

Triumph Over Adversity at the Wasatch Front

by Irv Nielsen

A blistering summer left the local Wasatch Alpine Striders prepared for hot temperatures as the Wasatch 100 Mile Endurance run approached. Of course you know what happened. Cold temperatures. Go figure! I didn't really think race day would be so cold, but as I was helping put up ribbons on the Sessions Ridge. The wind was biting. After the race, when I heard the runners complain of early nausea, I put the puzzle of running 100 trail miles into this scenario: The balmy temperature at East Mount Wilderness Park was deceptive. Participants were not prepared for cold weather up on the ridges in the first third of the race. This resulted in runners using extra energy (critical amounts of fluids are needed for this) to keep their core temperature up. The wind was again driving sodium-bearing sweat off the skin faster than normal. Runners feeling cold just do not consume as many fluids and electrolytes as they do in hotter conditions. The difficult climb up to Chinscraper meant extra heavy breathing which expelled more moisture.

All this added up meant the runners had a difficult time keeping up with their fluid and electrolyte balance. Early dehydration set the stage for nausea and susceptibility to altitude, even though most runners were well prepared to run at altitude. Stomach problems and fatigue battles seemed more common than ever at Wasatch this year. Many of the early leaders either dropped or took much longer to recover before going on. At the finish line I heard more than one runner with a bit of "wheezing" in their speech. Pulmonary edema at altitude strikes particularly bad when runners become dehydrated early in the race. It all fits together. Despite all of this however, the finish rate climbed up to 67 percent, versus 62 percent last year.

Karl Meltzer laid off of racing most of



Lynn Alder Photography

The Wasatch Trail at mile 52.

the summer due to an injured disc in his back. He was especially keen on attempting Hardrock, but didn't get cleared to run until a few days before Wasatch. Perhaps all of this rest enabled Karl to pull off yet another great victory. Mike Tilden held the lead for quite awhile before backing off and finished fourth. Leland Barker was also in the hunt for the Golden Skull award and overcame a car accident, which set him back physically and financially. Leland eventually came in a very respectable third.

Ann Trason started well and was giving the men all the competition they could handle, but eventually bowed out with severe hypothermia at Scotts, about 72 miles into the race. Despite the chill to her body, her warm heart sent Laura Vaughn a message to, "Get out of Scotts and down to Brighton." I may have left out a few of the adjectives in that message that give it extra flavor and encouragement. Laura did manage to

recover from being completely down and out. Struggling on despite the severe nausea and weariness, she took up the mantra, "Ring, painting, ring, painting!" Fred Denys, a well respected artist and 14-time finisher of Wasatch after this year's finish, kindly painted her a picture of Lake Mary, very stunning and quite a valuable piece if you know Fred and his highly sought after oil paintings. This, along with the first woman's 10-year ring presented at the finish, was just enough to keep Laura trail dancing over those passes to her tenth consecutive finish.

Susan Hunter-Yates won the women's race with a sub 24-hour time, only the fourth woman ever to do so. Susan claims she had little training for the race and wasn't expecting much. She left a lot of men whimpering in her wake while running to a ninth place overall finish. It must be true that sometimes the best part of training is accomplished by getting lots of rest. Adding to that day's theme, Dana Miller, (five-time winner) came back after

months of recovering from a chronic injury to nail down a 13th place finish.

All ten runners who came to Wasatch expecting to complete The Grand Slam of Ultrarunning did just that. They were: Bobby Keogh, David Jackson, Hans-Dieter Weisshaar, Joe Decker, Linda McFadden, Monica Scholz, Raul Flores, Rick Hodges, Robert Tavernini, and Scott Hunter. Congratulations to you all!

With the Summer Olympics blasting out over the news and knowing that many of those athletes are making tons of money, it is nice to share an athletic event with true sportsmen and women. If anyone is getting rich off from running Wasatch, they aren't telling anyone about it. But the runners are being rewarded internally through victory of the spirit. Richard Randall, called Grizz by his friends, completed his tenth Wasatch and accepted a painting from Fred Denys.

