

Meltzer Wins Again at Wasatch 100 Mile

by Claude Grant

The Wasatch Crimson Cheetah (*Acinonyx jubatus rufus*) stalked its prey as it left the checkpoint at Scott Pass aid station just before Brighton at the 75-mile mark. Fleet-footed Crimson Cheetah Karl Meltzer stunned onlookers this year, pouncing on Nate McDowell's 2002 course record, breaking it by nine minutes, arriving at the Homestead Resort in Midway, Utah, in 19:43:47. To say Karl was "in the zone" is an understatement. "Out of this world," is more like it. But it didn't start out like there would be a fifth Golden Skull first place award to the multiple winner of the Wasatch Front and Hardrock 100-milers. The lead was secured at the first checkpoint station by Jim Huffman, who led or shared the top spot until Meltzer put the hammer down (or at least forgot to slow down) near Brighton at mile 75, and kept up the relentless pace, building his lead to 14 minutes at mile 87 and more than an hour at the finish. Huffman gamely gave it a great effort continuing his strong quest for first until 90 miles, when he reached the excruciatingly painful part of the course commonly called "earth's torture

chamber." By that point Meltzer had this race tucked away good and tight in those experienced feet.

Huffman finished second in 20:56:12, Ty Draney took third in 22:09:50, Paul Swency grabbed fourth in 22:43:29, and Derek Blaylock was fifth in 22:53:45. Meltzer ran an astonishing five hours and nine minutes from Brighton (commonly referred to as the "morgue") to the finish, the fastest time known to the Wasatch on this difficult last section. After a very successful year, Meltzer now owns three of the top four times at Wasatch and the top three times at Hardrock. In awarding Karl his eighth Crimson Cheetah buckle this year, it is felt by many that he has made a good case for the title as the strongest 100-mile mountain runner ever. He set a new course record despite vegetation on the course having overgrown like a jungle (due to heavy early spring rain this year) and the technical difficulty of running on all those rocks when tired. Of course, he does own a lot of buckles that help keep his long pants up. That must help.

If you don't think those rocks create problems, just talk to Matthew Watts, who fell and cracked three ribs, suffering trauma to his chest area, which as a result slowly developed to an 80-percent collapsed lung. His gradual onset of shortness of breath due to hypoxia kept him from getting past the Pot Hollow checkpoint at mile 97, and he was taken to the hospital for two days of recovery. Having regained some of his sense of humor about the whole ordeal, he commented later, "You know, the rocks just don't care!" Most trail runners who have fallen themselves would surely agree rocks don't have much empathy with flesh and bone.

In the women's race, Darcy Africa took the lead at the first checkpoint, arriving 19 minutes ahead of Betsy Nye and slowly added to that lead, finishing in a very strong 24:34:53. Nye went on to a new personal record after finishing first woman three years running, in 2001, 2002, and 2003, with a powerful



Ty Draney, entering the Big Mountain aid station.

25:26:18. Krissy Moehl Sybrowski, the 2004 winner and Crimson Cheetah, came in third in 26:34:45. Lorie Hutchison also ran a personal best for fourth place in 27:14:47, and fifth place was taken by Stacey Bunton in 29:06:57.

Derek Blaylock, Phil Lowry, and Jim Williamson received their 1,000-mile, ten-year rings. They also received great print copies of a Fred Denys oil-on-canvas art work, a landscape with Mount Timpanogas in the background. In addition, Phil Lowry presented his long-suffering wife with an enlarged and framed photo of part of the course for her sacrifice in staying home with the family while he is out in the mountains training.

On a lighter note, Dana (mud and guts) Miller, a five-time former champion, was at the Homestead walking along with four plastic patio chairs in his arms and walking rather slowly since he dropped out at Big Water, mile 65, at Wasatch this year. Someone joked as he was going by, "Man, we are getting so old we need to carry chairs on our runs." Dana laughed at the lame humor and kidded back, "That's not a bad idea. I bet a small portable chair hooked on the back, like a backpack over the rear, would indeed come in handy on my future trail runs."



Tips for Wasatch 100 Mile Runners

- 1) Run mega training miles on hilly trails. From start to finish, Wasatch is all about brutal elevation changes, most of it at significant altitude. You will need to be strong and virtually bulletproof climbing hills if you want to finish.
- 2) Study the race website thoroughly before you go: the course description, the driving directions, the advice for not dropping out, the elevation chart, the rules, past race reports, and past split times. The race meeting on Friday afternoon is mostly for leaving drop bags. Almost no information is offered, although the setting—the highly manicured Sugarhouse Park—is beautiful.
- 3) Do some background work on your family history and go a day or two early so you can visit the Family Search Center and the Family History Library in the Mormon's Temple Square. The relentlessly friendly staff can teach you more about genealogical research in five minutes than you will get out of a raft of books on the subject. In no time you'll be tracking your ancestors across the Atlantic on leaky, wooden



Andrew Subudhi leads a group into Grobben's Corner.

- ships and uncovering great, great, great grandpas who died in the Civil War.
- 4) Pay attention as you fly into the airport. Below you'll see a weird landscape of towering mountain ridges and flat valleys, pure blue stands of water, fringed with a deep green algae bloom, white salt flats, dry patches of tan earth, and flocks of huge white birds, and of course, the great Salt Lake, the largest lake between the Great Lakes and the Pacific Ocean, and the largest saltwater lake in the Western Hemisphere.
- 5) On Thursday or Friday before the race, hike the climb out of Lamb's Canyon (about midway in the race) or the climb out of Brighton Lodge (about 75 miles in the race). You'll get a taste of the inclines and the altitude, and see some beautiful sites in the daylight that you'll miss at night. You might even see a moose wandering around in the forest. Both trailheads are easy drives from Salt Lake City.
- 6) Bring warm clothes, and lots of them. This year, a chilly, foggy wind whipped the early morning ridges and then sprang up again to punish the runners all night, especially in high, exposed spots. The campfires at the aid stations were like blowtorches on one side and dead cold on the other.
- 7) Spend some time touring Salt Lake City. It's Utah's capitol and is laid out with streets "wide enough for a team of four oxen and a covered wagon to turn around." At first named Great Salt Lake City (the "Great" was dropped in 1868), the city boasts the immaculate Mormon Salt Lake Temple and Temple Square, the ZCMI mall, the Salt Palace Convention Center, and just out of town, the world's deepest manmade hole, the Kennecott Utah Copper's Bingham Canyon Mine.
- 8) Finally, enjoy the Wasatch Mountains with their beautiful conifer and aspen forests while you can. Once the race starts, you'll have your hands full.

– Gary Dudney



Jim Huffman arrives at Big Mountain.