



**1983
ULTRADISTANCE
SUMMARY**

by Nick Marshall

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are the individuals who are basically "competing against themselves." It does not affect other runners much if a back-of-the-packer enjoys having a friend join them over the difficult final miles which they might not otherwise be able to complete. However, such company nearer the front of the pack must be frowned on. In the upper echelons, the motivation is not one of having a social stroll. People at the front are specifically racing against other runners, either in person or versus their times from other races. They don't need companions in order to be able to last the distance. No, what a pacer does for the more elite runner who may have a chance to win races and set records, is help them not to slow down. In doing this, they can distort the whole competitive process. The rule against pacing is a necessary and desirable measure intended to prevent a harmful practice that can otherwise confer an unfair advantage on one runner over another. A simple principle is at stake here: Any race should be restricted to those who are official entrants. While athletes in all sports have fans and supporters, these outside individuals are not allowed to involve themselves on the actual field of play.

One thing clouding the general perception of this problem is that most people seem to see it as identical to the situation in shorter races where a record may be established with the help of a pacesetter "rabbit." This misses the point entirely. The two are vastly different. It is very difficult to legislate how any official entrant chooses to pace himself in a race, even if his sole goal is to pull another runner along to a faster time. This in no way approximates the cases that arise at the end of some ultras. Sebastian Coe may have another entrant ahead of him for three laps of a mile, but he doesn't have someone join him in midrace and run the end of it with him! At that point, when one is at his weakest, he should be racing anybody who is still with him, or be fully responsible for doing all the work himself. Company then is ethical only when those involved happen to have been in the race from the start, not fresh impromptu pacers who lighten the load. Imagine the uproar if Joan Benoit would be trailing Raisa Smekhnova by 100 yards late in this year's Olympic Marathon; and as the Russian begins sagging, two of her USSR teammates run out from the sidelines to flank her to the finish! I don't think anyone would contend the interlopers would belong there. Such a form of pacing would be unfair to the second runner.

Some persons further say the anti-pacing rule is unimportant because it doesn't help a runner anyway. As suggested by the example above, I honestly do not understand how anyone can seriously believe that. No doubt there are individuals who might not be helped by the practice, but such runners are a rare breed. Innumerable ultradistance novices have instinctively recognized this when they finish their first 50-miler and thank someone who ran with them: "I couldn't have done it without your help." Top runners know the same truth. One correspondent wasn't complaining, but merely making an observation, when he wrote of a rival in a 100-kilometer, "He started the final 5.6-mile loop two minutes behind my course record, but his pacer really got him going on that last one, and he finished two minutes ahead of my previous mark." The presence of another runner alongside makes one's own running easier. Why do you think there is such an emphasis in top-flight races on "maintaining contact" and "staying with the pack?" A guy who can run 2:15 in the New York Marathon will almost surely not be able to go that fast if he is in the Podunk Marathon and has a two-mile lead at the halfway point. An artificially-paced performance is *not* the same as one emerging from the framework of a strictly bona fide competition.

It was only Sept. 10th when the final 100-mile running race of 1983 was held. It was one which had developed its own mystique

and reputation over a few years' time, simply because of its forbidding participation statistics. The Wasatch Front 100-Mile in Utah had 2 finishers out of the first 5 pioneers who attempted it in 1980. The following year nobody finished from a field of 7; and twelve months later the scoreboard read 3 out of 19. With only five completions in three years, and the fastest of those taking 30:05, the word was out that Wasatch offered a mighty challenge. Naturally, some people reacted to the growing reputation of the course like a bull does to a flag waving in his face. They charged. 41 showed up. An even 20 finished this time. Although 14 of them took over 30 hours, two men were done in less than a day. Rob Landis had a commanding margin at 22:04:18. Ben Dewell was the only person within four hours of him, making up ground at the end by putting together nearly equal halves for his 22:50:47. Dewell was joined by James Gills, Bill Athey, and Laurie Staton-Carter as the first two-time conquerors of the Front. The only woman yet to try Wasatch, Staton-Carter didn't appreciate being given 9th place in the men's category because there was no women's division. After two months of cajoling and complaining to the Wasatch management, she got her wish for a separate female division in 1984 and rejoiced, "Hooray...and let's hope some more women enter!" (Okay, Laurie, you've had one wish granted. You only get two more.)