The 1,000 miles of Wasatch ring was also awarded. It was a triumph of the day, a rejoicing moment of joy for us all. Everyone finishing Wasatch can relate a grand story of victory over adversity, victory of the spirit. There was Rick Gates, completing his 16th Wasatch and Fred Riemer nabbing his 15th with five minutes to spare. There was Hans Dieter from Germany finishing his weekly 100, making him appear to be from another planet, not just another continent. Derek Blaylock made it under 24 hours and his father David Blaylock finished again. The Blaylock construction business keeps him busy every week and yet they are still able to do Wasatch and do it well. Adam Grobden, the race director's son, came and made it two for two with great willpower. Everyone was nervous and excited for Debbie Moss of Salt Lake as she finished with only 52 seconds to spare. Robert Tuller from New York finished nine minutes over the 36-hour cut-off, but explained he was saving himself for his honeymoon. His wedding was scheduled for the next Saturday. There were many first-timers that left us with tears in our eyes as we felt the relief and joy explode at the finish. This is the best and true meaning of sport. As a part of the race committee, I was honored to stand in the presence of so many spirits victorious over their many struggles. I wasn't handing out medals and listening to the Star Spangled Banner play while they stepped to the podium. It was much, much better than that.



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Mile 92 — Only 8 to Go!



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The amazing Hans-Dieter Weisshaar, at the finish of his 15th 100-miler this year

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Attempting Wasatch over 70

(As told to Tom Hayes by an anonymous Montana ultrarunner)

Ultrarunning over the age of 70 is sort of like eating a persimmon. For one thing, you aren't sure how to go about it. And secondly, you aren't sure if it is good for you once you are done. There just isn't much published about training or racing at that age. I have a good friend running ultras in his mid-70s now, who is much too modest to allow his name to be used in this article. In hope of passing on his experience and of motivating some similar articles, I will be his voice for now. Let's call him Cal, as I know Calvin Coolidge was a man he admired.

Cal didn't start running until he was 62 and didn't do an ultra until he was 69, which, after observing the intermittent injuries of his 49-year-old son, may be good for his longevity. Rather than run the first 62 years of his life, he worked in the woods. As a timber cruiser he would be out almost every day on Montana mountains trekking up and down along compass lines rather than trails. He often saw his two sons paying money to run in little 10-km circles or his daughter paying even more to ride her horse in 100-mile circles. Cal couldn't understand why they wouldn't rather be paid for walking in forests with waist-deep pristine snow or bushwhacking through rain-soaked alders in the late fall.

When he semi-retired from work, he figured that maybe he should do a little running to maintain fitness between jobs. Undoubtedly anybody reading this magazine is well aware of the addictive qualities of running and understands why I am writing now about him attempting a 100-mile trail run in the Wasatch mountains. Adding to the satisfaction of running at his age is the ease in bringing home an age group award, as he often wins first, second, and last. But the recognition is still sweet and he especially enjoys placing in the age 60 or even age 50 age groups.

Training as an older athlete is a puzzle. Should he run more or harder to keep his fast degenerating muscles in shape or does his age help maintain a base



Tom Hayes with his inspirational runner.

longer than a beginning runner's does? Does he need to eat more or less or the same as a young masters runner? Cal has learned that heat has a more dramatic effect on him now than it ever used to. But he still hasn't cracked the code on training. One week before his first ultra in 1995, the Elkhorn 100 Km here in Montana, he did a 50-mile training run. He sure felt more confident going into the race but allows now he must have run it on tired legs.

This spring of 2000, as he commenced his thirteenth year of running and 74th year of living, he was feeling unusually fatigued after his 30-mile training circuit. Some ultrarunning friends convinced him he wasn't eating enough. So he experimented at the Bighorn 50 Mile by eating huge quantities at the 18-mile aid station (which provides a smorgasbord of good food). The terrific climb immediately following the big meal laid Cal out and he had to drop from his first ultra. He feared that age had finally won the battle and he was no longer able to recover from strenuous exercise. But a long rest and a successful stress test convinced him to try one more ultra.

The Elkhorn 100 Km in mid-July was a perfect test. The euphoric sense of returning to a family reunion of ultrarunners, lots of good climbs, a beautiful trail and talkative aid stations

saw him through to a finish, matching his best in the last few years, which is generally about 14 hours (just below the middle of the pack). Later at the Bridger Ridge Run, he placed in the top third as he set a record only a minute slower than his age 60 mark.

Cal's training is primarily a six to eight-hour run about once a week along with two or three days of timber cruising (five to six hours). He does some half-mile intervals on the gravel road leading to his ranch plus a few five-km's and ten-km's each month during the summer. So, as with most 100-mile neophytes, he had no idea what to expect during the Wasatch Front 100 this fall. He decided to keep going as long as he had fun. All his friends seemed to think his natural inclination for climbing would lead him to a successful finish in this 100-mile, which is second only to Hardrock in vertical climb.

On race morning Cal started back in the pack, as he didn't want to be trampled by all those youngsters chomping at the bit. Everyone seemed to start slow and easy and he understood better why a fellow once told him he disliked doing 50-milers because he had to run so fast! Cal's wife even went a half-mile or so to be sure the trails looked all right. Running on trails with a flashlight was a new experience for him and he had to mooch off other's lights when his bulb

burned out after a half-hour. It was a great feeling to see the sun finally come up (although he thinks ascending more than 4,000 feet to the chinscraper was sure a challenging way to start 100 miles).

