon, including the power lines that head to the top which all needed to be replaced.



Fire destruction even on the high ridges



A week after the fire, I ran up onto my mountain and was greatly saddened by what I found. My training playground would never be the same. The culprits were were shooters from Washington state who went and bought explosive targets, shooting at them only a half mile from homes. They only received a fine of \$10,000 and

no jail for starting the fire that took \$2.1 million to put out.

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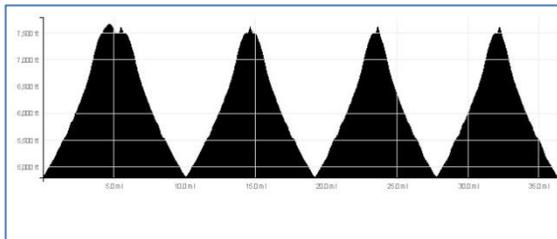
Later after the fire was put out, government leaders went to investigate the shooting problem and as they visited, they actually witnessed another fire being started. Finally the BLM stepped in and issued shooting bans on the east slopes of the mountain. Still shooters tried to continue and finally the BLM has resorted to fences and gates.

This wasn't the end of the tragedy on the mountain. City leaders were very slow to act regarding potential mud slide threats from the thousands of acres of ash. Nothing happened until the rain came a few months later. Mud and ash flowed down the mountain into neighborhood filling basements.



Acting too late the local government finally took erosion control action, and closed a significant portion of the foothills I used to run in. The efforts chewed up all existing trails in the closed area to help with runoff.

By 2012, the Lake Mountain secret was out and other ultrarunners came to meet its challenge. In 2014, I participated in what probably has been the largest group run up and down the mountain. It was very nostalgic for me, thinking back on the former years when I was the only up going up. It made me proud and happy to see so many runners enjoying that morning.



Profile of my quad Lake Mountain run



A group run up Lake Mountain. Me on far left.

Also in 2014, I did a first. Several runners had accomplished doubles, so I decided one morning to accomplish a quad – four times in a row running up and down my mountain. It was great fun.

I continued to find new ways to enjoy the mountain. In 2013, I ran the entire spine of the mountain north to south, beginning at the homes on the north side of the mountain. That was a spectacular and challenging run. [View a video of this run.](#) Many of my favorite foothill trails have now long disappeared as homes have crept higher and higher on the mountain foothills. But even in 2014, I discovered a series of fun single-track motorcycle trails to the south, past the further developments. This is now a favorite morning area to run.

Finding your own training playground is essential to help you get out often for interesting runs on easily accessible trails. Go find it.



Shoes and Foot Care

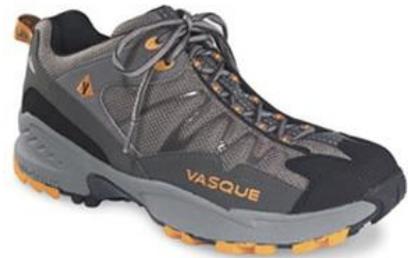


When I started to run, I had no understanding about shoes or foot care. Somehow I had a strange belief that expensive running shoes was a scam and it really didn't matter what you ran in as long as they fit well. I would just go to a big box store and choose a pair of cheap shoes off the shelf that seemed to fit well. My struggles were many, as I tried to go longer distances. My feet would get very sore and blisters were frequent. I became very discouraged.

Once I discovered the existence of ultrarunning in 2004, I subscribed to an email listserv named, *ultralist* (still in existence in 2016). This was the primary gathering place back then on the Internet for ultrarunning discussions. After my first year of ultrarunning, in 2005 I posted a long summary of my running activities and one veteran posted in reply: "After reading your race reports about your first ultra year, I'm amazed that you survived. It seems that you made many poor decisions during the year but still managed to grow and achieve success. You seem to be very determined and quite persistent, but be careful out there. Learning from your mistakes will help you eliminate a lot of the unnecessary pain you've been experiencing." His comments were very true. I was gaining a lot of good experience through failures. I did read carefully the *ultralist* and learned a ton of knowledge from the experienced runners who shared their experiences and race report.

Note: I will mention some products. I have never been sponsored by any of these products. I don't want to be sponsored and feel obligated to stick with a product. I use products that work. Once they stop working, I move on. You won't ever see me hash-tagging products on posts as many do. I would rather just run than try to get free products. Generally I'm not into gear.

I finally concluded that I needed better shoes. Trail shoes at that time were still a pretty new idea. There were mostly lightweight boots or road running shoes. Vasque came out with a trail shoe, "Velocity" that seemed to be the most popular shoe on the *ultralist*. While traveling to run my first 50-miler at White River 50, I stopped off at a sports store in Boise and bought a pair of Velocities. When I put them on, I was amazed! It felt like I had pillows on my feet. I didn't know comfort like this was possible in shoes.



My running enjoyment took a turn for the better as the foot pain and blisters greatly diminished. I ran in Vasque Velocities for several years, going through many, many pairs. They would last for about 400 miles until the uppers would develop holes in the crease locations. As I would retire my shoes, my boys would claim their favorites to use.



Now with decent shoes to run in, I later turned my attention to foot care. I learned from the *ultralist* that you could prevent blisters by taping potential hot spots ahead of time. The tape of choice seemed to be Elastikon, a cloth tape that stretches and holds to the skin very well. The runners on the list recommended also applying tincture of benzoin, a bonding fluid. It makes the tape adhere much longer. This was a great find. The Elastikon worked great, but the tincture of benzoin would make a nasty mess at times and tough to clean off the skin after a race. Eventually after a year or so, I stopped using the tincture of benzoin and learned that if I just stretched the Elastikon a little while putting it on, it

would bond much better and usually stay on for an entire 100-mile race.

Early on, I would usually just tape the back of my heels to eliminate rubbing blisters. But eventually I started taping other locations too. To this day (2016) I still use Elastikon for any run longer than about 25 miles.

I became familiar with black toenails, but it took me awhile to figure out that they can nearly be avoided by more room in the toe box, and thus better fitting shoes. That lesson took years to arrive. My family would make fun of my gross looking toe nails, but it didn't bother me.



My main foot problem was sesamoiditis. In the foot beneath the big toe in the forefoot are little sesamoid bones that can become painfully inflamed. Eventually I made my first visit to a podiatrist in 2005. I learned about foot pronation, and by looking at the wear of my shoes, I discovered my right foot in particular over-pronated pretty badly. The podiatrist made me hard custom heel orthotics to control my pronation. They were very hard to get used to. I wore them during my first 100-mile finish and by 80 miles my feet were so sore that I had to walk the rest of the way in. I would try putting them under my insoles but even that didn't work well. I think it took me a year to wise up and ditch them altogether.

The real cause of my sesamoiditis was shoes that were too narrow. It literally took me years to figure that out. My feet are just a bit too wide to fit into most standard shoes. Once I figured that out and was more careful about the shoes I ran in, the sesamoiditis went away.

My pronation issue remained. Instead of using orthotics, I learned how to tape the sole of my shoe, building it up under the insole, to better force my foot to quit tilting inward so much. Too much buildup would cause blisters, so I learned how to apply just the right amount. I still use this method today (2016) for all my running shoes and will never use orthotics anymore.



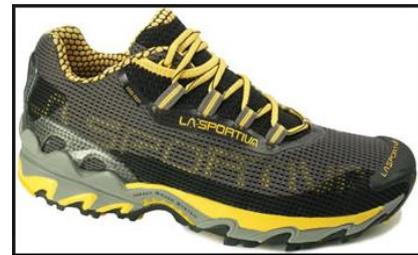
My next foot ailment with increased miles was a painful Morton's Neuroma. A neuroma is a thickening of nerve tissue. Mine was between the third and fourth toes in the ball of the foot. Compression would occur causing terrible pain to shoot into the toes. This pain would be felt especially on a sustained uphill such as the early miles of Bighorn 100. Eventually it would just get so bad that the toes would numb and then I could bare it. My solution was to use a thinner insole. It really all came down to getting more room in my toe box but I still didn't realize that at the time. For a couple years I would always replace my insoles with thin insoles that I would buy at the store. (Later when max cushioned shoes came out, this problem totally went away).

Crushed toes was a particularly nasty issue, especially the small toe. I would resort to using toe cushions, a nice item to put on a toe to protect it. I still use those now and then for a particular toe. But again, the real problem was narrow shoes and a small toe box. I remember at The Bear 100, that my toes became terribly crushed and that with ten miles to go I was literally in tears from the pain. It wasn't until the next week that I discovered my shoes had two insoles in them, giving my feet no room in the shoe. During the night I had asked my crew to change out my insoles, but I wasn't clear. They thought I wanted to add my insoles to another pair of shoes. Ouch!

It wasn't until the 2009 Bighorn 100 that I finally figured out that most of my foot ailments were running in shoes too small. It took me twenty-four 100-mile finishes to teach me that lesson. For the 2009 Bighorn 100, I started running in a new model of the Vasque Velocity, getting my usual size 9.5. They seemed a bit tight, but I ran in them anyway. Within 15 miles I was really suffering. Late into the night I nearly DNFed because of the terrible foot pain. At an aid station with my drop bag, I decided to change into an older pair of shoes and was surprised that the pain mostly went away and I was able to finish the race slowly.

After the race, I was very discouraged about my shoes. They seemed to work so well in the past, but now no longer did. I soon figured out that with all the running that I had been doing for the past five years that my feet had grown nearly a full size. I ditched using the Vasques because I didn't like their new model, and I was in search of a new running shoe. (Today I always run in size 10.5 and sometimes even 11).

I followed the lead of Karl Meltzer at that time and started running in La Sportivas. That somewhat worked for a year or so, but the problem with the shoes was that they were too narrow and the rock plate was bad, causing sore feet bottoms. They also wore out quickly, in just about 250 miles. I couldn't afford buying expensive shoes that often. I also eventually badly aggravated a tendon that wraps around the ankle and connects to the bottom of the foot. These shoes just were not protecting my feet enough.



So, I was again trying to find the ideal shoe for me. I ran in some Montrail for a while that helped, but they were pretty heavy and slow shoes. They did let my ankle heal.



Finally the shoe I was really waiting for arrived. Hoka One-One Mafate. I started to run in them during 2010 and was amazed to discover that I could run 100 miles without sore feet afterwards. My finish times improved and I started setting personal record times at nearly all distances while running in these shoes. They made a huge difference and I was delighted. Many runners away from Utah scoffed at the funny looking "clown shoes" that many of us were wearing and thought we would surely twist our ankles in them. But I learned how to run in them well and never twisted an ankle.

The barefoot craze was going on and this was in the opposite direction, max cushioning. No, I couldn't feel every rock on the trail and my feet thanked me for that.

But nothing is perfect when it comes to shoes. The major issue I had with HOKAs, all models, is that they still were too narrow for me. They caused nasty blisters on the sides of the big toes or side of the foot because of shoe defect, a seam inside. All manner of taping didn't cause those to go away. Also the foam cushion used by those early HOKAs would break down pretty fast. With my pronation issues, the foam would eventually collapse and the shoes became slanted. New models of HOKAs wouldn't improve things much and the Stinson model proved to be very, very unstable for my pronation issues. In 2012, while wearing unstable and worn-out HOKAs, the pressure caused on the inside of my leg developed a massive stress fracture that sidelined me for six months. All because of imperfect shoes.

In 2013, I kissed HOKAs good-bye and started using the New Balance Leadvilles. These shoes were stable enough for me and didn't cause the nasty Hoka blisters. But they didn't provide enough of the max cushioning I wished for. In 2014, I went to Altra Olympus. These shoes delighted me at first. The zero

drop never was an issue for me. But as the summer went on, I discovered that their traction was very, very poor. I was slipping and falling on just about every steep trail in the Wasatch Mountains. My forearms and elbows had terrible scrapes and cuts all summer. The Altra toe boxes are nice and wide, but their funny foot shape doesn't work for those of us with long second toes. I had to wear size elevens, but even that wasn't enough to give room for that toe. I finally had to say good-bye to Altras and went back to HOKAs. Once I switched, all the slipping and falling stopped.



In 2015-16 I ran in the perfect shoe for me. The Hoka Rapa Nui II. These shoes had the stability I needed and didn't have a seam inside that caused the nasty Hoka blisters. They still were a bit narrow, but fit pretty well. Proper taping provided the protection I needed. Unfortunately Hoka discontinued my ideal shoe. These shoes would not break down fast and I could easily put 600 miles on a pair. I quickly bought enough half-price pairs to last me through much of 2016. Their replacement model (Speedgoat) is too narrow and likely won't work for me. For 2017, I will again be looking for that perfect shoe.

What about zero drop? Similar to the barefoot running craze, I think it is a passing fad, but an ingenious marketing idea. A little heel lift works best for me. Don't worry so much about millimeters of drop. Instead concentrate on good running form. Runners need to develop good technique and form before anything like a couple millimeters of drop can make any difference. Foot-strike and shoe-drop are secondary to proper pronation and activating the major running muscles correctly.

In summary, these are the factors for me in selecting shoes. 1 – Fit. Toe box room and width. 2 – Stability. I must pronate correctly. 3 – Foot protection. Max cushioning and toe protection. 4 – Grip – Good lugs and aggressive tread patterns for steep slopes. 5 – Uppers. Must drain water fast, keep out most of the dust, and not have seams to cause blisters. 6 – Weight – Shoes that are as light as possible with the required features.

My foot care involves prevention. In my early ultra years I would typically finish a 100-miler with some nasty blisters, but with better fitting shoes, tougher feet, and better prevention I started to finish without any blisters.

Before every 100-miler, I would take about 30 minutes to carefully tape my feet. The taping depended on the shoes and potential hot spots. I used Elastikon two-inch tape, and applied to: the backs of my heels, the bottom of my right heel (pronation slippage), the sides of the big toes, and the entire forefoot. With Kenesio tape (one inch), I would wrap any toes that tended to rub against each other. Currently in 2016 for some reason these are the first three toes of my right foot. I use Kenesio tape because it is smoother than Elastikon when rubbed against another toe. Finally, I would apply Butt Paste on any toes that aren't taped.

Early in my ultrarunning career I started to run in toe socks. They seemed to make sense and helped me avoid toe blisters. But the socks wore out so very fast, always getting a hole at the tip of my longer second toe. Worst of all, I eventually figured out that they spread out the toes and used up way too much room in the toe box causing lots of problems. Once I finally ditched them, my foot problems decreased quite a bit.



My socks of choice in 2015-16 were ASICS Quick Lyte Cushion Quarter Socks. For me, light socks that fit well work wonders. Cushioned, thick socks take up too much room in the shoe. If I need cushion, that should be in the shoe or the insole, not the sock.

What about wet feet? There are certain 100-milers where my feet have been wet nearly the entire time. My experience has been that wet feet, while uncomfortable and heavy, lubricate well. I would usually have to remove some of the tape on my feet as it got soggy and lost its adhesive. But I rarely came away with blisters in races with wet feet. So I wouldn't stress out about running with wet feet. They usually would just dry out fast or stay wet and work fine.