In 5th place was Rene Casteran. However, what should have been a sheer triumph for him was tinged with many discordant notes. Casteran says it was a combination of joys and sorrows from before the beginning of the event and extending beyond its conclusion. His was a tale of strong friendship and loyalty; hardship and success; and, ultimately, loss:

"Rob Volkenand and I planned to tackle this apparently vague and awesome course as One---sharing the pacing, decision making and motivating together as much as is possible for individuals. The plan was good, but not all went so well. Going into the event I was as much of a weak link as there could be. We planned to leave Oregon 3-4 days early to scout out parts of the trail. When I arrived at Rob's home I was a total wreck with the worst toothache ever. Rob arranged for help from a friend (of course---a running dentist). On Labor Day he performed an emergency root canal, free of charge! For the long drive to Salt Lake City the next day, Rob literally pulled me out of bed. I didn't want to go, as the antibiotics had made me extremely nauseous. He pushed me into the car and drove the whole way himself. When we arrived, I couldn't even help set up our tent."

"At no time did Rob consider that *we* would not be at the starting line together---I needed that. In the days before the race, he managed to drag me out to scout parts of the trail. He ran and I stumbled around, but it helped bring me around. Then during the race itself, Rob and I were indeed one runner, except that he took on the pacing chores totally. I was the caboose. In a few places Rob would get to checkpoints before me, only to wait up! He kept us on an easy 30 hour pace, beautifully consistent and mostly on course. In one unbelievably crazy section known as Hardscrabble we were to follow a creek making 19 crossings. I counted. We made 28! A local entrant, Brett Grandy, helped us stay wet footed but on course. After reaching Catherine Pass, at 10,480' and mile 78, we descended into the abyss of Dry Fork Canyon. Here things fell apart for us, in the dark. Lost. We wandered up and down, over and around sheer dropoffs and loose boulders for about 2 hours. We were still lost as the sun began rising. Help arrived, with the promise of a way out. While Rob checked his watch, I sat down demoralized and exhausted."

"I wanted to quit. I had already quit mentally. As I sat there, Rob and the guide took off. I was filled with mixed

emotions. I was mad at the race. I was mad at myself--for having gotten lost and now having to face my own weakness. It was hard to swallow at the end of a 100 miler. And I was angry with Rob for not succumbing to my depression; for still being strong and positive; and for dismissing me so easily and taking off. Well, hell, I got up reluctantly and followed. But this was no longer our careful even pacing. It was kamikaze, go for it, breakneck speed. I felt a perverse sense of impending doom. Either I would take a spectacular fall and be carried out in a body bag, or perhaps reach depletion many miles from the finish and wander aimlessly thereafter, or even make the finish intact, only to do 30 hours and 1 second. In a weird way, I wanted to prove Rob wrong. We couldn't make it, I thought. We'll die--you just wait and see, I thought."

"At 82.5 miles, Rob stripped off all the nighttime clothes, leaving our packs, food and maps. He wanted to singlemindedly push for it all. To add to the punishment, I declared we must run the next 3 miles all uphill. I was in a self-destructive mood. Something snapped inside me. I was an isolated individual, no longer *us* running the way we planned this run to be. Eventually I got ahead somewhat, but I knew I'd see Rob on the downhill. I decided to push, push and push on down, all the way expecting disaster. Emotions of my previous sickness surfaced. Thoughts of other disappointing finishes this year haunted me while I admitted my frailty at having wanted to quit only a short while ago. And still the malevolent thought was there of proving Rob wrong, of thrashing myself for all I was worth, only to say I told you so. These were not very flattering self realizations."

"Well, I did make it under 30 hours after all--28:50:24. Rob was indeed right. Regardless of the time, you can give it your all. There's the bittersweet irony. Rob went off course at the last turn. The man who helped me get well, got me to the race and led me through it...eventually wandered in to the finish have done well over 100 miles, only to be officially listed as a DNF---lost at 90 miles. I owe him everything. We should have been together."

Possibly Rob Volkenand would have had a more satisfying time if he had stayed in Oregon that weekend instead of traipsing off to Utah. He could have run the Dick Garrett 24-Hour and avoided getting lost. Warren Finke showed great prowess on the track, blazing to a split of 7:12:33 at 100 kms. It knocked half an hour off his old U.S. mark for that distance on the track, where there has always been a paucity of 100K events. Finke pulled out after doing a couple insurance laps beyond this point, so it meant he got a record for the day while actually winding up next-to-last in the full 24-hour. Before the race, Del Scharffenberg said he'd file a report on the event, "after the pain and suffering subsides." After rating a mention in last year's *Summary* on account of a bike accident he had, Scharffenberg said he wished he could merit inclusion more for his running performances instead. Del's problem is too many sports. A little earlier, he'd competed in a Great Canoe Race. His partner was a past National Jr. Champion racewalker, so they thought they'd mop up on the long portages in the canoe contest, "but that's where we lost most of our ground. It's tough to run two miles carrying a 40-lb. canoe on your shoulders!" Between the biking, boating, et al, his mileage by foot was quite modest, averaging only about 29 miles per week for the year. Still, he was serious about the effort. "I guess I'll be telling you how 24-hours feels on inadequate training. I've motivated my two teenage kids to be handlers by offering 10¢ a lap! Now they are quarreling over who gets to do it, for money they always bug out of me anyway."