The additional climbing, the rocky footing and the long downhill on the gravel road from Francis Peak got him to feeling a little fatigued at 18.6 miles. Cal realized this course did not give any breaks and that any given stretch was tougher than any other ultra he had been in. The scenery on the ridge tops was awe-inspiring. Maybe that is what brought out the motorcycle rider who had deserted his 1,000-pound bike on a steep side-hill and narrow trail after Sessions Lift-Off.

The clear sunny day and moderate temperatures made it more difficult to keep up with electrolytes and hydration, but he thinks he did fine, as he took electrolyte capsules at least every hour. The aid stations were good and the volunteers very friendly. But he was hoping to find more fat and protein calories, like ham or turkey sandwiches, in the first 30 miles. He thinks maybe he started too slow and those ahead of him had gobbled them up!

Fatigue seemed to be building up more than he expected this early in the race. He thinks his training was adequate for a 100-km, but not enough for the massive ups and downs at Wasatch. He believes he needed more long runs exceeding the six or seven hours he did about once a week. And he thinks extensive experience with rocky trails would be a big help. Possibly he just wasn't mentally ready for the difficulty of the course. So he decided on the ridge before Big Mountain to save his wife a late night drive to pick him up at Lambs or 6:00 a.m. at Brighton, which is as far as he believes he could have gone. Cal really liked the course and feels very challenged to return. But first he thinks he will try that 70-mile race up in British Columbia called "the death march."

Cal attributes his quick recovery partly to starting too slow and partly to a kinder, gentler pace than he employs in shorter races. He was able to look stairs squarely in the eye the very next day. He was out cruising timber in rugged terrain three days after the race. So he is thinking maybe some longer

training runs and a crew with some of his own food for the first few aid stations plus a clearer mental picture of how tough the Wasatch 100 course can be will carry him through to a successful

finish either next year or the year after. Especially if his son's pacer (third woman at Wasatch in 1999) drops his son as she promises and paces Cal instead!



Mindy Niitsuma near the Alpine Loop Crest Aid Station (mile 92).

