

Landis Subdues Tough Wasatch Course (Again)

by Steve Baugh

Excellent weather and a record-breaking field of 51 starters made this year's Wasatch Front 100 mile run the best in its five year history.

At the pre-race meeting there was a mood of anticipation as the reputation of the course was much discussed. The trail has been proclaimed as one of the nastiest footpaths that people hike on, let alone race on. The climbs and descents are never-ending, with over 45,000' combined elevation gain and loss.

The race began at 5:00 a.m. on Saturday morning in East Layton. Runners immediately faced the steep ascent to the ridge north of Francis Peak, a tough climb with no switchbacks.

Robert Landis of Alta, Utah, last year's champion, took the early lead. Landis is a strong mountain runner who trains all year round at high elevation—running in the summer and cross-country skiing in the winter. By the time most of his competitors climbed the top of Chin Scraper Hill at 5 miles, Landis had reached the dirt road leading to Francis Peak at 9 miles.

One runner was determined not to let Landis extend his lead too far. Odin Christensen, a tough Western States competitor from Reno, Nevada, was in hot pursuit. When he reached the first check-

point at Francis Peak he was only 20 minutes behind and running confidently.

Back in the pack Laurie Staton-Carter had opened up a sizable lead on Cindy Andrus, the only other woman in the race. The competition was refreshing for Laurie, who had been the only woman entrant in two of the four previous years. In 1983 she won the women's division and in 1980 she won the overall event. As usual, several of the men followed her in order to take advantage of her course knowledge.

The second leg through Hardscrabble took its toll on many runners. Hardscrabble is a difficult area to run because the narrow winding canyon necessitates numerous stream crossings. To make things worse, the trail is overgrown and covered with patches of stinging nettles. Landis cruised through this section handily, and he reached the 35-mile checkpoint at East Canyon in 6:40. Odin Christensen followed in second, but over an hour behind. He had found that Hardscrabble Canyon was more difficult than the topo maps led him to believe. Laurie had a comfortable three hour lead on Cindy at this point.

The section from Big Mountain to Lambs Canyon is downhill but considered the nastiest section on the course by many runners, including Landis. There are several steep downhill segments of trail with ankle-busting rocks and no water.

Nevertheless, Landis appeared unfazed by this segment. When he arrived at Lambs Canyon, the 53-mile point, he had increased his lead over Christensen by another 30 minutes.

As the race progressed through the day, many runners were on pace to break 30 hours. But at dark the statistics changed dramatically. Several runners dropped out at Lambs Canyon, including Cindy Andrus.

By the time most runners reached Millcreek Canyon checkpoint at 62 miles it was dark. They then travelled up a winding trail past Dog Lake and further up to Desolation Lake. Many of the out of state runners from low elevations had trouble along this trail, which follows a ridge for several miles at over 10,000 feet above sea level. The ridge was very cold that evening, and runners were glad to reach the Brighton Store at 75 miles and sample Don's homemade soup.

Landis stopped for only a few

minutes at Brighton, as he realized that he had a chance to break his course record. Christensen's quads were shot by the time he reached this point, as he had had a difficult time running the downhill section from Scott's Pass. Seven hours later Laurie cruised in to Brighton, headed for a friend's cabin, and took a brief nap.

After Brighton one must contend with the climb up to Catherine Pass and the difficult descent down Dry Fork Canyon. Dry Fork was indeed a concern for the veterans. Last year a group of runners missed a turn and nearly ran off a cliff. There is only one safe way down, and this year lots of flagging tape was used and flashing lights were stationed at the difficult areas. Runners still had trouble though, due to the steep gradient and loose rocks.

When Landis reached American Creek he was at his low point of the race. Feeling hypoglycemic, he drank a few cups of hot chocolate and took a long rest. The stop was worthwhile, as afterward he was able to run confidently, but he was worried about his chances of breaking the course record. From Snake Creek Canyon all the way to Midway he pushed hard, and was rewarded with a new course record of 22:00:48.

Meanwhile unknown ultrarunner Del Beaudoin surprised himself and everyone else by overtaking Christensen in Snake Creek Canyon. In only his second ultra (his first was a 31 miler) he fin-

Wasatch Front 100 Mile Endurance Run

East Layton, Utah Sept. 8-9, 1984
Trails, 23,510' climb, 22,770' descent

1. Robert Landis, 27	22:00:48!
2. Del Beaudoin, 39, CA	24:34:41
3. Odin Christensen, 36, NV	25:30:35
4. Richard Gates, 27	27:45:06
5. David Lygre, 42, WA	27:47:21
Brent Hale, 30	27:47:21
7. Dale Sutton, 44, CA	27:49:33
8. Alan Weeks, 35	29:48:39
9. O.R. Petersen, 47, CO	29:50:05
10. Scott Demaree, 33, TX	29:51:47
11. John Bandur, 46, WA	30:33:40
12. Leland Jonas, 40	31:23:01
13. Phillip Krumm, 48	31:25:43
14. Rob Volkenand, 53, OR	31:41:56
15. Herman Kuhn, 48, CA	32:06:37
16. Joseph Adams, 44, TX	32:37:10
17. Laurie Staton-Carter, 31	32:42:27
18. Stan Nakashima, 32, WA	32:59:41
19. Tim Guinan, 37, WA	33:25:45
20. Fred Denys, 38	33:46:54
21. Paul Hart, 35	34:19:36
22. Fred Riemer, 36	34:24:41
23. Irvin Nielsen, 38	34:27:13
24. Jon Griffin, 45, CA	35:22:08
51 starters	



It was Landis vs. the clock, as he left everyone far behind while chasing his own course record.

ished second with a fine time of 24:34:41. This performance is especially remarkable since Del had never been on the course, and had no handlers or pacers.