Presumably, their self-interest in seeing Pop go a long way

in the race helped Scharffenberg achieve that goal. Afterward, he wrote, "We had very mediocre performances for a 24-hour. I won my first ultra in 18 finishes, but only made 100 miles because nobody else was going to and it would be embarrassing to win with only 95 or 98. I considered your statement about so many running past the 100 barrier, then quitting, and found it to be quite true. Right up to 22 hours I fully intended to go a few miles over, but with 10 laps to go, 14 or 18 or 22 seemed intolerable, so I started my countdown to the end. One high point was Finke's 100 km. He was very steady, with 2:59 marathon and 5:45 50-mile splits en route. After he stopped, the rest of us caught up. Bob Van Deusen ran fairly steady till he had to quit after 81 miles with an injured foot. At 16 hours, I was catching Bob as he retired for good, and I had logged my first 100-mile *week!* I took my last break at midnight, still planning to go 110 or so, but when I tried to resume, my foot was too sore to run on. I decided to just walk---I had nearly 6 hours to do 13 miles. It was relatively easy until the last hour. I had 100 miles in 22:57:04 and went on home, too tired to even watch the clock run down." Yep, that's what'll happen to you when you get your first 100-mile week ever; especially when you cram it all into a single day.

The TAC National 50-Km. Championship at East Meadow, N.Y., was a two-man duel waged by a pair of past champs. Defending titlist Charlie Trayer is a real ace in the shorter ultras. He has never gone as far as 60 kilos; but in two 50-Ks and three 36-milers, he has four wins and five fast times. At the TAC 50-K, he calmed down his usual tendency to take off with a killing pace from the gun. It was 95° and Trayer found the number of turns on the unshaded 10-loop circuit bothersome. "I ended up just running as evenly a pace as I could to finish in that heat." Spectator Dan Brannen chimed in, "I was dying just sitting in the shade." Trayer drew away from Bill DeVoe by a 3:10:39 to 3:13:10 count. Behind these speed demons, the field wilted. Dave Obelkevich was way back at 3:42:31. Jack Terry, 53, was the lead master at 3:49:45 and a rookie, Ceila Reed, garnered female honors at 4:41:16. Although the course was pancake flat and it was a short ultra, the baking macadam KO'd over 45% of the 43-member field.

Walkers are generally able to handle heat better than runners, but you couldn't tell it by observing the outcome of the TAC 100-Mile Racewalk at Columbia, Missouri. Conditions similar to those in the 50K run gave this lengthier walk a severe depletion problem. Out of 30 hopefuls, only one guy and one gal managed to meet the 24-hour deadline. Reliable Alan Price won his fourth National 100, but his 22:36:54 was almost 2½ hours slower than any of his past victories. Chris Custer, a newcomer, barely beat the clock with her 23:50:49. At Point Reyes, Cal., 28 of 34 runners completed Drake's Bay 50 Mile. Trail terrain relegated all but Rae Clark, at 8:03, and five other men to times over ten hours. The lead lady, at 11:47, was a 50-year-old, Marty Maricle.

The last ultra of the summer was the 8th annual Lake Tahoe 72-Mile. 58 runners tried the loop around the high-altitude lake, down from 109 two years earlier. Spear Kronlage sped through it in 9:15:03. Glenn Bailey circled the water in 9:40:10 and G.E. Jensen did 10:27:29 before the bulk of the pack began arriving an hour later. Pam Smith at 15:01:55 was the only one of her sex.

Then it was autumn. The Rocky One 50-mile in Pennsylvania was moved up on the calendar from November. Tom Smith and Mike Ranck were so evenly matched they wound up joining forces for a 9:06:08, over two hours ahead of Harlow Akins. Out of 7 men, the only non-finisher on the rocky trails was an unhappy Ron Warner. He'd gone off course the year before and returned to atone for that error. It was to no avail. Much later, he said, "The year was sort of a bust for me. I got lost again at The Rocky One. I