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Wasatch Front 100 Mile

East Layton, Utah
September 9, 2000
Tough Trails

1. Karl Meltzer, 32	20:52:56	54. James Sperling, 53, MI	31:12:49	90. Todd Hoover, 33	33:32:56
2. Mark Mcdermott, 41, ENG	21:24:06	55. Thomas Green, 49, MD	31:22:35	91. Shane Mozaffari, 32	33:33:70
3. Leland Barker, 42	21:48:26	56. Chris Luberecki, 33, CA	31:26:23	92. Scott Hunter, 55, MA	33:41:15
4. Michael Tilden, 33	22:44:41	57. <u>Laura Vaughan</u> , 34, CA	31:26:27	93. Michael Schlier, 44	33:43:45
5. Mike Topper, 41, CA	22:58:55	58. Chris Avery, 37, AZ	31:30:17	94. Brent Palmer, 60	33:45:17
6. Derek Blaylock, 31	23:00:57	59. Art Bradham, 43, SC	31:37:29	95. Eugene Trahern, 37, WA	33:46:46
7. Ken Jensen, 32	23:32:48	60. Daniel Barnett, 37	31:50:16	96. David Blaylock, 57	33:48:58
8. Mark Hartell, 36, ENG	23:39:20	61. Mark Hartinger, 43, WA	31:51:51	97. Charles Wilson, 51, CA	33:53:05
9. <u>Susan Hunter-Yates</u> , 28, WA	23:45:39	62. Ronald Ross, 42, OH	31:51:52	98. Roger Adams, 39	33:59:51
10. James Nelson, 39	24:14:49	63. Ron Cunningham, 51, OR	31:52:01	99. John Reynolds, 37	34:00:31
Tom Remkes, 38	24:14:49	64. Jim Knight, 47	32:01:04	100. Paul Hansen, 48	34:02:12
12. Tim Spence, 44	25:03:34	65. Duncan Orr, 49	32:08:54	101. Dan Simpson, 26	34:07:05
13. Dana Miller, 49	25:07:11	66. Robert Green, 44	32:13:01	102. Frederick Denys, 54	34:09:03
14. <u>Sue Johnston</u> , 34, VT	25:16:45	67. Hans-D Weisshaar, 60, GER	32:13:01	103. Peter Dudley, 45, CO	34:14:05
15. <u>Betsy Nye</u> , 35, NV	25:26:31	68. David Jackson, 41, KY	32:21:36	104. Joe Decker, 30, MD	34:14:41
16. Tim Seminoff, 42	26:03:20	69. Mike Price, 50	32:27:31	105. Mike Stephens, 42, CA	34:25:12
17. Richard West, 52, WA	26:36:20	Mark Williams, 42, MO	32:27:31	106. <u>Candy Lavicky</u> , 40	34:26:21
18. Alan Johnson, 48	26:36:23	71. Peter Lindgren, 30	32:35:13	107. Robert Tavernini, 32, TX	34:27:39
19. Daniel Hendriksen, 46	26:38:40	72. <u>Lorraine Sorensen</u> , 50	32:36:19	108. <u>Annette Lillie</u> , 32, CO	34:29:10
20. David Terry, 38, OR	27:13:55	73. Kevin Dickerson, 36	32:37:33	109. Bert Meyer, 55, CT	34:40:45
21. Michael Mitchell, 41	27:33:37	74. Richard Hayes, 49, CA	32:41:20	110. John Medinger, 49, CA	34:46:09
22. Robert Clementz, 41, TX	27:45:36	Paul Schmidt, 48, CA	32:41:20	111. Alex Bennett, 28	34:46:59
23. Peter Riley, 39	27:51:14	76. Nicholas Palazza, 53, NY	32:42:07	112. <u>Loni Rasley</u> , 30	34:55:20
24. Garrett Graubins, 27, CO	28:08:11	77. Mike Byrnes, 47	32:43:40	113. <u>Linda McFadden</u> , 38, CA	35:03:24
25. Bobby Keogh, 29, NM	28:22:02	78. <u>Lorie Hutchison</u> , 36	32:44:27	114. Michael Lavelle, 44, CA	35:05:45
26. Gordon Hardman, 49, CO	28:23:48	79. James McGregor, 57	32:48:49	115. William Rideg, 34, MT	35:06:30
27. Kim Olsen, 46	28:25:10	80. Rick Kelley, 50, AZ	32:49:06	116. Adam Grobbsen, 23	35:07:24
28. <u>Ruth Zollinger</u> , 34	28:25:55	81. Patrick Mcurmury, 41	32:51:00	117. Max Gines, 49	35:14:47
29. <u>Pam Reed</u> , 39, AZ	28:28:55	82. <u>Janine Duplessis</u> , 45, WA	33:03:43	118. Marc Collman, 43	35:15:39
30. David Fortune, 36, CO	28:29:07	83. Ike Hesler, 60, WA	33:12:08	119. Karl Ryserjr., 45	35:17:08
31. Bob Henderson, 54	28:32:28	84. Brent Knight, 40, ID	33:20:01	120. Grant Holdaway, 69	35:31:13
32. Ted Russell, 34	28:37:44	85. Tom Hayes, 49, MT	33:22:30	121. David Capson, 39	35:34:46
33. Daniel Wolfe, 50	28:38:26	86. Ron Nicholl, 57, WA	33:24:08	122. Stuart Sorensen, 55, CA	35:36:28
34. Eric Hodges, 51, CA	28:39:34	87. <u>Lynn Yarnall</u> , 50, WA	33:29:21	123. Frederick Riemer, 52	35:55:38
35. Rex Stickland, 56, AZ	28:41:35	88. <u>Ann Grove</u> , 59, CA	33:30:30	124. Mark Stodghill, 52, MN	35:55:52
36. Jeff Lamora, 27	28:43:10	89. Max Bliss, 32, NY	33:32:44	125. <u>Debbie Moss</u> , 45	35:59:08
37. Don Platt, 46, CO	28:43:41				
38. Phil Sheridan, 43, KS	28:49:11				
39. Ted Heal, 53	28:50:03				
Troy Olson, 37	28:50:03				
41. Murray Schart, 41	28:50:52				
42. Bill Francis, 48	29:17:43				
43. David Hayse, 30, IN	29:25:59				
44. Rick Gates, 43	29:29:22				
45. Grizz Randall, 56	29:43:12				
46. Raul Flores, 44, KS	29:45:48				
47. John Diroll, 43	30:05:25				
48. <u>Monica Scholz</u> , 33, CAN	30:18:19				
49. <u>Jill Bohnney</u> , 36	30:40:16				
50. Mike Ehrlich, 37, CO	30:43:35				
51. Karl Jensen, 51, CAN	30:46:43				
52. Gary Webster, 33	30:55:14				
53. Tom Noll, 45, ID	31:08:35				



Near the Alpine Crest Aid Station (mile 92).