Dust in the shoes and socks can be nasty. If they stay in the shoes too long, blisters can start forming. It is worth the investment of time to quickly clean the feet, change the socks and move on. Whenever I run on trails, I run with gaiters - Dirty Girl Gaiters. I wonder why all trail runners don't use them. They save me so much time, keeping the dirt and tiny stones out of my shoes.



What about switching shoes during a race? If the shoes are working well, I leave good enough alone. For most of my races I finish in the same shoes I started with. At times, one shoe might be causing some problems and I might switch out the problem shoe. I don't feel embarrassed running in two different colored shoes.

One of the most important things to do to avoid blisters, is to stay properly hydrated. If I'm badly dehydrated, I'm at a higher risk of developing blisters. If I'm retaining fluids badly, blisters can also develop. Stay properly hydrated.

What happens when I get a blister? If it is toward the end of a race, I just grin and bear it. Otherwise, I'll stop and treat it. I'll pop them with a safety pin from my bib or with a cactus needle in the desert. Yes I know some say don't drain them. I always do, feel better quickly, and it has never resulted in infection. After draining, if I have tape, I will tape over the spot after cleaning well and run on. I've never used moleskin, the tape works better.

Keeping the feet happy is one of the most important thing to pay attention to. What are my feet like after nearly 40,000 miles of running? They are soft but tough. My big toes always have some numbness on the tips of them, but I'm used to that now and it doesn't worry me. I get calluses, but usually carefully remove them periodically. My toe nails are always rather ugly looking because they come and go. Toe nails are overrated. Thus far I've avoided any stress fractures in my feet. I think I have good feet and I try to treat them well.

Fueling on the Run



Proper fueling while running an ultra is somewhat of a religious topic. There are many things that work and nothing truly is sacred, to be successful. Some ultrarunners are vegans, and most eat meat. Some believe drinking soda is harmful, and most drink it freely during races. Some think you should drink constantly, others when you feel thirsty. Some think beer is heavenly liquid, others consider it to be unhealthy and dangerous. If you get a chance, volunteer at an aid station during a 100-miler and watch what people eat and drink from the aid station or from their drop bags. Fueling strategy can be all over the map. Figure out what works for you.

To be successful in ultrarunning you must keep in careful balance:

1. Calories
2. Fluids
3. Electrolytes

Calories

**Yeah, I have
a diet...
It's called
RUNNING!**
I ♥ TO RUN.

A big problem for me early on was to learn how to eat while running. I would lose my appetite and just stop eating. When I ran with my brother-in-law Ed, I would observe that he would eat a ton. I knew that he was doing the right thing, but it took a while to teach myself to eat during my runs. Runners who come up through the marathon ranks especially have this problem. They will typically run marathons without eating and don't understand that "hitting the wall" is most likely caused by an imbalance of either calories, fluids, or electrolytes. It is possible to run much, much, further than a marathon if you

pay attention to your fueling.

During my initial couple years of ultrarunning, a dreaded "bonk" would arrive at some point. It was a nasty sickening pit in my stomach that would greatly slow my performance. I experienced it for the first time during my first 100-mile attempt and it felt like I was dying. I soon learned to feel early signals of a bonk and would quickly take action to take in more calories and electrolytes. As I gained more experience over the years, with more careful attention to fueling, I can totally avoid "the bonk."

I subscribe to the idea that while I run, my body can only process about 300 calories an hour. More than that will eventually cause my stomach to rebel. Typically my problem is the reverse, making myself eat enough per hour to come close to 300 calories.

Early on I believed in the common notion of "carb up" the night before a race. I quickly learned that what goes in, must come out, and the older you get, the come-out step takes a long while during a race. I have not seen benefits from "carb up" the night before running a 100-miler. Transitioning to liquid carbs the day before is much more beneficial to my digestive system. Fueling consistently during a race has better results for me than "carb up" beforehand.

What to eat during a race? During my first ultramarathon, a 50K, I recall eating an apple about half way through. I quickly discovered that apples take a long time to get digested out of the stomach and can slosh around in there for hours. I now avoid anything that won't digest quickly including apples, watermelon, oranges, nuts, and any other fibrous foods. Sure, these foods can supply some good calories and taste good, but if I run with a sloshing stomach, I slow down and eventually throw up.

Several months ago, I received a message from a reader of my blog, a nutritionist who wondered how someone like me, who seemed to have such incredible health, could be consuming coke and candy during runs. She believed that coke can terribly affect your bones. My children's swim team coaches made them all abstain from any soda during their competitive season, teaching them that it would slow them down. (I would tell them that the carbonation would make them float better.) I've heard it all. But my experience and belief is that coke and other sodas are a staple for 100-mile races. They provide a good combination of fluid, calories, and carbonation to help keep things balanced and calm the stomach down. On a hot day at mile 50, nothing tastes better to me than a cold Ginger ale. During a 100-miler is no time to get ultra picky about nutrition. Your bones won't crumble during the race from drinking coke. What about candy? You will see it freely spread out on aid station tables. You need to take in quick simple carbohydrates, not go sit down and feast on a healthy green salad.

BU-URRRPP!!!



Fluids



vowed to never be so foolish with hydration again.

Back in 1996, I started to get into mountain biking and enjoyed riding on the dirt roads around my home in Tucson, Arizona. One day I foolishly went for a long ride out into the desert with just one water bottle. Miles out into the desert on a warm afternoon, I realized that I wouldn't have enough water to get back. I grasped how foolish I was. I did my best to ration my remaining water but pretty severe dehydration came. I had pain in my joints, a loss of energy, severe thirst, and rapid respiration. Thankfully I was saved by finding a full water bottle right in the middle of the road. I

vowed to never be so foolish with hydration again.

As a new runner, I was foolish and learned the hard way. I would at times run out of water and get dangerously dehydrated. During an amazing two-day adventure run in [Canyonlands National Park](#) I totally ran out of water and had to drink from little pockets in the slick rock. I eventually learned my limits. If I didn't pay careful attention to my fluid intake and became dehydrated during a 100-miler, I would usually end up running slowly for several hours until I eventually recovered. Sometimes that recovery would not come until the cooler evening. I would make this mistake over and over again, but eventually I learned my lesson well and took better steps to avoid dehydration. I now carefully plan how many water bottles I need to bring with me on runs.

I also learned that I could train my body to better react to mild dehydration. Putting the body through some dehydration stress allows it to adapt. I'll do many morning training runs where I drink very little. I've discovered that now, when I do long adventure runs, I require fewer water bottles. If I get somewhat dehydrated, it no longer affects me as poorly as it used to. If I run out of water, I now can still run pretty well for quite a while to get to the next water source. However, races are not the time to cut back on fluids. Once I was running with my brother in a 100-mile race and after six miles or so, I noticed that he wasn't carrying any fluids. His response was that he never started his training runs and with water. A 100-mile race is no time to cut back on fluids because of the increased pace and very long distance. You must keep things in balance right from the start or later on you will suffer.

Don't try to over-hydrate before a race. You will regret it. It usually harms more than helps. I drink normally during the previous day and race-day morning. How much should you drink during the race? I like to drink regularly, sipping from my bottle, but not with excess like some people subscribe to. Thirst helps you make a good determination and you can



monitor things by your output frequency and color.

I learned early on that if I used a camelback during a race, I tended to avoid drinking as much as I should, simply because it took effort to suck to fluid and it interrupted my breathing. Squirting from a handheld bottle solved my problem. It didn't take me long at all to get used to running with handheld bottles. I could also run much faster without something on my back.

To cool yourself in hot weather, is it better to put the water in you, or cool yourself with it on your body? In two different races I ran in 2015, one race director claimed it was bad to drink ice water to cool you down. Another race director said there is very little value to cool your skin with water, drink it instead. For me, the truth is: Do both. A popsicle during a hot race can greatly improve my core temperature and I can revive very quickly. Also, keeping my head and back of the neck cool with water, dramatically improves my ability to run in the heat. But proper hydration must be done in all cases.

Electrolytes

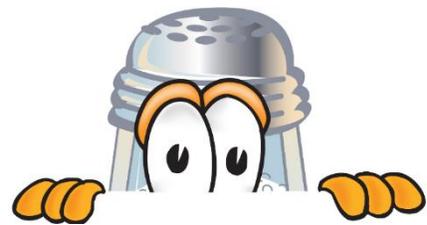


Recently in 2016, some articles were circulating around runner social media that the need for increased salt intake during long endurance events is a myth. The rationale is some theoretical mumbo-jumbo being tossed around by those without true ultrarunning experience. They sound to me like those people who believe that the moon landing was a hoax.

I learned very early on about the terrible dangers of not replacing electrolytes. In 2004, during a hot June, I ran the length of [Paria Canyon](#) with friends and family. I drank mostly straight water during the last 20 miles in the open desert as the temperature approached 100 degrees. When we finished, I just could not understand why I felt so ill. Nothing seemed to help pull me out of it including dipping in cool water and lying in the shade. I eventually threw up violently. I didn't start feeling better until I started taking back in electrolytes.

I quickly learned about replacing electrolytes during long runs. What works for one person might not work for another. We are all different. But for most people, an electrolyte drink just won't be enough. I became introduced to supplements such as Succeed! Caps. Things really improved for me as I learned to take in the right amount of salt for me. It was a game of trial and error, plenty of practice and experience. One trick I used in the early years was to bite into one of the caplets. If it tasted wonderful, I knew I truly needed it. This helped me figure out just how often I should take the supplements.

One summer when I was running across the rugged Highline Trail in the High Uintas, I came across a father and son coming back down from Kings Peak, the highest peak in Utah. The son was in distress, continually throwing up, and the afternoon was warm. I questioned the father about his son's intake. Sure enough, they had only been drinking water and not eating salty foods. I gave them a quick speech about electrolytes and gave them some Succeed! Caps. I'm confident that they later felt better and made it back to their camp.



As the race director of Pony Express Trail 50 and 100, I warn runners every year about electrolyte intake. Since this is a crewed race, it should be pretty easy to have what you need to fuel. In 2015 after two runners finished, they both went through difficult recovery, nearly passing out and going through a bonk. As I queried each, it became pretty apparent that both had not been taking in enough electrolytes. I helped both, gave them both supplements, and within an hour they pulled out of it.

For me, the first signal that I am low in salt is nausea or an acid stomach. I recall in 2006 when I ran my [first Wasatch 100](#), that my stomach was very ill and I refused to take in more salt, somehow

convinced that salt was causing my problem. It was just the opposite. Hours later when I started suck on some salty jerky, I instantly started to feel better. I would say 80% of the time, I can solve nausea by simply taking in a couple S-caps.

It took me awhile to learn about fluid retention. After many of my 100s I discovered that I had actually gained several pounds and for the next day or two my body would dump an amazing amount of fluid. For me, typically fluid retention will start occurring during the second half of a 100-miler, during the cool night. For me, through experience I have learned that the cause usually is because I have not been taking in enough salt, but continue to drink plenty. If the fluid retention continues, it can drastically impact my performance, contribute to a nauseous stomach, and cause blisters to appear on the feet. The body needs to dump the fluid, but for some reason holds on. My solution usually is to shift to straight water, only sipping now and then unless I feel thirsty. Also, I will take in more S-caps. Usually within a couple hours my body will start eliminating the excess fluid.

I can monitor this by looking at my hands. If my veins are popping out, I'm dehydrated. If my hands are swollen, I'm retaining fluid. During a 100-miler I can observe swings back and forth. I know that serious fluid retention can be hyponatremia, when my sodium level gets dangerously diluted in the blood. I take that seriously and pay careful attention to my electrolytes intake even during a cold night.



Rookie runners think the solution to electrolyte replacement is taking in electrolyte drinks such as Gatorade, GU2O, etc. But if you are retaining fluids, the last thing you need is more fluids. For most runners these drinks don't have enough electrolytes for ultra-distances. I'm a believer in the electrolyte supplement capsule. All of these capsules are not created equal. Learn and know how many per hour of each brand that you should take.

Another signal to me that I may be depleting my electrolytes is cramping. If I am managing my electrolyte balance well, the cramping usually never comes. If it does, quite often I can diffuse the cramping by quickly taking in extra electrolytes.

My Fueling

I'm pretty simple when it comes to what I take in during a race or long adventure run. I go with what seems to work and am not into trying to get sponsored by various products. What I eat and drank has evolved.

For a 50-mile race or the first 50-miles of a 100, I will generally consume mostly liquids. Diluted Ensure for a drink, and gels for calories work well for me. Hammer's Heed also works well for my stomach. On adventure runs I might even take Instant Breakfast packets and add that to water. I cannot tolerate Gatorade. I will also generally run with some candy in my pockets. I like peanut butter M&Ms (don't melt quickly) and soft sour Jolly Ranchers.



After about 50 miles, typically my stomach has had enough of the Ensure and probably also enough of the gels. I have to mix things up. Switching to something like Heed can work. Eating candy instead of gels can also get me the calories I need. Recently I've discovered that baby food packets can be great, pudding, yogurt, strained fruit can all be great and can be downed in seconds.

At the aid stations I will drink Coke or Gingerale. I also may quickly eat a PB&J sandwich or bean rollup. Boiled potatoes dipped in salt are always great. I also can't pass up an Oreo. Matt Watts introduced me to taking burritos with me on adventure runs. I may also have one in my drop bags during races. At night soup works, chicken broth or potato soup. I avoid noddles. Those just sit in the stomach too long. A greasy grilled cheese sandwich or cheese quesadillas during the night can be heavenly. Hot chocolate when it is cold and calories are needed, can really perk me up. When the stomach goes south, at times some nice greasy bacon can kick start it again. If the greasy, salty food is what



I crave, I know I'm doing poorly on my electrolytes.



Puking happens. Some runners boast that they never barf. I think they are missing an important technique that is needed at times. Sometimes the stomach just won't process anything and you know that you are stuck. Yes, you can plod along slowly until things eventually improve, or you can empty things out and start over again. If you are truly skilled, you can puke without breaking stride. I can. I then have to treat the stomach very carefully, like a baby. I start slow, drinking straight water. Calorie input much be careful. Electrolyte input is likely a must. Generally things will start improving to let me run fast again and eat more.

Recovery

I don't use any fancy recovery drinks when I finish a race. Perhaps some work. I usually finish running pretty hard and don't eat well during the last hour or so in a race. Eating quickly when I finish is really important to avoid a bonk. I'll take a couple S-caps, drink an Ensure, and hopefully get a chance to eat a burger and fries. Cold orange juice for some reason hits to spot.

In the couple days after running a hard 100, I usually lose my appetite and my taste buds act funny. Not much tastes good. I can't tolerate sour drinks or sodas. Salty foods generally work, but I just can't eat a lot for a couple days until my systems all recovery. Fluid retention goes down eventually and within three days I've generally bounced back.

Fueling is so important. If I have a poor race, the cause about 75% of the time is poor fueling. All the training investment put in can go out the window if you don't fuel well during a race. Reminders work for some. I ran with one runner who had a timer go off on his watch every hour to remind him to take in electrolytes and food. You need to fuel well. What works is different for every runner. It takes experimentation during training runs (not races). Find out what works and then stick with it.