Odin Christensen was third in 25:30. Though disappointed in missing a 24 hour buckle, he was pleased to have finished before the second sunrise.

Laurie Staton-Carter looked fresh as she finished 17th overall in 32:42:27. Joe Adams and Leland Jonas finished in fine form,

after having had difficulty the two previous years. Rob "Ole Goat" Volkenand made up for his adventure of last year, when he took a wrong turn at 90 miles and was disqualified after running 110 miles and missing the Snake Creek checkpoint. That fork in the road is now called "Ole Goat Junction."

Perhaps eighth place finisher Alan Weeks best summed up the race. "It is a beautiful and rugged 100 mile course, but I'm sure glad it's over."

during the first five miles to be met on top by a cheerful little boy serving ham sandwiches and coffee. Western States comes down third. The professionalism is there through the glitter, but it's a razzle-dazzle world, with too much of everything. The Pacific Crest Trail 100 is much like Donner: small, homespun, and staffed mainly by friends and family of the Flatlanders. Hopefully we'll see the resurrection of this race next year as we Flatlanders regroup (you can take that to the bank!). Finally, I know each of the race directors personally, and each pour a lot of his life into his race.

The Donner Trail 100 is, by my estimate, only 95 miles long. My suspicions, reached after seeing the results of runners I know were confirmed, at least in my mind, after I ran the course this year. Western States had been 5 to 8 miles short for its first four years, and route changes in those early years, caused by flooding, further improved the early runners' chances of a buckle. Wasatch and PCT have to be somewhat over 100 miles in length.

Time to get to the subject of buckles. "Bucklemania," best sums up my concern over the effect that buckle awards often have over people's principles and outlook. I've personally observed fellow runners cutting trails and using various other tactics in the pursuit of the almighty buckle. Buckles become obsessions to some. I've seen our Flatlanders Club disintegrate over buckle matters and races staged just to award previously engraved buckles. In any case, only the DT 100 does not have a buckle award, and I think this contributes to a healthier atmosphere; you run the race to face the challenge for the sake of the challenge.

I rank Wasatch, WS, DT, and PCT in that order for scenery. The first three ascend rapidly during the first 5 to 10 miles for a spectacular view of the sunrise. This is easily the scenic high-

A Flatlander's Views on Four Mountain 100's

by Dave Niederhaus

There are four major hundred mile trail runs in the far west: the Western States 100, the Pacific Crest Trail 100, the Wasatch 100, and the Donner Trail 100. My intention here is to compare them from a runner's viewpoint, as opposed to that of a statistician, a race director, or the news media. I have run each race at least once, although I did not complete Wasatch. Before beginning the comparison let me state that I'm not writing to impress you with my running abilities. I have been running for over thirty years (12 years in ultras) but I'm certainly not fast. I enjoy the challenges of mountain ultras. A small, enthusiastic, competent field of runners over a tough 100 mile course with plenty of weather and terrain obstacles is something I look forward to with relish. The WS100 does not meet this criterion as the other three races do. It has become something of a circus with cash prizes and maximum commercialism. But enough of that. You can see where I'm coming from—basic Flatlander philosophy, new challenges, new limits, and competition for its own sake.

The first element to compare is the degree of difficulty. There are many factors to be taken into account here. The most difficult has to be Wasatch. I don't say that because I didn't finish it, but rather because it simply makes the runnerup, WS100, look like a cakewalk. PCT100 is third, followed by the Donner Trail 100. Wasatch is brutal in every aspect, from altitude changes to the continually rocky trails, to the severe temperature changes. Western States has had its difficult (and its easy) years, when snow or mud or heat turn a well planned run into a survival test. I've seen all the extremes of WS, from calf-deep dust ('77) to large snow accumulation ('87).

The PCT 100, on the other hand, is fairly predictable, as it

stretches from low desert to moderate mountains. Only deep snow and overnight freezing conditions ('82) make this run unpleasant for a seasoned ultrarunner. The Donner Trail run is the least difficult of the four, but it has its good points too.

All four races require exceptional race support teams. As far as I am concerned, the key factor in any ultra competition is hydration. There are long stretches of WS and Wasatch that, in a dry year, will tax your "camel" characteristics. The Donner Trail 100 has to have the smallest number of aid station personnel, but they are most enthusiastic. The 1984 running of this event saw only 17 entrants and there was a strong sense of camaraderie and competition. The support teams organized by race director Crawford were equally tightly knit. No money was given out here, unless you count the expired gaming chips affixed to the award plaques. Wasatch is a close second on aid stations as far as enthusiasm. Picture pushing yourself up a 10,000 foot mountain



Bill Finkbeiner near the top of Peavine Mountain (8250') at about mile 9 of this year's Donner Trail 100 Mile. In the background is Reno (4900'), where the race starts. Finkbeiner was the eventual winner in 16:48:52.