Peak Bagging



Ultrarunners in the Mountain West likely also become peak baggers. Those peaks stand high above and call runners who are fit enough to run and climb their slopes to the top. Climbing to the tops of peaks never really was an interest to me in my earlier years. I would get up to the top of peaks by car or ski lift, but never under my own power. As a child I used to climb up “Y mountain” in Utah to the Y on the mountain slope. One day I went up as far as I could toward the top, but was stopped by difficult cliffs. Peak bagging for me came decades later.

I believe the first peaks I bagged were the two highest peaks in Utah, Kings Peak and Gilbert Peak, in 1996 with my backpacking buddies. This was the second year that I went backpacking with this group and tried to be much more prepared than the previous year when I suffered hiking more than 40 miles with them. That year I bought some heavy, water-proof boots to protect my feet. But after just two miles, I had to stop because blisters were already forming. Those boots would tear apart my feet for the entire trip and I did my best to continually duct tape my feet. I was such an outdoor rookie at that time. On the second day of our trip we summited Gilbert Peak, the #2 peak in Utah and I was introduced to boulder hopping and false summits for the first time.



Camped at Dollar Lake the day before climbing Kings Peak



On the third day we summited Kings Peak and

my boulder hopping skills greatly increased as I went straight up to the top of the peak and straight down instead of using the established routes. I survived that trip and looked forward to future peak bagging. A couple years later I returned and bagged Kings Peak again with my brother and our sons. That year we were eaten alive by mosquitos at Henrys Lake.

My backpacking trips would lead me to bag other peaks in Idaho, Wyoming, Oregon, and Utah. My buddies seemed a bit overly excited to bag peaks on our trips. I struggled to the tops with them. On my own I would climb Gobbler’s Knob high above our family cabin in Utah and started to feel a sense of accomplishment pushing to the top of peaks.

My fascination for Kings Peak continued. In 2003, I read a newspaper article about two guys, Craig Lloyd and Scott Wesemann who climbed the three highest peaks in Utah (Kings Peak, South Kings Peak, and Gilbert Peak) in one day from a base camp at Dollar Lake. They called their accomplishment the “Utah Triple Crown.” After reading the article and discussing it with my brother-in-law Ed, I mentioned that they had “done it wrong.” I believed a proper “triple crown” needed to be accomplished from a trailhead, not from a base camp. We believed that we could do it and a few weeks later we attempted it, but aborted because of overnight snow. We did reach the top of Kings Peak and returned to the trailhead in one day.

My Path to Ultrarunning – Davy Crockett

Five years later, now an experienced ultrarunner, on my 50th birthday, August 1, 2008, I would become the first person to accomplish a proper [Utah Triple Crown](#) from the Henry's Fork trailhead and I did it solo. By evening I was back home eating birthday cake. In the years to come many other ultrarunners would follow in my footsteps running up all three mountains in one day. Many would do it faster but few, if any, did it solo like I did that first time.



On top of Gilbert Peak

A year earlier, I took my peak bagging to truly new heights. I had planned on doing the first Utah Triple Crown that year but decided that I would do something tougher, the four highest peaks in Utah. To bag the fourth highest peak (Emmons Peak) would require a very long boulder hop across the highest continuous ridge in the United States outside of Colorado, Kings-Emmons Ridge. Descriptions tell hikers that it will take them 4-6 days to do a round-trip of hiking the ridge. Four-to-six days? How about one day? I could do it.

This turned out to be the most dangerous solo adventure I ever ran. It is so remote with no one else up on that high ridge that involves boulder hopping for more than five miles. It required careful skill on moving boulders to avoid injury. I fell hard one time, hit my chin and nearly knocked myself out with no one around for miles. I'll never try this again solo, but I did it! I was the first person to travel the [Kings-Emmons Ridge in one day](#) from a trailhead. Along the way I summited seven 13-ers. I ended up not summiting the top four peaks in Utah in one day because I ran out of time and determination to bag Gilbert Peak on the way back.



In 2002 I [started climbing to the top of Mount Timpanogos](#) in Utah for the first time. For more than 100 years, Mount Timpanogos (11,749 feet) has been the most popular hiking destination in Utah. Timpanogos towers over the valley floors below by more than 7,000 feet – an impressive sight that draws hikers of all ages to its trails. After my first summit, I decided that I disliked the last mile to the true summit and I started to only hike to the saddle overlooking Utah County below. But in 2005 as I started to run up Timpanogos with Phil Lowry I concluded that the only proper way to hike the mountain was to reach the true summit. I thought I had climbed the mountain 14 times, but in reality only twice. To bag a peak, you must reach the true summit. By 2015 I had bagged that peak 80 times.

As ultrarunners bag peaks, they will often try for fastest known times going up and down a mountain. Since I can no longer compete with younger runners sprinting up mountains, I instead gravitate toward the longer endurance feats. How many times in a day can a peak be bagged? As of 2016 I share the record for [six consecutive Timpanogos summits](#) and [two consecutive Kings Peak summits](#). I've accomplished the

double Kings Peak three different times. Each time I was going after a triple Kings Peak [but came up short](#).

By 2014 I had bagged Kings Peak 14 times from the Henry Fork trailhead. I knew the trail too well and wanted to get to the top of the mountain from a different way. No one had ever climbed [Kings Peak in a day from a trailhead from the south](#). Starting from the Swift Creek trailhead, this route is a 41-mile round trip with 6,580 feet of climbing instead of 26 miles and 4,300 feet of climbing. I battled rain and snow but still made it to the top and back in about 15.5 hours for an amazing adventure.



View of Kings Peak from Anderson Pass on my 2014 adventure

For me bagging peaks is just a side-hobby of ultrarunning. I don't carefully seek to bag a list of peaks like the serious peak baggers. For me, they are there and seem like a good place to go for a training run. When considering what a peak is, you have to understand "prominence." If you don't, every bump on a ridge could be considered as a new peak. The prominence of a peak is the height of the peak's summit above the lowest contour line that encircles it without also encircling a higher summit. For me, I like to consider peaks that have at least a 300-foot prominence.

In 2013 I took Wasatch peak bagging to new heights. I considered whether the top six peaks in the [Wasatch Range could be summited in one day](#). I had one failed attempt, but on the second one I did it, or thought I did. With a closer look at the peak statistics, the list I was using had an error. Bomber Peak on the Timpanogos ridge didn't quite pass my 300-foot prominence rule and thus isn't a separate peak by that rule. But I did summit it along with the top five highest Wasatch peaks, Mount Nebo, Mount Timpanogos, South Timpanogos, American Fork West Twin, and North Timpanogos. The adventure included about two hours of drive time between the trailheads, 40 miles of running, and climbing about 18,000 feet. My total time start, to finish including driving was 21:33.



In 2014, I tried something even harder. I attempted to climb the [eight highest peaks in Utah County in one push](#).

- Mount Nebo 11,928
- Mount Timpanogos 11,750
- South Timpanogos 11,722
- North Timpanogos 11,441
- North Peak ("North Nebo") 11,174
- Box Elder Peak 11,101
- Provo Peak 11,068
- East Peak ("East Provo") 11,040





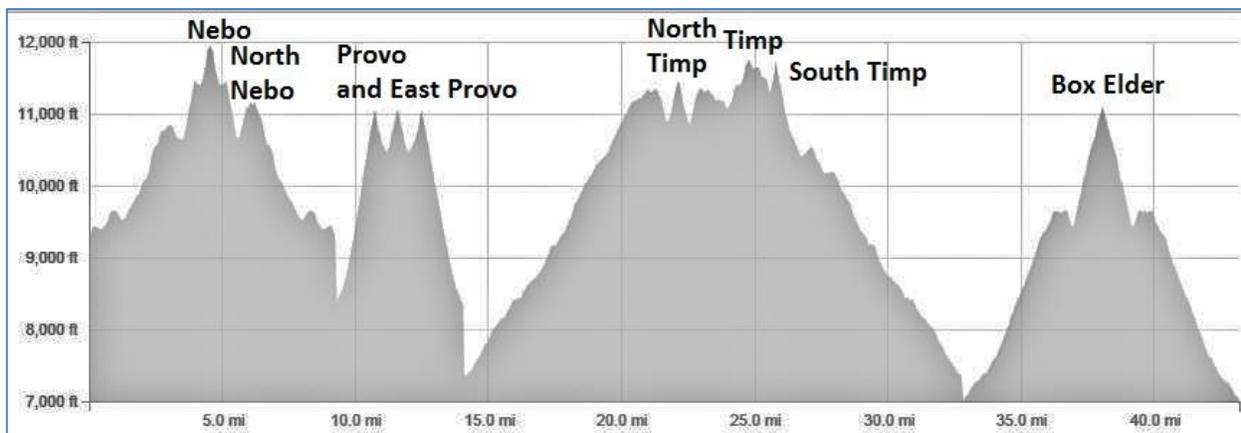
This would involve about 22,000 feet of climbing in about 50 miles using four trailheads. My adventure started out well. I bagged Mount Nebo and North Nebo in the early morning returning to my car after a four-hour round trip. I then drove up the Squaw Peak road toward the trailhead for Provo Peak. Since I was using a 2wd car, I stopped four miles short of the trailhead putting in some extra miles. I had never climbed Provo Peak and it was pretty steep and hard but I made it.

The trip over to East Provo Peak was very hard and scary. I ended up on very steep scree slopes and it took me 5.5 hours to do both peaks. I was pretty beat up with many wounds from falls, but I continued on to Mount Timpanogos. During the night I successfully summited the toughest peak on the ridge, North Timpanogos. The “trail” was much rougher than the year before and really wore me out. By time I returned to the saddle below the main summit, I had lost my energy and determination, deciding to quit and return another day.

A year later, [in 2015, I returned](#), very determined to finish this time. Using all the experience from the past year, I made careful plans to compress the time it would take. I planned to do the most difficult sections during daylight. All went well. The trip to East Provo Peak and back was again very difficult and slow. I vowed that I would never again bag that peak. For the Timpanogos peaks, I was joined by Kendall Wimmer and Matthew Van Horn and had great fun with them. With my past year’s experience, I was more than five hours ahead of my previous time.



We finished the Timp portion and I returned to my car at 1:25 a.m. There was just one more peak to climb, Box Elder. The trip up and down was very slow, and not very fun, but my determination pushed me through and I finished at 9:28 a.m. with a total time of 30:48 for all eight peaks. I had accomplished my goal! I had summited the eight highest peaks in Utah County. My GPS recorded 43.1 miles and about 20,000 feet of climbing. Excluding my car travel time, I ran for about 25.5 hours.



My Path to Ultrarunning – Davy Crockett

Since I'm not very serious about peak bagging, my list is small, but each adventure is very memorable. Here are the Utah peaks that I have bagged that are over 10,000 feet.

Peaks in Utah	Height	Summits
Kings Peak	13,528	15
South Kings Peak	13,512	2
Gilbert Peak	13,442	2
Mount Emmons	13,440	1
Painter Peak	13,387	1
Roberts Peak	13,287	1
Gunsight Peak	13,263	1
Trail Rider Peak	13,247	1
Mount Lovenia	13,219	1
Mount Waas	12,331	1
Manns Peak	12,272	1
Mount Nebo	11,928	5
Mount Timpanogos	11,750	80
South Timpanogos	11,722	2
American Fork Twin	11,489	1
North Timpanogos	11,441	4
Lone Peak	11,253	1
North Nebo	11,174	2
Box Elder Peak	11,101	2
Provo Peak	11,068	2
East Provo Peak	11,044	2
Deseret Peak	11,031	1
Clayton Peak	10,721	1
Gobblers Knob	10,246	2
Mount Raymond	10,241	1
Scott Hill	10,116	4

Winter Training



The temperature drops, frost falls, leaves cover the ground and the snow begins capping the mountain peaks above. When I started running in 2004, it seemed like all the runners I knew would stop doing serious training for the winter months, taking a break. I had increased my fitness level and feared the impacts of stopping, going back to a sedentary life, so I just kept running and training year-round. But living in the Mountain West required me to change my approach for the winter months.

As the trails filled with snow, and with occasional snow in the valleys, I discovered a wonderful experience running in the valleys. I would seek creative ways to keep my motivation up and explore new areas to run. One of my most favorite times to run during the year is in the early morning as a fresh new snow is falling with an inch or two on the ground. Everything is quiet. The running surface is soft and fast. All is white, with a distinct difference from our colorful, loud attention-grabbing world. Winter running is wonderful with a remarkable cold, but unique experience to discover.



For winters, I shift away from concentrating on getting vertical training and instead concentrate on flatter miles. This shift usually happens for me at the beginning of October and gets me ready for flatter races such as Pony Express Trail 100, Javelina Jundred, Across the Years, and Rocky Raccoon 100. During the winter my mileage actually increases and I have accomplished my highest mileage months in the winter, at times above 400 miles. My average monthly miles for the past eight years for Novembers has been 296 miles and for December, 320 miles.

Clothing

Dressing warmly in the cold weather is critical to stay healthy and avoid injury. On year some young local runners tried to see how long they could run in the winter months in shorts and summer clothes. I considered that act foolish youthfulfulness and reckless. I believe when those runners become older, they will value more protecting their health and their legs. At my age (57 at the time of this writing), I clearly notice the effects of cold temperatures on my body, shifting blood away from digestion and respiration in attempts to keep the body warmer.



During the winter of 2015-16, groups of runners in Utah moved their winter running up to the snowy peaks to continue challenging each other and to post more and more eye-popping photos and videos on social media. As more and more naïve runners braved the elements without proper clothing, injuries resulted. As 2016 winter descended, several respected runners admitted that they experienced serious frostbite the previous winter. Still, even with a good discussion on social media about the dangers for taking winter precautions, several runners posted mocking comments in response to those promoting caution.

I have a set of dressing strategies depending on the temperature, 30s, 20s, and teens. I rarely go out and run in single digits or less for a couple reason. 1. The danger of getting sickness after being exposed to those frigid temperatures for long periods of time. 2. In Utah such frigid temperatures are usually caused by temperature inversions which brings with it trapped unhealthy air. But I do enjoy winter runs a bit warmer.

If temperatures are above freezing, I may or may not run in shorts. For the past ten years I've used a nice cycling jacket that keeps me warm down to about 25 degrees. The extra pockets are nice to carry gloves, hat etc. For the lower 20s, another layer is used, perhaps a fleece vest. For the legs, I'll just use some cheap tights – anything seems to work fine, even synthetic long john bottoms. For gloves, in the 30s, I use some light running gloves, but if it gets colder I might break out fleece hobo mittens. If even colder, I'll insert hand warmers. For the head, it will be a light synthetic hat down into the 20s and then a warmer ski hat. A fleece sleeve for the neck and chin works as it gets very cold. As it gets down into the single digits, I might even pull out some ski goggles. With the right running clothes, you can still run for hours out in the cold. Overdressing is a very common problem. You need to find the right balance of clothes to stay warm and minimize the sweating. It is no fun to find yourself far away from home sweaty, tired and cold.



What shoes are used and what about spikes? This is a common question, but the answer is simple. I just use trail shoes with good lugs for traction. Early in my running career, I would try to use Yak-Traks but found that they broke easily, fell off often, and really didn't help much at all. Later as microspikes became available, I bought a pair of those. But when all is said in done, with the thousands of miles that I have run during the winter, I've probably only used the spikes for less than ten miles total. They really are not that helpful unless the surface is icy and slippery. If the surface is packed snow, trail shoes work great, even blasting down steep slopes.



For fluids I usually still use hand-held water bottles. I might start with hot water or warm Ensure, but eventually that might turn into slush or ice. Certain water bottles perform better in the freezing temperatures. I prefer the Ultimate Direction bottles with nipples. The cheap plastic pull-up nipples on other bottle can freeze very quickly. At times I will use bladders, but care must be taken to make sure the hose is tucked in beneath the jacket. Otherwise it will freeze very quickly.



What about snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, or winter peak bagging? It's not for me. Believe it or not, I am not that adventuresome when it comes to the back-country in winter. I choose to stay on packed roads and away from any danger of avalanche or steep trails.

Where to Run

My winter running consists of various types: Dirt roads, Snow packed roads, some pavement, treadmills, frozen lakes and southern warm canyon runs.

Once the snow flies, all you need to do is find snow-pack routes from ATVs or snow mobiles. Running such surfaces can be great fun. Lake Mountain behind my home is a perfect example. Heading up to the top of the mountain is a dirt road that gets daily 4WD traffic, even in the winter. With several inches of packed snow, the rough rocks are covered and a fast running surface results. Running up to the top may be a bit slower than during the summer, but blasting down the soft snowy surface can be much faster, crazy fun, and easy on the legs. Similar mountain roads exist all over and are just waiting to be run.



Group run up Lake Mountain. Me on far left



Along the Jordan River Parkway trail

Canal roads are another great winter surface. Near my home are more than a dozen canals that extend from the Jordan Narrows both north and south. Along each canal is a maintenance road. Closer to the cities, these roads can be fenced off but in more rural portions they typically are used without complaint. Because they are very flat, they make great winter runs. The Bonneville Shoreline trail at the foot of the Wasatch Range is another popular choice for winter runs. And for pavement fans, there are miles and miles of running on the Jordan River Parkway (just watch out for ice).

The trails and dirt roads can become muddy at times. I'm not a fan of mud running, so during those times, I'll find some creative ways to run some big miles on the pavement, using convenient stores along the way as my aid stations. One day I started at Utah Lake and ran the entire stretch of the Provo River Parkway (paved trail) to Vivian Park in Provo Canyon and back. I had never run the entire stretch of the trail and it turned out to be a very fun cold weather run both through the city and up in the canyon.

Another day, I attempted to run 97 miles, all the way around the Sanpitch Mountains that lie about an hour south of my home. I started at a little town called Levan, about 12 miles south of Nephi, at 1 a.m. Through the night I ran 30 miles straight south on a rural highway. It was terribly cold in patches, well into the teens. I nearly turned back several times, and my water bottles eventually froze, but soon morning came and I ate breakfast at a food mart. My run continued around the mountains but I ultimately stopped short of the finish when my knee became sore from the pavement at about mile 65. But this had been an amazing cold-weather run that keep my enthusiasm up to keep training. [Watch my video of this adventure.](#)



Sanpitch Mountains

For another Loopy cold weather training run, I ran all the way around the southern Oquirrh Mountains in Utah, about 100K, which consisted of about half pavement and the rest dirt road. Watch my video of this adventure.

A great place to run during the winter is the west desert in Utah, close enough to home but lacking deep snow. I discovered the peace and beauty of the Pony Express Trail one winter by just running west out my back door and continuing as far as I could that day.

A favorite event during the winter is the Salt Lake Running Club Winter Series held at historic Saltair on the shore of Great Salt Lake. This series of 5K, 10K, and 15K races are held two weeks apart on the frontage road along the lake shore and for me has been some great winter speed work and competitive running.



Running the Pony Express Trail in December



As the mornings become frigid and stormy it becomes impractical to go out. The treadmill, while dreaded, becomes a valuable method of training to get through the cold months. In my chapter on Treadmill training I explained how train with treadmills and find some creative ways to motivate me. I had some friends who train year-round at my local housing development community center. I make my appearance in November and depart for good around April. My buddies give me lots of grief in November kidding with me that I've been a slacker and haven't been training since they last saw me in April. I then chew them out for doing indoor training all year. We laugh and then make the room stinky from our sweat. In 2015 I bought my own incline treadmill and now no longer frequent the clubhouse. It has been a very good investment and I have more motivation to get in a quick workout.

I suppose the most fame I have about the winter running is because of my runs across the ice on frozen Utah Lake during the winters. The idea came to me in 2007 as I noticed some duck hunters way out on the icy lake surface. In Utah we get some long stretches of high pressure winter inversions that trap the cold air down in the valleys. The temperature can be below freezing for several weeks in a row, causing the lakes to freeze. Overnight the ice fog drops crystals on the ice plate which results in an amazing running surface. See my chapter about running on frozen Utah Lake including many pictures and videos. Typically the lake will freeze solid enough to run by late January. Some years it never freezes safe enough to run.



Eventually the short gloomy winter days start getting to me and I long for spring to arrive. Why wait when just 4-5 hours to the south are amazing warm desert trails to run in the winter? Each winter I'll make a couple trips to the south to experience the joy of the red deserts running routes that would typically be much too hot to run during the summers.

My Path to Ultrarunning – Davy Crockett

In another chapter I covered my love of running in Capitol Reef National Park, a great place to run in the winter. I've also enjoyed running in Canyonlands and in the lowlands near Zion National Park. Venturing to the canyons near the four-corner region in Southeastern Utah can be an amazing winter running playground. One year I had great fun running a giant loop in Grand Gulch.

Why stop running during the winter months? Don't. Instead discover new paths and trails to run.



Toughest Running Moments



During my nearly 40,000 miles of running between 2004-2016 there have been some very tough moments. Much of these rough miles were self-induced, caused by being ill-prepared. Other times were just due to unexpected events during races and adventures. Tough times are part of the sport and hit us all. The key is knowing how to overcome tough spots and working through the challenges to run another day. This collection of short stories are some of the hard moments I ran into on the trails.

2009 Bighorn 100

It was June 20, 2009 in the Bighorn Mountains in Wyoming. During a chilly night I was slogging through marshes at about mile 55 in the Bighorn Mountains. I was in terrible pain. I was seeking for my 24th 100-mile finish and my 4th Bighorn 100 finish. But I had decided to quit. I couldn't understand why my feet were in such terrible pain. (Much later I would figure out that the shoes I was wearing were sized way too small.) I needed to stop that pain. My decision was firm, but I was still eleven miles away from a viable dropping-out point. So I continued slowly. This wasn't fun. Friends caught up to me, gave me comforting words, asked if they could help, and then went on.

At mile 60, I took some Advil and soon the swelling went down. I felt much better and started to run fast again. I began to have an internal debate in my mind whether to change my mind about quitting. Well, this better feeling only lasted a half hour. The swelling increased again and I slowed back down and continued to plod along. I shouted out loud, "Why do I do this to myself?"

I finally reached the Footbridge aid station at mile 66. It had taken me nearly seven hours to cover that past 18 miles. Morning had arrived and I told the volunteers that I would "probably" be dropping out. Why did I say "probably?" They brought me my drop bag and I just sat down with it and slowly ate. I watched runners who were behind me arrive. They all looked tired, but still had a determined look in their eyes as they went about their tasks. I watched them carefully and finally something triggered in my mind. Perhaps it wasn't over. I slowly started to work on my feet. I changed into different shoes that fit much better. I had 34 miles to go and still had 13 hours to go. "It's possible," I told myself. I said to the volunteers, "I'm going to try to go on, but I'll probably be back."

I didn't return, but within ten miles I again decided firmly to quit. But at the next aid station (mile 77), the captain wisely said, "Why don't you sit and eat for a few minutes and then decide." After eating some greasy bacon my energy and determination returned. With about eight miles to go an aid station volunteer said, "I have seen at least a couple runners who have looked worse than you." I did finish in 33:21, one my slowest 100-mile finishes ever, but I did finish. What I learned from this experience fueled me to finish the next 30 100-milers in a row without a DNF.

2003 Highline Trail

Dusk arrived as I watched the terrible snowstorm finally hit me. Now I was in deep trouble at about 12,200 feet, on North Pole Pass in the Uinta Mountains of Utah. I was still a rookie endurance hiker who had not even heard about ultrarunning yet. I foolishly thought I could fast-pack the rugged 60-mile

Highline Trail solo end-to-end in about 30 hours. Those 30 hours had come and gone and I was now just about seven miles from my starting point and in big trouble.

I had made mistake after mistake. Things went well in the beginning, a day earlier starting from Chepeta Lake to the east. By dusk I had traveled westward nearly 30 miles to Yellowstone Basin. But then my cheap headlamp went dim. I searched for replacement batteries but found none. For several hours I would switch the light on and off, trying to cross the basin by moonlight. But then the moon went down. I had waypoints in my GPS, but they were each one mile apart and I continually lost the trail. My travel pace slowed to one mile per hour. Finally I had to stop for the night. At least I was smart enough to have a tent and a sleeping bag. At first light after very little sleep I decided to turn back and return to my car at Chepta Lake. I suffered all afternoon in a four-hour downpour of rain that drenched me to the skin. My GPS stopped working and I wasted an hour going up a wrong pass. I figured out my mistake, back-tracked but knew it would be impossible to get out of these mountains by dark. I pushed as hard as I could but then the weather turned really bad.

On North Pole Pass, the wind was now ferocious and the snow stung against my face. My wife expected me home tonight. I had no cell coverage, no working flashlight, no working GPS, cold and wet, and now I again kept losing the trail. I stumbled down the switchbacks on the east side of the pass and it became darker and darker. I lost the trail and finally understood that I would be spending another night in the Uintas. Through the snow and wind, I could just make out a giant rock. I scrambled to the wind-protected side of the rock, roughly set up my tent and got out of my wet clothes. Restless sleep finally arrived as I contemplated all the mistakes I made to get into this predicament. Morning came bringing brilliant sunshine and rising mists as the mountain terrain dried out. I arrived back safely and had many new lessons to contemplate.



North Pole Pass on a better day

2006 Grand Canyon R2R2R2R2R (quad) crossing

The rain was stopping and the skies clearing as dusk approached. With the light decreasing, my eyes started to do funny things. Perhaps the sleep deprivation contributed, here on my [fourth consecutive crossing of the Grand Canyon](#). I started to see all sorts of objects in the canyon. First I swore I saw a water tank ahead near the trail. I had never remembered seeing one there before. When I got closer, it was just a big rock. Next I saw a large building with windows. It looked like a pumping station. Again as I got closer, it turned out to be a massive rock with some water stains on it the shape of windows. I thought I saw hikers ahead. Those turned out to be rocks too. It was driving me crazy. Finally I just averted my eyes to the trail so I wouldn't go batty.

This was one of the toughest moments of my running career. I had decided to run 100 miles in the canyon by running four consecutive crossings and adding miles along the way on the rim and the Tonto Trail. The adventure was grueling. I was now faced with the final massive climb up to the North Rim. The last seven miles climbed 4,200 feet for a total of about 22,000 during my adventure.

It was now a death march. I concentrated on just keeping up a steady pace. I wasn't going very fast, but I kept on moving. This was the first time during a run that I had faced a second night. I was very anxious to finish. With two miles to go a cold and steady rain fell. I noticed that I was starting to lean to the left over and over again. I stayed to the right of the trail so I wouldn't fall over a cliff into the canyon. As the rain fell, I noticed several times little mice that would run ahead of me on the trail. I was so tired that it fascinated me to chase them. My mind was turning into mush.



A beaver I ran into during the night on my second crossing

Finally I reached the last switchback. I let out a cheer. I was almost there. I podded on, up and up and then stumbled out into the parking lot, making my way to my car at about 10:30 p.m. I had finished! One of only five people to have accomplished a R2R2R2R2R2R. Twice I have returned to try to duplicate this feat, and twice I have left only doing an R2R2R.

2012 Rocky Raccoon

No doubt, something was seriously wrong with my right leg/knee. But all I had left was 10 miles to finish my 5th Rocky Raccoon 100 and earn that coveted 500-mile jacket. I was now using my trekking poles like crutches. Running was impossible. Morning had arrived. I had hoped to break 20 hours this year, but that mark had passed five hours ago. I sat down on a stump and the terrible pain calmed down. I had never experienced such pain before during a race. I had promised myself that I would stop if my knee started to swell up and now it was starting to swell. Good friend Matt Watts finally caught up to me, joked with me and told me how bad I looked. I explained my problem, but I was still determined to go on and he wished me well.



Competitor	Laps	Mi	KM	Last Lap
Davy Crockett	96	100.80	162.222	00:16:17
Rainer Satzinger	58	60.90	98.009	00:19:34
Randall Tolosa	44	46.20	74.352	00:51:05
Ed Ettinghausen	93	97.65	157.152	00:17:04
Valdis Aistars	41	43.05	69.282	00:18:58
Chisholm Deup...	55	57.75	92.940	00:27:08
Juli Aistars	72	75.60	121.666	00:18:25
Tom Pelsor	59	61.95	99.699	00:16:25
Robin Saenz	84	88.20	141.944	00:17:19
Miles Krier	84	88.20	141.944	00:17:19
Carl Hunt	45	47.25	76.042	00:18:47
Max Welker	57	59.85	96.319	00:15:19
Tom Jackson	85	89.25	143.634	00:16:05

Leader board when I reached 100 miles

About six weeks earlier at about mile 130 of Across the Years, in the 48-hour race I felt confusing pain in that leg. I was trying to defend my championship of the year before when I had covered 187 miles for the win. I had been cruising well with about an eleven-mile lead on my closest competitor, good buddy Tom Jackson. Now my race was crumbling. Something was wrong and I couldn't figure it out. I thought it was just a muscle pull in the leg. The heat of the afternoon also started to slam me. Eventually I needed to take some long rests.

At mile 150 during the second evening, Tom caught up to me and we ran a couple miles together on the one-mile loop. I knew my win was gone so I stopped for a long 4.5-hour rest. Late that night I returned to the course and Tom was off sleeping somewhere. Could I catch up? The leg felt better and I was running fast again. But eventually I saw Tom ahead. I was at 157 miles and he was at 172. It would be impossible for me to catch him. I ran for a while together but then the leg hurt again and I slowed. I would block out the bad pain and finish strongly in second place with 174 miles. But later that day at the airport I could barely put weight on my leg for more than 100 feet.

For the next six weeks I rested and the odd leg pain decreased. I decided that I would wait to go get it checked out until after running Rocky Raccoon 100. A week before the race I felt very little pain but during the first mile of the race it returned. Progressively the pain became worse. Soon I could only manage a 10-minute pace, and later only a 12-minute pace. By mile 60, I took out the trekking poles. By mile 90 I knew something was seriously wrong but I limped on and eventually finished in 28:23, my slowest Rocky Raccoon ever. That was the most painful run I had ever experienced. But I earned that 500-mile jacket! At the airport I couldn't walk this time and checked my pride at the door. Someone offered me a wheel chair and I accepted.

For the next two months, doctors fumbled around with poking, prodding, x-rays, and even an MRI. They thought it was just a soft tissue over-use injury. But I wasn't getting better and was even on crutches for a couple weeks. Finally I convinced my orthopedic surgeon that I probably had a stress fracture and that the MRI had not looked low enough. He pulled out the image, looked closer and agreed. A bone scan showed the true story. I had a massive stress fracture across my tibia that went through front and back, a few inches below my knee. It probably started during Across the Years, and then during Rocky Raccoon, it continued to fracture more and more throughout the race. It was a long healing process, but six months later, I finished Cascade Crest 100. That was a tough running moment, running 100 miles on a broken leg.

July 4, 2014 – Provo Peak, East Slope

I was holding on but starting to slip. If I could just move another five feet across this steep scree slope, I would make it across the most dangerous spot. Above me a backpacker had been looking down, wondering who this crazy guy was, off route, in running shorts on this steep slope all alone. I looked down the steep slope. This wasn't going to end up well. Every move caused more slipping. My shoes were really having trouble gripping the slope. My fingers were aching from gripping rocks. I had to finish getting across. I made the next move and my feet slipped again. I said to myself, "Here we go!" I started heading down. 5, 10, 15, 20 feet, sliding down the slope with sharp rocks ripping into my arms as I tried to halt the fall. Finally after about 20 feet my grip worked and my slide stopped. I rested and then the cramps started. After all, I had been running and climbing for the past ten hours on this crazy adventure.



I had in my mind to [climb the eight highest peaks in my county](#), all above 11,000 feet, in less than 30 hours (including driving between the trailheads). It would be the toughest adventure of my running career thus far, 22,000 tough feet of climbing in 40 miles. I had bagged the first four peaks (Nebo, North Nebo, Provo and East Provo Peaks). East Provo Peak proved to be a difficult peak to get to because of a sleep

slope. I thought it would be easier taking another route. It wasn't. The sun was descending and I knew I had to get back up and over Provo Peak to my car before dusk.

I finally decided to abort my “easier route” and return to a scary route mentioned in various peak bagger reports. But to get over there, I had to cross a crazy steep slope with very loose rocks. I was really beat up from previous falls but kept pushing ahead. Finally I slid down and feared that I would really be beat up. But I stopped the slide and then very carefully continued on and back up to the top of Provo Peak. Back on track I was still determined. Later that night I also bagged North Timpanogos but by morning had blisters forming and felt too beat up and called it quits. I still had no doubt that in the near future I would still conquer all eight peaks in a little more than a day. A year later I returned and succeeded.

2006 Quint Timpanogos

Memories of a question a guy asked me six hours earlier on my 4th trip went through my mind. “Why are you doing this?” My reply was, “To set a new record.” He shook his head and said, “What kind of record is that, a record for the criminally insane?” I couldn't argue with that logic and had just continued on.



Now I was on my 5th trip up the mountain on a quest to be the first person to accomplish five consecutive Mount Timpanogos summits. I had been going at this for nearly 22 hours and was nearing 22,000 feet of climbing on my adventure going up and down and up and down Mount Timpanogos (11,749 feet), the most popular hiking trail in Utah.

This was a tough moment. I felt very low in energy but was still pushing a pace that was passing day hikers on the trail. Hikers coming down stopped to ask me, “Are you the guy doing five summits?” I would grin and admit to the crime. News was spreading up and down the mountain. When one guy stopped, he pulled out his radio and said, “He's coming up again and now he's in a white shirt.” I ran into some scout leaders who had recognized me from the previous evening on my second trip. After they had seen me several times, they finally figured out that I was doing something pretty amazing. I stopped to talk to so many groups that my pace slowed, and I actually heard cheers along the way. These kind words perked me up and pushed me on. The final push to the summit was very hard but I finally made it. There was no fanfare at the top, just a couple people up there admiring the views. I quietly went into the summit hut and signed the register. I had accomplished my 5th summit at the 24:42 mark. I cheered quietly to myself and then started to head down. I had set a record that would be very tough to break. Others would try, but as of 2014, it has stood for eight years.

2013 Triple Kings Peak Attempt

“How stupid am I? I should know better than this!” I think to myself as I look out from my little protection among some rocks at about 12,000 feet on the slope of West Gunsight Peak, the cutoff route to Kings Peak, the highest point in Utah. I look across the valley and can't help but be in awe of the blizzard of snow blowing horizontally across to my left. I shiver in my flimsy garbage bag over my short sleeves and running shorts. Despite the hundreds of miles that I've run in the Uinta Mountain, the unpredictable weather got me again. I thought, “maybe I am stupid, but not as stupid as those poor guys now hunkered

down in rocky slots near the summit of Kings Peak at 13,000 feet.” I worried about those guys that I had warned who just couldn’t keep up with me.

I was on another crazy adventure. I was attempting to be the first person to run a triple Kings Peak, three consecutive summits, trailhead to peak and back, three times. I had attempted the same thing just one week earlier but quit after two trips. It bugged me all week that I had quit, so here I was again, trying again. My first trip went well, a 26-mile 8-hour round trip on tough trails. That had been my 13th lifetime Kings Peak summit. After a 30 minute stop at my car refueling I felt great heading up for the second trip.



Early morning view from Kings Peak

This time, I kept watching the sky. The temperature dropped as I reached the final mile climb to the summit and I looked out to the west and saw terrifying dark thunder clouds heading toward me. I hesitated, put on my garbage bag, and decided to push as fast as I could to bag the summit. I had to stay on the east side of the ridge all the way up to avoid the fierce wind. I reached the top with winds of about 40 mph. and talked briefly with a guy sitting on top messing around with his gear. I commented that we needed to get down fast. I turned around and started to descend very fast. I warned another group that they should turn around.

On the way up, I had made mental notes of several boulder caves where I could hunker down if needed but I still had hopes to outrun the storm. At first others were following me, but they could not match my speed. Lightning could be seen and the thunder was loud. I reached Andersen Pass and now needed to run west for a mile across the flat exposed Andersen Basin. I looked up to Kings Peak summit and it was now being pounded by the dark clouds. There was no sign of the others coming down. They had stopped.

As I ran across Andersen Basin, the wind and sleet pounded my back, pushing me on. So far I was staying ahead of the storm. As I reached the grassy shelf above the cutoff, the storm caught up to me and I was now running in a blizzard of snow and 50 mph winds. I felt like kicking myself for getting into this predicament, without warm clothes and still 12 miles from the trailhead. I rushed on knowing that I could find some protection among the cliff rocks through the cutoff.

I sat in my protective crevice looking down to the Painter Basin trail and could see a scout troop struggling to make their way up and over Gunsight Pass. They looked like they were dressed well. The storm wasn’t easing up, so I decided to push on. When I reached Gunsight Pass I slipped and fell on icy rocks and a nice boy scout waiting for his troop offered to help me. I was fine and pushed over the pass, now protected better from the massive storm. I ran fast, again trying to stay ahead of the dark black clouds. The wind pushed my back for the next five miles as I ran by some campers struggling to protect their tents from the onslaught coming. Once I reached the forest, I knew I was fine but shaken. I decided to give up my quest for three trips. Even if the storm passed, I didn’t want to face icy boulders. A triple Kings Peak is still out there for someone to grab. In the meantime, I am still the only person to do a double, and I have accomplished that three times.

2014 Grand Mesa 100

“I need to stop and lie down, just for few minutes. If I don’t, it feels like I’ll pass out,” I tell my pacer David at about mile 92 of Grand Mesa 100 in Colorado. The early afternoon heat was killing me and I knew I was in early stages of heat exhaustion. This would be my 63rd 100-mile finish and I knew well when I was approaching bad situations. This felt bad. I collapsed by the side of the trail, breathing very hard, with a pounding heart rate, and didn’t even notice the numerous mosquitos biting me. I didn’t care, I just needed to cool down. I was in the middle of a long eight-mile stretch between aid stations without water sources on the edge of the largest mesa in the United States. Exposed fields between the trees felt so very hot and slammed me. I was so ready to be done with this race. “Why do I do this to myself?” I ask out loud. There was no reply from concerned David.

A year earlier, I also ran Grand Mesa 100 but by mile 60, a terrible rain storm hit and it rained hard for the next nine hours. I quit because I lacked proper rain gear and only a few hardy souls made it to the finish. I returned this year determined to get even with this course and finish. The night had been rough. Lately my stomach would shut down during races at altitude and this 10,000 foot high mesa caused plenty of puking during the night. I nearly quit several times but eventually recovered with very long rests in my crew car. At dawn, at mile 75, the aid station I was at was closing down and the final runner was approaching. I now felt fine and decided I would finish “this thing.” David and I ran off with great speed and I passed several runners over the next few miles.

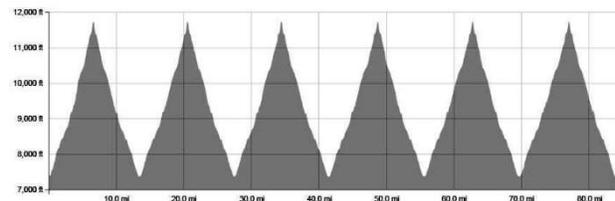


But by mid-morning the hot sun came out and started to bake me. My 55-year-old body just didn’t do well running 100-mile distances in the heat. As we pushed on my pace slowed way down. I wanted to stop and rest in the shade but David pushed me on. I eventually convinced him that I had to stop or there would be bad problems. He gave me all the water he could offer and that was enough to start cooling me down more, inside and out. That eight-mile stretch seemed to go by so slowly. It was one of the hardest stretches of my long 100-mile career. Eventually we passed by a small lake. I had David drench my shirt and hat which worked well to finally cool me down. When we reached the final aid station, I felt better but for the next three miles faced another battle, clouds of mosquitos! I kicked myself for rejecting being sprayed, thinking I would run fast enough to avoid their bites. But I made it, finishing in a very slow 32:11. Many runners didn’t make it that far. I finished in 11th place.

2016 Sextuple Timpanogos

I called out to myself, “Don’t fall off a cliff.” It was about 2:00 a.m. as I was nearing my sixth consecutive summit. Nearly ten years had passed since I set the record for five consecutive Mount Timpanogos summits. After three failed attempts to do six, I was finally about to succeed in July, 2016. All had gone pretty well until the tough sixth trip.

As I reached above 10,000 feet in the middle of the night, the altitude finally got to me and I became exhausted. I only had 1.5 miles left to break the record and knew I couldn’t stop. I hadn’t slept for 44 hours. Rain started to fall. It was a very tough moment but I pushed through the adversity and succeeded.



Cheating in Ultrarunning



For three years, I was deeply affected by a cheater. Before then, I had no idea that there were serious cheaters in the sport. One back-of-the pack runner in my Pony Express 100 race was accused by another runner of for taking rides. I was shocked and confronted the runner and crew at the finish. They denied it but I could tell on their faces that it was true. I decided to let it go without better evidence. That event did get my attention that cheats did exist in the sport.

During 2014, I became acquainted with a local runner, Kelly Agnew, online who I thought was an elite runner. But at the 2014 Bear 100, we both ran and I was surprised that I was several miles ahead of him. He dropped out before 40 miles. I saw him again at the 2014-15 Across the Years 48 hour race that we both were in. I was disappointed that Kelly was also running in that race, because I knew I probably couldn't beat him. My motivation to push hard decreased. Kelly dominated and won the 48-hour race with more than 200 miles in only 41 hours. I didn't remember seeing him pass me much during the race but I thought I probably was just not being observant. I was very impressed with his performance. A couple months later, in February, I learned that he won Jackpot 24-hours in Nevada with a staggering world-class 140 miles! I was stunned because I knew the course was much slower than a track, with a hill each miles and slower dirt sections. I sent him a message of congratulations and encouraged him to enter a 24-hour race with a track, that surely he could post enough miles to get on the USA 24-hour team and compete at the World Championships. I was puzzled why Kelly seemed to not be interested. His blog was full of self-promotion achievements. Getting on the team would be a big accomplishment.

As I made it to the finish line, the crowd was cheering and I was feeling elated. When I crossed the timing mat at 140.42 miles, they told me to head out and get as far as I could because I still had 28 minutes on the clock. I declined.

From Kelly Agnew's race report after claiming to run a world-class 140 miles in 24 hours at 2015 Jackpot 24. Nearly three years later, he was DQed for faking laps.

Detecting Kelly's cheating for the first time.

The next month, I saw Kelly again, at the 2015 Monument Valley 100 in March. As the race started, Kelly took the lead and I decided to try to keep up and I did. I thought this was very cool to be running with such a great runner. We chatted for a while but after a few miles I was puzzled that Kelly seemed to be already slowing a bit. He made some sort of excuse to stop and said he would catch up. I had one of the rare times when I was leading a 100-mile race so I pushed harder and led for about 17 miles. Kelly didn't catch up. That evening I was running a rugged 9.4-mile out-and-back that involved a very slow, steep and rocky 1,000-foot climb in only one mile to the top of a mesa. We then had to run on top of the mesa another mile to punch our bibs and then return the way we came back to the aid station.

As I was returning, at the bottom of the steep climb, I saw Kelly at an unmanned water stop. He was four miles behind me. I was returning from the turn-around and he was still heading toward it. We greeted each other and he said he was struggling. The four mile section that he had in front of him was the toughest, slowest section of the entire course. I ran 2.9 more miles back to the aid station and it took me about 40 minutes. I went to the bathroom for a few minutes and when I came back out I was told that Kelly arrived and went on ahead. I was stunned and immediately realized that Kelly cheated and didn't run the entire out-and-back. He would have had to cover a total of 6.9 miles in about 45 minutes, running a staggering pace of nearly six-minute miles. That was absolutely impossible for those very rugged and sandy miles! I was shocked and asked his wife Jo, who was still sitting by the fire at the aid station, why Kelly cut the out-and-back short. I could tell by her face that she knew I was right, but she said, "Oh, he wouldn't do that." I knew he cheated big-time. He had previously told me that he had taken a wrong turn earlier in the day. Perhaps he felt justified this one time to make up for that. I tried hard to not let it bother me and pushed aside the thought that Kelly was a serious cheater. He finished one place ahead of me. At

the end of the race I told the race director that I believed runners had cut the out-and-back short, that the course was a problem. Later in Kelly's race report he specifically mentioned he did the entire out-and-back and punched his bib. I was sure he wrote that because Jo probably told him that I believed he cut the course. I absolutely knew that Kelly lied in his race report. Thoughts went to his world-class 140 miles covered in 24 hours at Jackpot a month earlier. Did he cheat that race too?

Kelly was running the Grand Slam of Ultrarunning in 2015. He struggled with heat but barely finished Western States 100 in 29 hours. He finished Vermont 100 and Leadville 100 with mid-pack times. For the final race, Wasatch Front 100, we both ran. It was a hot year. He ran ahead of me, but not by much. He looked very bad when I passed him at the Alexander Basin aid station. He would soon quit and fail at his Grand Slam attempt. I was very surprised, but I didn't finish Wasatch that year either.

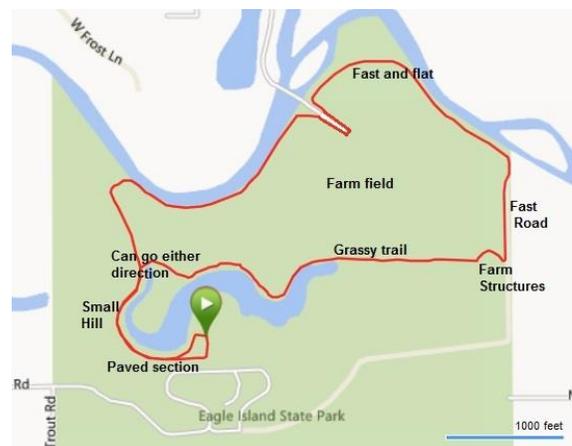
More cheating detected

I saw Kelly next at the 2015 Jackpot race in Nevada. He was running the 24-hour race and I was running the 100-miler on a course with a 2.5-mile loop. On this nearly out-and-back course, you can really watch your competition. From the start, Kelly gained a good lead on me and lapped me during the first 20 miles or so. But then I saw him standing around the start/finish area complaining about a bad stomach. I offered to help but he declined. I ran on, realizing that I had unlapped myself and I then tried hard to catch up. A few laps later again I saw him standing around the start/finish area and he mentioned that he might quit once he was sure he got the win. He complained about a hamstring. We ran together for a short time and then I pressed on ahead. Great! Now I was really ahead of him. But no, somehow I wasn't. How could I pass him twice and not be ahead of him? I then would never see him on the course. One time at night, I did, when he called out a greeting, making sure I noticed him. But I could not remember him ever passing me. His laps piled up ahead of me. It clicked in my mind. He was recording laps he wasn't running! He did win his 24-hour race with 121 miles, stopping early. He should have passed, and lapped me at least eight times, but he didn't. I didn't know what to do. I didn't see him cheat, I only detected it.

Once home, I carefully analyzed his race results over the years. I discovered that got nearly all his wins and course records from loop courses. On traditional courses he was usually just mid pack. It was a huge discrepancy. Only one thing could explain this, cheating.

Cheating witnessed

A month later, we both ran in Pickled Feet 100, in Idaho on a two-mile loop that was easy to gage your competition. I was determined to watch him. He went out fast, alone in the lead. I was running in second place. You could run the big loop in either direction which made it easy to see where your competition was, if you picked the other direction. As I approached the 50K mark, I was catching up to Kelly, one lap behind. I now pretty much knew he was a cheater so I kept my eye on him. I caught up to him on a lap and he was complaining about his feet. I went on knowing that I had unlapped myself. When Kelly was no longer seen on the course, after a lap I was bold and went up to his tent, opened the flap and saw him sitting out a lap in there! I was furious. On another lap he disappeared from the course completely again. I looked all over for him, even stopping mid lap and looking carefully



in both directions. No Kelly. As I finished the lap he magically showed up behind me, probably from his car, yet he was still ahead on the lap counts. I asked, "Where were you?" He lied and said, "Right behind you." I gave a disgusting noise, knowing he lied to me. I now knew for sure that he was a serial cheater, and was probably doing it in all his races. His wife Jo would sit with him when he cheated laps. After I confronted Kelly, every time I saw her, she would give me a big frown. He again would disappear during laps but he was no longer using his tent. I probably should have gone and searched all the cars, but I had my own race to run. I also should have told the RD what I had seen at that point, but it was my word against Kelly's and he was good friends with all the Idaho crowd. At the far side of the course I did search around behind walls and a car to see if he was hiding and received a ride there. It bothered me terribly and I knew I had no chance to win. He won with a staggering 17:20 time and I came in second place. He stole a win from me. When I read his race report, it was full of flattering words about me and I knew he only wrote that to butter me up, hoping that I wouldn't accuse him of cheating. I couldn't just proclaim on Facebook that he was a cheater. I would get crushed by all his friends.

After this race, I knew I needed evidence. I contacted the Across the Years race director, telling him I suspected a serial cheater, and wondered if he would check the back mat data from last year to see if the runner cheated. He offered to help very confidentially, but I didn't know Jamil well enough and decided to wait longer before I told him the name of the cheater. Before the next Across the Years, I did tell him the name and asked if he would watch him closely because I would not be there on the day Kelly ran. They didn't watch him close enough that year to DQ him but did see suspicious things. Kelly still couldn't be stopped and again he won the race I was in.

Caught on video

In February 2017, we both again ran at Jackpot. I ran the 100-miler and he ran the 24-hour race again. This time I was prepared. My son lived nearby going to grad school and he was going to help me. As I was running, I could keep track of him every lap. Sure enough, as I was catching up, within a mile of him, he totally disappeared off the course for an entire lap. When he returned, he had not lost a lap, but miraculously improved his position by a half mile! What a cheat! I was furious.

My son arrived and he knew his task was to watch Kelly closely every time he finished a lap. Kelly was struggling. My son reported that after a couple of the laps, Kelly would go sit down in the warm tent for a few minutes to get out of the light run, but would then continue on. His wife Jo wasn't there at the time. At mile 30, my son was excited to report that after a lap, Kelly went off the course to his car with Jo, who must have just arrived. After about 25 minutes he came out with her. Kelly had his bib covered up and hood pulled down. He and Jo carefully went out of their way to go by the timing area, looking like spectators. They waited until the timer was distracted and then carefully walked forward slowly to register a lap. Kelly paused to make sure his time was recorded and then they both went back to the car to wait again. My son had taken a video of this from his phone. We got him! I started taking the video to the race director but then paused. We needed another video to really be convincing.





Kelly in gray with bib covered and Jo (in purple) slowly walking forward to record a lap he didn't run.



Kelly pauses to check the monitor to make sure the lap he didn't run was recorded.



Kelly and Jo walk back to their car to wait out another lap.

I asked my son to watch again and I ran on for another 2.5-mile lap. When I finished my next lap, my son reported that Kelly again came out of the car again, but this time dropped out of the race! On his Facebook Page he would later brag that he was leading the race at 50K, but I knew he had actually run 5 miles short of that. What a cheat! I was so mad and disturbed by this. Why did Kelly quit the race? Here is my theory: In past years at Jackpot there were many tents on grass area that he sneak through to cut back through the course. This year because of the rain, no one had tents there. He knew he couldn't keep sneaking by the timing area with Jo each time without being caught. There is no way he could win the race without cheating, so he quit and explained that "he didn't have it." What do you mean you didn't have it? You bragged that you were leading the race? This whole incident really delayed my race and caused me to dwell on it instead of running well, but I went on and tried.

Stopping the cheating

I now had some evidence. I still could not just proclaim that Kelly was a cheater and post my video online. I would still be accused of false accusations. I didn't really want him to be "outed," but I wanted him to stop his cheating because I believe he had probably cheated in more than 20 races. I contacted the Jackpot race director, who was a very close friend of Kelly's. He seemed to believe me after I showed him pictures from the video. But Kelly didn't win that recent race, he quit early, so the RD chose to not confront him and instead took good actions to improve his race security.

I consulted with a trusted friend and lawyer. The strategy chosen was to work with various race directors, tell them what I've seen and show them the evidence. For each race Kelly was registered for, I contacted those race directors. I advised them to do two things: 1. Improve their loop course race security. 2. Before their race send out an email to all the runners telling them that cheating would not be tolerated and that they had improved precautions. With this tactic, Kelly would either stop cheating, worried that he was discovered, or would not show up for the race.

The tactic worked at 2017 Pickled Feet (Pulse). They sent out an email and Kelly quickly cancelled his plans to come. Another race did the same thing, Kelly showed up, and I was told by the race director after the race that they were pretty sure he didn't cheat this time. He won, but without outrageous results. I didn't know he was registered for a race up in Canada and didn't contact that RD. He won again up

there and I suspected that he was still cheating. I now knew that he was only a mid-pack runner, likely about as slow as me, so it was pretty easy to measure which races were cheated.

As Across the Years race approached, I wondered if a new approach would work. I contacted someone who Kelly didn't know and asked him to send Kelly a warning email that he would be watched carefully at Across the Years. I also heard the Across the Years now had a greatly improved timing system where the back mats would be checked real-time for misses. The warning never got sent to Kelly and he showed up, determined to win again this year. I finished my race a day before Kelly ran and I was home following the results. Just a few hours into his race, Kelly was caught faking laps and disqualified. The race director immediately let me know and thanked me. Word spread and initially Kelly and Jo denied that he cheated, that the race staff made a mistake, but they decided to not fight it. But more information became public and eventually marathoninvestigation.com noticed and looked into it. Kelly started to be contacted to explain. He selectively deleted about 30 race reports from his blog that were suspect races. Marathoninvestigation.com published [a very public article](#) that went viral across the world. It saddened me to read all the vicious comments, but a three year burden left me. Kelly would no longer cheat in ultrarunning. Race directors looked at past race data carefully and he was eventually disqualified from 18 other races. Some of these races even redistributed awards, so the true winners could be recognized.



As the months went by, I thought it was important that both race directors and runners learn from my experiences and hopefully care more about holding fair races. I researched past cheating in ultramarathons and published an article on the Internet that included the following:

Cheating in the 1980s

Cheating reared its ugly head in ultrarunning in the early 1980s. In 1980 an elite 100-mile runner was disqualified for cutting the Metropolitan 50 course in Central Park, in New York City. Allegations were raised by witnesses seeing him cut courses at other races. It was suspected that he had been cheating races for years by cutting courses, skipping loops at night but still getting them recorded, and by other means.



This runner's cheating ways were made public and three years later he took revenge on his primary accuser by assaulting him during another 50-mile race in Central Park. The enraged person came onto the course around mile 9, chased the runner, screaming verbal abuse, and tried to trip the runner multiple times. When that didn't work he socked the runner hard in the collar bone. The runner went on to finish in 6:14.

Another runner in the early '80s seeking a record, brought their own person to record laps at a track ultra. The race director discovered that the runner's laps were being inflated and disqualified the runner. Also during that time a runner was caught cheating, taking rides during the famed Westfield Sydney to Melbourne race in Australia.

In 1985 a runner was disqualified for clocking unbelievable laps at Birmingham 50, including a lap of multiple miles late in the race, averaging 5:32 pace. The runner firmly denied cheating but the data didn't

add up. With that lap pace, he should have passed about thirty runners going at a noticeable sprint pace. Not one runner in the field saw him pass them on that lap.

Be aware that it happens

Running legend, Gary Cantrell (of Barkley fame) wrote in 1985 that cheaters did exist in the sport. They “arrived [to races] well prepared to cheat. With small fields and sprawling courses, most ultras are easy prey for those **willing to sacrifice self-respect for the respect of others**. No matter how insignificant our sport is, some motivation exists for people to cheat. We know because it happens. For some, the hunger for success can be satisfied only by records and wins. For a few of those, the hunger is satisfied no matter how the result is achieved. As painful as it is, race directors must now acknowledge the possibility and make plans to catch cheaters.” (*Ultrarunning Magazine*, May 1985, 27).

Ultrarunning historian and Hall of Famer, Nick Marshall, observed in 1981, “Cheating episodes are the lowlights of the sport. . . . Race Directors must always be vigilant to the possibility of cheating. There’s a tendency for organizers to avoid the subject, or even pretend it can’t happen, simply because it is such a messy area to deal with. Nevertheless, it does happen on occasion and it should be faced squarely.” (Marshall, 1980 *Ultradistance Summary*, 40)

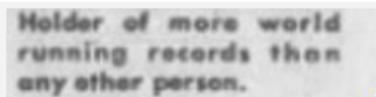
The fraudulent runner

Cantrell described another type of cheater in 1985 that had plagued the ultrarunning world – the fraudulent runner. This type of runner doesn’t steal victories or destroy course records like those who have recently been disqualified at races, but they step forward to claim an undeserved spotlight for gain, disrespecting the entire sport.

Fraudulent self-promotion runners became part of the sport in the 1980s and this practice would be repeated in the decades to come. Some runners would claim to be the best in the sport, invent various solo stunt running events without oversight, achieve invented “world records,” and then use it for gain and fame even though they never truly competed with the best in the sport.

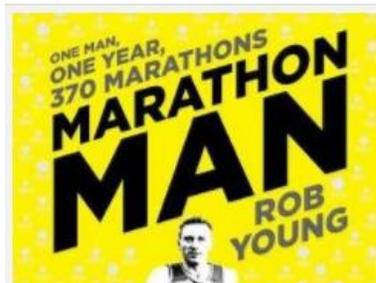
One example was Stan Cottrell who was featured in a 1981 issue of *Runner’s World* who claimed to be a world-class “ultramarathoner” without running in any ultra-distance races. In 1979 he claimed that he set a 24-hour world record of 167 mile in a solo run and tried to get it listed in the Guinness Book of World Records but was rejected. In 1980 he claimed to have run across America in a record 48 days setting the fastest known time at that point. The attention he received disturbed many in the sport who saw through the exaggerations and misstatements. Over the years his claims and similar assertions by others taught the sport to be cautious of claims by those who demonstrated strong motives for fame and gain.

In 2016 the Georgia Supreme Court ruled against Cottrell who sued five people for defamation over comments on the Internet accusing him of being a “scam artist.” Over the years, Stan did use his fame for a lot of good will with his “friendship” runs, but that didn’t make up for all the false claims that runners of his time detected. Since the 1980s there have been others who followed



Holder of more world running records than any other person.

Another case: This appeared in a 1980 newspaper advertisement promoting an ultrarunner’s clothing line. While he wasn’t a cheat, he actually held no legitimate world records. His records were all invented fastest known times for runs no one else had yet attempted.



A recent case, Rob Young, self-proclaimed, “Marathon Man” was accused of cheated his Trans America run attempt.

in Stan's footsteps claiming all sorts of invented ultrarunning "world records" to further their brand and businesses.

The course-cutter

But Gary Cantrell wisely pointed out in 1985 that the course-cutter cheater was the most insidious of all cheaters because we don't really know who they are. We don't know how many there are and won't know unless we all take ownership for the integrity of our sport. Thirty years later as the number of ultras have increased dramatically, new race directors have been oblivious that cheating is happening. We have become overly trusting and in many cases have looked the other way or disbelieved that cheating was happening. Courses have been designed all over the sport that can be easily cheated and cheaters seek out these kind of courses. In the world of self-promoting social media, these cheaters do what Cantrell explained in 1985: They "sacrifice self-respect for the respect of others." Some race directors have taken good precautions to chip runners and collect data, but very few of these race directors take the time to analyze the resulting data to detect obvious anomalies. Some think that chipping runners and placing mid-course timing mats will scare away the cheater. It does not.

It continues to happen

Serious cheating is still happening. Agnew is not the only one. In January Mark Robson was disqualified finishing fifth in a 100K in Australia by using similar tactics as Agnew, "hiding in bushes, and taking short cuts." It is believed that he had only run about 70K instead of 100K. He had been previously banned in 2014 from Australian triathlons for cheating but just moved on to other venues to continue his tactics. Very recently, in February, Patrick Wills was disqualified after finishing third at Rocky Raccoon 100 in Texas. He missed out-and-back checkpoints and clocked unbelievable lap times for the second half of the race when the course was sloppy with mud. Both of these race directors took the time to check their race data and were bold enough to take action.

Competitive runners can easily detect this kind of cheating. You should always keep track of the runners around you. On loop courses don't just look at your lap count but notice the lap counts of runners near you. We don't want everyone to become overly paranoid and make false reports, but the way some of these cheats are caught is simply by watching and noticing, and watching some more.

Race Directors

Sadly, some race directors just don't care that much. They are in it to get as many registrations as they can. They don't want to deal with confrontation. Avoid running in those races. If the race director has not published the safeguards that they use, ask what they do to ensure a fair race. Happily, most race directors will take actions now that this problem has become public. Timing areas are being safeguarded more. Runners are pointing out to race directors areas of their course that can easily be cut by cheaters. More course marshalls are being placed. More race directors are analyzing their data. Cheatable courses are being redesigned. Game cameras are being used in areas that course-cutters would likely try to use. Cheaters have been put on notice, most people are watching.

Race Directors should make it clear to registered runners that course-cutting will not be tolerated and safeguards are in place to ensure that. When the Pulse Endurance Run emailed a clear message to their runners, Agnew quickly cancelled plans to run there.

These course-cutting cheaters plan ahead. They seek out cheatable courses and prey on naïve race directors. They strategically plan how they can cheat. They never publish their GPX tracks for their races.

What should be done about past records, wins, and accomplishments by a serial cheater? In the early 1980s, Nick Marshall, the keeper of ultrarunning statistics for that time, took the bold move to expunge a known cheater's results from Nick's historical statistics. He even refused to publish any new finishes by this runner. Nick was highly criticized by some for this action. In 2018, I think an even better practice is being used by ultrasignup. Instead of making results only disappear, DQs are highlighted in the runner's results and they are removed from the races' finisher lists and course bests. I wish more races would look at their past race data and take action for these runners.

“Outing” these course-cutting cheaters isn't needed in all cases, but remember, for a serial cheater, a quiet DQ does nothing but emboldens them to continue. In all cases, vigorous social media shaming isn't appropriate. If runners know that a race director will look for course-cutters and DQ them, it will deter this behavior.

Forgiveness is desirable and possible. When a course-cutting cheater is caught, I believe they should be banned from races depending on the severity. Shaming is inappropriate. But they should realize that if they came forward, apologized, returned awards, and answered questions, that most people will find forgiveness eventually in their hearts. The serial course-cutter of the 1980s was encouraged to write a letter of apology to Ultrarunning Magazine with a chance to "start over." But no apology ever came forth.

Some tips for detecting and preventing course-cutting

The first red flag for course-cutting is negative splits, especially in 100-mile races. Runners who can run the second half of a 100-miler faster than the first half are extremely rare. I analyzed four 2016 100-mile races and just a very small number of runners achieved a negative split and some of those might cause you to wonder. See: [Negative 100-mile splits](#). At 2018 Rocky Raccoon, Patrick Wills, who was DQed, ran a negative split by 48 minutes, which is very significant and highly unusual. Loop races should have back mats with the ability to quickly check and flag patterns of misses. Timing areas should be clear and be placed away from runner aid stations and tents (and port-a-potties). Timers should watch runners who exit the course right after clocking a lap and they should not be allowed to head in the opposite direction after going through the timing area for any reason.

Most runners are totally honest

In contract, let me point out that the vast majority of runners in the sport run totally honest. I recall one year at Across the Years a runner reached 100 miles, achieving his goal. He stopped even though he had more time to run and went home. But later from home he reviewed his lap times online and noticed that he was credited with a lap of just a few seconds, a timing problem because he was near the timing mat too long and it recorded him twice. He knew he had ran one half-kilometer lap short of 100 miles. He informed the race director and mailed back his 100-mile buckle. In another case a very prominent runner was returning home from a successful race. As he was thinking about his his race, he realized that by mistake he missed a section of the course. He turned around went back to the race and asked the race director to disqualify him. Mistakes do happen.

Safeguard our races

I'll finish with the 1985 sad words of Gary Cantrell, "We cannot afford the luxury of entrusting our sport to the integrity of the participants. At least one legitimate ultramarathoner has been caught course cutting. How many (or few) have not been caught remains a matter of conjecture. . . . However painful the implicit distrust, we must safeguard our races against the dishonest competitor, or risk losing the fun that makes the races worthwhile."

Urban Running



During the winter, one of the most frequent questions I receive is: “Are you still running during the winter?” Since I started running in 2004, I have never considered taking the winter months off. I usually do the complete opposite and step up my training to new levels, putting in more miles during the winter months compared to the summer. Putting on holiday weight doesn’t become a worry and the result is a solid mileage base for the races in the new year. As of 2016, I’ve run year-round for more than twelve years.

But my approach is different during the winter. Many runners in Utah in recent years have enjoyed to continue to push up to the peaks in deep snow. Perhaps that is fun, but for me, it does not contribute much toward continued 100-mile race training. I move my training down into the valleys and find ways to do creative, interesting long urban runs.

During the winter and spring there are many fun, flat 100-mile or fixed-time races that become my focus and motivation for solid training during the colder months. As I continue to work hard, my fastest 100-mile times result. In 2016 at the age of 57, my 20:51 100-mile time at Jackpot 100 was the 4th fastest time in the world during 2016 for a runner age 57+. (Data from realendurance.com). All of my personal record times at all distances have been accomplished during the winter and spring. If I would have taken winter months off as most runners do, that would have never happened.

For me, urban pavement running has its place at times but must be carefully accomplished to avoid hard-surface injuries. I make sure I use max-cushioned shoes and listen carefully to my body to rest when needed. Recently I sat in the dentist chair with my mouth being poked at by a dental hygienist who told me she has finished about 15 marathons. She complained about injuries, but said that in a couple days she **must** run 17 miles because her training plan demanded it. I wanted to chastise her foolishness but the scraper she had in my mouth wouldn’t let me. If you run on pavement, you need to be even more careful about overuse injuries.

During most of the year I shake my head in wonder as I see runners every day pounding the pavement in wonderful weather when the trails are dry. But during the winter at times I will join them in the city. One of my most favorite times to run is in the early morning as a fresh new snow is falling with an inch or two on the ground. Everything is quiet. The running surface is soft and fast. All is white, with a distinct difference from our colorful, loud attention-grabbing world. Winter running even in the city can be wonderful with a unique experience to discover.

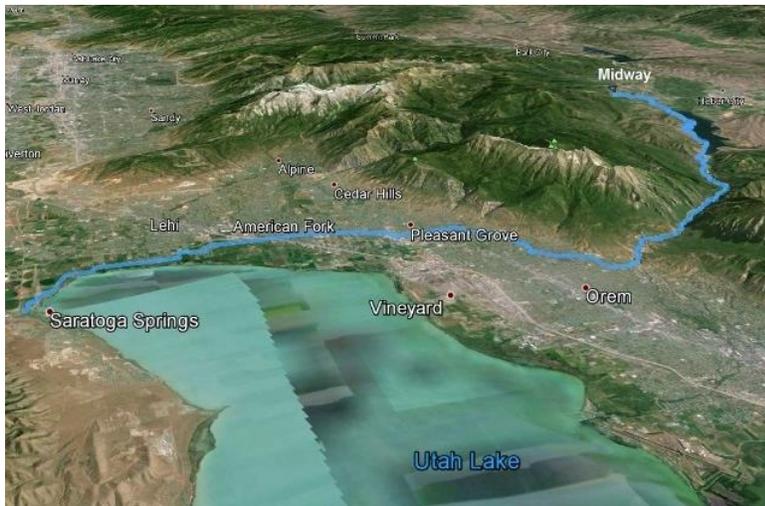
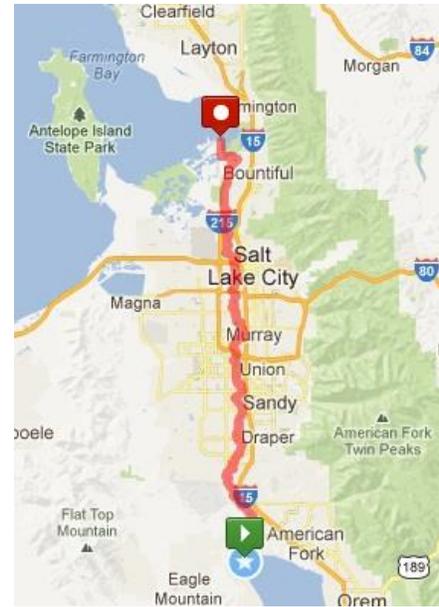


I enjoy searching for and finding long unique runs near or through the cities. A great benefit of the urban run are the stores and fast-food restaurants along that way that can act as aid stations. They can be a warm winter oasis that also allows me to run without carrying much.

My Path to Ultrarunning – Davy Crockett

In 2012, I got the idea to run between the two largest lakes in Utah, Utah Lake and the Great Salt Lake using mostly paved trails. The Jordan River in Utah meanders for more than 50 miles between the two lakes and the Jordan River Parkway Trail has been built over the years to follow closely by the river. As far as I could tell, no one had before attempted to run the trail end-to-end in one day. I decided to go further than that and link up with the Legacy Parkway Trail to reach the Great Salt Lake. This adventure was a very interesting urban run. In 2016, I went even further, linking up with the Rail Trail to reach Layton for 66 miles.

For many of these long urban runs, I will make use of mass transit for shuttles, running to or from train stations. Other times my kind wife will come and pick me up at the end of my run. Plotting a creative circular run in another approach I frequently do.



In 2015, with a family Christmas party scheduled 41 miles away in Midway. I considered, “Why drive, if I can run?”

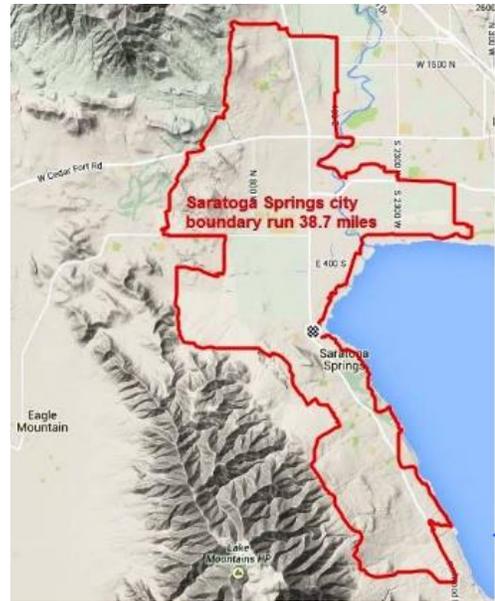
I left my home at about 3:00 a.m. when it was 35 degrees with snow flurries. All was peaceful and quiet as I ran through the cities. I connected with a paved trail, the Murdock Canal trail in order to avoid any morning

traffic and to minimize waiting at traffic lights. At the mouth of Provo Canyon I stopped at a convenience store to resupply and warm up for a few minutes. Running up Provo Canyon, I made use of the Provo River paved trail and then to avoid the busy highway ran on the snow covered Heber Creeper railroad bed giving me a new and interesting challenge. Finally I ran seven miles along the beautiful Deer Creek Reservoir to my destination, in time to clean up before the party.

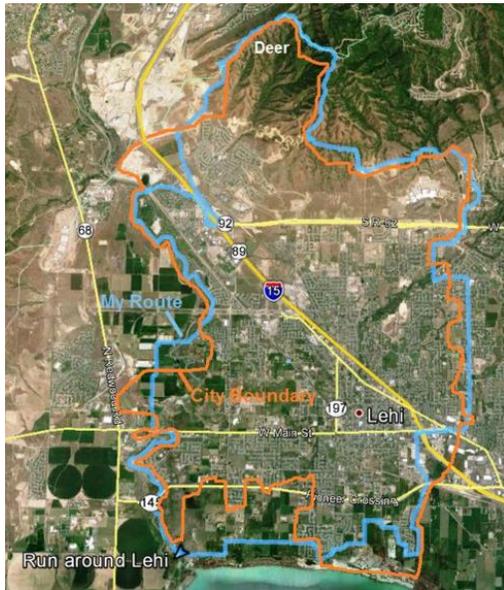


Most of the time I come up with these ideas for long urban runs just a couple days before I run them. I get an idea that seems interesting and then look for the next available time to go accomplish it. During cold times, I can usually run the first 25-30 miles without needing to refill my bottles. I look for runs that will include a place to refill my bottles by mile 30.

During 2014 to keep my motivation high for running during the winter, I hatched the idea to run around the borders of my city, Saratoga Springs. This required careful research and planning to try to follow the boundaries as close as possible without too much crossing over private property. I tried to keep the city property inside my large loop. It turned out to be great fun and a navigation challenge. The run around Saratoga Springs turned out to be 38.7 miles.



Next, I ran around the city boundaries of Lehi, Utah for 33 miles. The boundaries were even more difficult to navigate. On the northern end I had to climb up and run high snow-covered ridges and saw hundreds of deer. The east side was urban running. Finally, I ran around the city of American Fork, Utah for 20 miles. All the city boundary runs introduced me to roads and trails I had never been on before and there was plenty to see and experience. It made winter running interesting.



Run around Lehi

Another crazy strategy for a unique urban run is “maze running.” The challenge is to see if I can run a housing development run on every road possible without carrying a map with me. This requires some careful planning and memorization of the roads. Because this is so odd, I will do this during the pre-dawn morning so I won't be seen by local residents. I don't want anyone calling the cops because a suspicious guy is stalking their neighborhood.

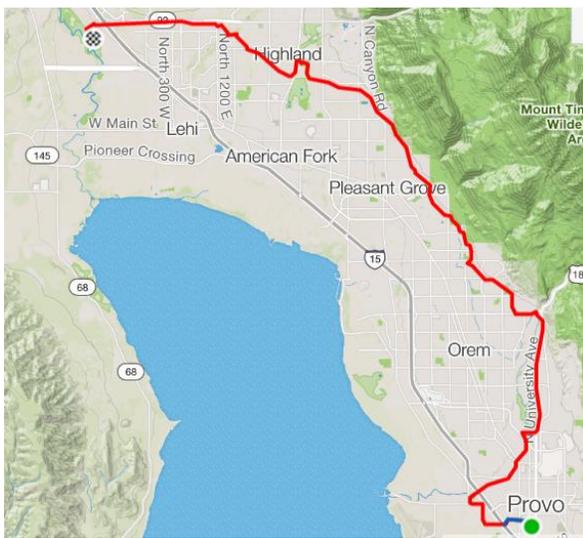
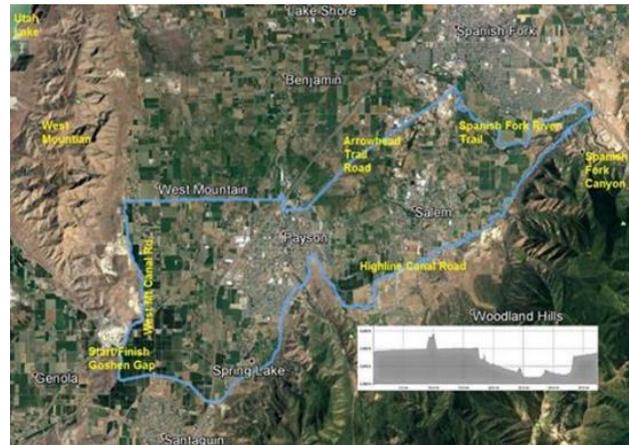




Another approach is to make use of indoor tracks. There are several that I have run on including the Legacy Center in nearby Lehi, and the indoor track at Brigham Young University. But the most interesting place to run indoors in Utah is the Utah Olympic Oval, the home of many skating events during the 2002 Winter Olympics. This unique venue includes a 442 meter track that runs around the ice oval. The USA teams train at the facility and usually you can run while watching them train. I've also seen China's team train there. 18 laps is about five miles. My GPS watch doesn't work inside, but I use the chronometer on my watch keep track of lap counts. As I was training for Across the

Years in 2016, I ran for six hours at the oval and covered 37 miles. I concentrated on keeping most of my lap times near 2:45 or 10:00-minute-mile pace. This is a great place to do carefully controlled long fast training on a soft track.

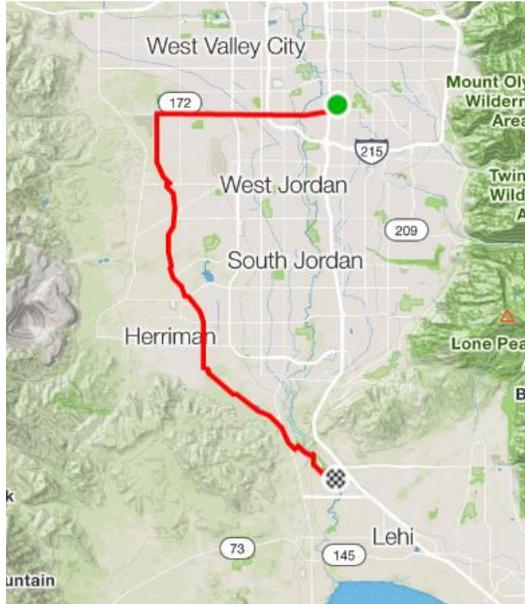
I also look for rural/urban runs to do big loops, using the stores along the way. In 2016 I ran a very interesting 37-mile run that made use of 22 miles of canal roads. In Utah there are very many old canals that run through the large valleys to irrigate the farm fields with river or lake water. Usually there are nice dirt roads that run along these canals even through the cities. Sometimes they are blocked off by firm no-trespassing signs and gates, but most are still accessible and used by the public to run and walk. I wave to friendly farmers along the way and talk to the horses.



For my urban runs, I do not like running on sidewalks and waiting at lights to cross intersections. Instead, I look for routes to connect networks of paved trails that result in very few road crossings but still provide the stores along the way. One favorite is in Utah County to connect the Murdock Canal trail with the Provo River trail. The Murdock Canal is now a buried canal with a nice paved trail on top. The Provo River trail runs near the Provo River as it makes its way to Utah Lake.

For this run, I choose my direction of travel based on the wind direction. A head wind, even a light breeze can be very chilly in the winter. I used the train as my shuttle, leaving my car at the Lehi station at the north, and starting my run at the Provo station on the south. I ran to the Provo River Trail, ran up

river to the mouth of Provo Canyon and then connected with the Murdock Canal Trail for a total of 29 miles, stopping for a nice breakfast and lunch along the way.



In 2013, a new paved trail was opened that runs along 15 miles of the Mountain View Corridor on the southwest side of Salt Lake Valley. As of 2016 this trail still gets low use, but presents spectacular views of the Wasatch Mountains to the east. The local cities maintain the trail well. When I ran it end-to-end I was amazed to see that much of it had been plowed that morning when just a couple inches of snow fell.

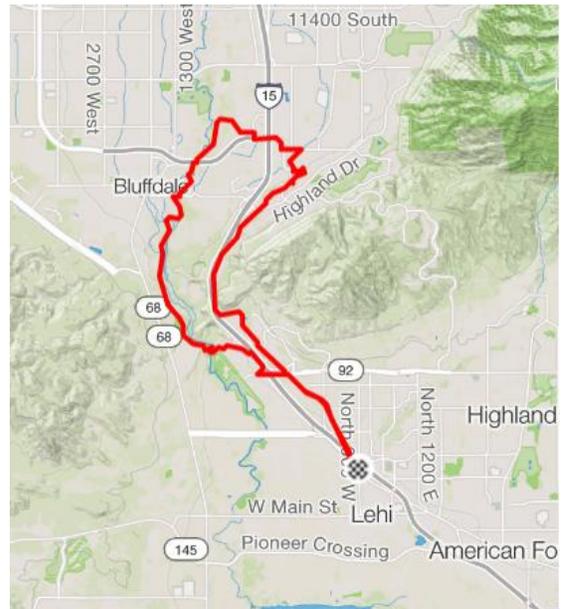
I first left my car at the Lehi train station and rode the train to the Murray station. From there I decided to run along 54th south for eight miles on sidewalks to the start of the trail. I could have also taken a ride on the bus that runs regularly, but chose to run instead. The length of the trail was interesting. Sometimes it ran on top of a former railroad bed, other times right next to the highway. I stopped for lunch at a Smith's market at 114th South. For the last six miles of my run, I connected with a canal road

to the Jordan River trail, and arrived back at the trail station.

Frequently old abandoned railroad beds are converted to paved trails. These can be great routes for urban runs. Such trails exist at the north end of Utah County in Lehi and the South end of Salt Lake County in Draper/Sandy. For one run, I put together a loop run using the rail trails and then connected with the Jordan River trail that runs through the heart of the valleys for a 24 mile route.

The Porter Rockwell Trail (or Sandy Trail) runs ten miles long all the way up to 84th South close to the Trax light rail line which can be used as a shuttle. There are many interesting options with miles of connecting trails to make this a great area for urban runs.

Don't stop running in the winter. Find creative routes in the city to keep your interest high and put in the miles.



Reaching for 100 100-mile Finishes



When I attempted to run my first 100-miler at [The Bear in 2004](#), I ran quite a few miles near the 100-mile legend, Hans-Dieter Weisshaar from Germany who was at that time 64 years old. That race was Hans's 66th 100-mile finish. That year in 2004, finished 13 of them. Hans was indeed a legend. He started running 100s at the age of 58. When I DNFed the race, and was given a ride to the finish line, I was able to watch Hans finish in 32:54 to a chorus of cheers. I was in awe.

I had failed to finish my first 100 mile race and believed that I was in way over my head at age 46. Here was a man 20 years older than me, finishing 100-milers every month. If I could only just finish one! I did get that first finish, a few months later and was hooked on running 100-milers.

Hans continued to run. He finished an astonishing 20 100-milers in one year. What was totally impressive is that his finishes each year always included some of the toughest 100s, including Hardrock 100. He coined a "Super Slam", to finish four tough mountain races in a single year that didn't need to include Western States 100. In 2007, he finished his 100th 100-miler at Hardrock 100. There were rumors that he was going to retire from running 100s, but he didn't.

100 100 milers! Hans was the king of 100s. When Hans finished his 100th, I only had seven 100-mile finishes to my name. But, I was progressing to the point where I could now finish ahead of Hans in a race. I could gage my progress on comparing our finishing times in the same races.

In 2016, Hans is 75 years old and it appears that he may have finally hung up the 100-mile running shoes. He has amassed about 140 100-mile finishes, the most in the world as of 2013. (Ed Ettinghausen passed him in 2017).



Hans-Dieter Weisshaar

As of 2018, there are a handful of others who have also finished 100 100s. Ed Ettinghausen, California (Most in the world as of 2017, 150+, 40 in one year), Dan Brenden (140+), Arizona, Monica Scholz, Canada (125+, 25 in one year), Catra Corbett, California (120+), Mike Smith, New Mexico (120+), Ray Krolewicz (105+), South Carolina, and Liz Bauer (100+), South Carolina.

I met Ed Ettinghausen (150+ finishes), for the first time in 2010 when he came to run my Pony Express Trail 100. He was very early into his ultrarunning career with only four 100-mile finishes. When he ran Pony Express, he was still experimenting with hats and wore a coonskin hat in my honor. Shortly after that he settled on his jester attire. I still tease Ed about [sneaking up and passing him at about mile 82](#) for the win.



Ed on the left in coonskin hat

Ed, the Jester, now wears a full Jester costume when he runs. I run with him at races several times a year. He has gone on to run 135

My Path to Ultrarunning – Davy Crockett

marathon distance runs in a year, and in 2014 finished 40 100-mile races in a calendar year, the record. He embraces the Jester theme and has his own “Jester Nation.” Ed is kind to all and very encouraging, usually with a group of runners following after him. I enjoy running with him. I’m sure in a couple years Ed will soon be top of the career list of 100 finishes. He holds several age group world and American records for long distances. In April, 2016, he ran 717 miles in ten days at Sri Chinmoy. He is age 54 in 2017.

Dan Brenden (140+ finishes), age 65 in 2016, from Phoenix, Arizona is a humble, friendly runner, and good friend of mine. He started his 100-mile career in about 2002 at the age of 51. He has completed the grand slam of ultrarunning eight times, more than anyone in history. I’ve shared many miles with Dan. You will always see him smiling and running in his short shorts. DNFs are becoming more frequent for him, but he is tough as nails and continues to do what he enjoys. He is very humble about his amazing accomplishments. I’ve tried to have him tell me how many 100-mile finishes he has, but he does not really like to put focus on himself.



In 2016, after we ran at the same race near Las Vegas, Dan sent me a note that contained: “I was impressed how hard you were pushing it even so early in the run—any way you were impressive and motivating that I really need to follow your example more and push harder—I did sprints this morning—not fun but did it—OH well it was a start in your direction. Very Nice Davy thanks for getting me going in the right direction.” Amazing! I totally look up to him but he is always looking to others to improve.

Dan Brenden

Monica Scholz (125+ finishes) age 48 in 2016, is an attorney from Canada. She has a long list of accomplishments. I’ve never had a chance to meet her, only running in a few large races with her. She began her 100-mile running career in 1999, at the age of 31. She won the 2004 Trail Runner Series, female ultra division. In 2010, she set the record for [most 100-mile finishes in a year at 25](#) (Later broken by Liz Bauer and then by Ed Ettinghausen). She has finished the very tough H.U.R.T 100 eleven times and Badwater seven times. It appears that Monica’s last 100-mile finish was in 2013.



Catra Corbett “Dirt Diva” (120+ finishes) age 51 in 2016 from California can’t be missed on the trail with her colorful dress, more than 50 tatoos and numerous piercings. She started running 100s in 1999 at the age of 34. She took up running in 1996 after finding herself in jail in 1994, a meth addict. She had abused drugs and alcohol for 20 years. She cleaned up her life, overcame her addiction, and instead became addicted to running 100 miles. In 2004 she did the 424 mile round-trip of the John Muir Trail over many 12,000 and 13,000 peaks in just over 12 days, a feat which no one has attempted to break yet.



I have run many races that she was in and we greet each other as we pass. I ran with her for the first time at H.U.R.T 100 which she has finished seven times. Her advice for life: “Always think positive. You know, things will always be better, even if you hit a rough patch in life, just use what you learned from your running: go through it, keep going, always remains positive. Sunshine behind the dark clouds!”

Mike Smith (120+ finishes) age 58 in 2016 is from Indiana, now living in Santa Fe, New Mexico. I've never met Mike. He finished the Grand Slam in 2014. Run100s.com records that he reached 100 finishes in April, 2016. He took up running 100s in 2000, at the age of 42.

Ultrarunning legend, Ray Krolewicz (105+) also is on the list, along with Liz Bauer (100+).

For years, I never had any hopes or goals at how many 100-milers I might one day finish, but with each year my finishes started to pile up. I was getting a reputation of finishing many each year. In 2011, I did set a goal to finish 10 100s that year and reached it, finishing my 47th 100. I knew that I was among the top-20 in the world at that point for career 100-mile finishes.

When I experienced my severe stress fracture in 2012, I wondered if my 100-mile days were over and if I would ever reach 50 100-mile finishes. I eventually recovered and finished my 50th that year at The Bear.

In 2015, I finished 11 100-milers, 2016, a personal record of 12, and in 2017 11 again. I reached 75 finishes in early 2016 and I finally considered the possibility of one day reaching 100 finishes. By the end of 2017 I had finished 97 100s and the 100 finish mark seemed within reach soon until I got injured in early 2018. There are two others who reached 100-finishes mark in 2017, John Taylor (100+) and Susan Donnelly (100+). John and Susan reached their 100th 100 at Superior Sawtooth 100 in September, 2017. Matt Watts is nearing 90 finishes. There is no accurate list of career finishes, but it appears that I am now in the top-10, and have the most 100-mile finishes among runners from Utah. To me this is astonishing. It seems like it was just a few years ago that I watched Hans finish his 66th. I felt like such a failure and a poor runner. I never dreamed about being on a list that included his name.

One year at Bighorn 100, I rode in a car to the start with Hans, Matt Watts and a couple other accomplished 100-milers. I realized that in the car were nearly 300 finishes to our names. In 2016, I was running in the same race as Dan Brenden and Ed Ettinghausen and saw them walking together during the night. As I went by in the other direction, I called out, "There they are, the 100-mile legends!" They laughed. I have shared many miles with the two of them. Between the two of them, they had nearly 250 100-mile finishes.

Will I reach 100? I'm asked that question frequently now. I used to brush it off, but now I hope that I will reach that milestone. Now the question is, "Which race?" The main factor is to be free from injuries, and I was seriously injured in January 2018. The other factor is age. With each passing year, staying in shape to consistently finish 100s takes more and more effort. In 2016, the problem was mostly mental. In late stages of a 100-miler I would lose interest and determination. Thoughts about quitting would arise more often. Others my age also battle the same challenge. For me, it took some serious soul-searching and mental exercises to put me back on the road to consistent finishes. But, you never know. Life's higher priorities can set this goal aside. Finishing 100s are not easy. Some runners collect marathon finishes, which to me is easy because I run a marathon run nearly every week. With 100 miles, success is far less predictable.