

## Catskill Mountain 100k Road Race and Relay

8/11/19

### Solo Race Report



Why? That's the question I was faced with many times prior to running this race solo. I can't explain why I had the desire to run 100k, and most people wouldn't understand anyway; but this seemed like the perfect race to serve as my first ultra-marathon.

The weather reports a week prior forecasted a beautiful August day in the upper 70's for race day. This time they were right on, as it could not have been a more gorgeous day to run the beautiful back roads of the Catskill mountains. Start time was set for 4 am and my wonderful wife agreed to get up at 3 am and drive me to the start. She had asked me a few times in the days prior if I was nervous at all. Surprisingly, I was not. My concern was that I wasn't bringing enough food, or the right food, or

enough water. Since this race is completely unsupported, I was required to have a crew and provide my own supplies. I was meticulous in my planning. I created a timeline, which I printed and gave to each of my 4 crew members, along with the course map. I created a strategy for eating and drinking; 100-200 calories per hour by way of energy gels and cliff bars. I would drink 2.5 liters of water each 20-mile segment, where my crew was set to resupply me. I sent a bag of food along with each crew so I could eat at each 20-mile mark as well. Mentally, and for planning purposes, I had broken this race down into 20-mile segments with a refuel break between each. I knew I would have to break it down further into 10-mile sections once I got past the 30-mile mark.

My plan for completing this race was to stay positive, and to remember that I have all day to finish. Don't push the pace, and don't let the negative thoughts stick around for too long. I wanted to have fun and not regret this.

The first 10K of the race was dark and a little chilly, which made it a little difficult to rip open my gel packs with my Raynaud's riddled fingers. But I was so excited and ready to do this run that I didn't let it bother me. The first sight of wildlife also came in the first section of the race, in the form of a rabid raccoon sitting in the middle of Woodland Valley road watching me run by. It was dark so all I could see was its glowing eyes

until I got close and shined my handlamp on it. The second bit of excitement in the first 10K was losing my new visor that I was looking forward to wearing when the sun came up. I'm not sure where it fell out of my pack, but it was disappointing to see an empty pouch where it should have been neatly tucked away. The quaint little village of Phoenicia came and went quickly as we were now headed west on Rt 28. If there is anything that I could complain about in this race, it would be this section. Living just down the road in Shokan, I frequently run on Rt 28 to get to the more pleasant and friendly back roads. The shoulder of Rt 28 is slanted for rain runoff, changing the mechanics of my running gait just enough to make it painful after a few miles. Chatting with another runner that had just come off a 100-mile finish within the last month made this section fly by without even noticing it.

Before the start, I asked my wife to turn my phone on airplane mode so as not to kill the battery. Much of the course has very little, if any, cell phone service. My plan was to listen to an audio book while I ran the first 40 miles. I've listened to this book a few times on long training runs and it usually works in taking my mind to another place while my legs are yelling at me to stop running. I spent most of the day running alone so listening to a Navy Seal tell his story of pain, suffering, and ultimately overcoming adversity to become a successful ultrarunner was very helpful.

I was excited to get to Rt 47 in Oliverea and get started on the uphill climb towards the Slide Mountain parking area where my son would be waiting with refill supplies and food. I knew I was going to walk most of the big climb, which has always been an internal struggle for me. I've never been one to walk during a race, so forcing myself to walk and conserve energy was against my natural tendency but I'm sure glad that I did. Continuously replaying my race plan in my head all day was so important in order to not only finish but have a fun day of running this beautiful course. My son was waiting for me at the Panther Mountain parking area, which worked out nicely as it gave me a chance to eat and refuel before finishing the rest of the hill. My initial plan to have him meet me at the Slide mountain parking area may have been a little too ambitious considering the distance to get to it after reaching the summit of the climb. Roughly 8 miles of flat and downhill running followed the climb up to the Slide Mountain parking area. It seemed like this stretch went much farther than 8 miles, and I didn't mind that at all considering the landscape in which I was running. The road parallels the West Branch Neversink River into Frost Valley, past Lake Cole and the beautiful Frost Valley YMCA facility.

Lake Cole was a landmark that I had mentally check marked because it signifies the halfway point of the race. Keeping my race plan in mind, I focused on my next stop: Grahamsville in less than 10 miles. What I had forgot about was the huge decent down into Grahamsville. Ouch. Running on pavement downhill is not my favorite thing in the world, and this one would take a little longer as I took it slow trying to conserve energy and save my knees. Again, I sunk into the sound of my audio book author read about

David Goggins' 3<sup>rd</sup> attempt at Hell Week in Navy Seal BUDS training and let the pain slip away.

An interesting thing happened around mile 35; the pain in both hips and tightness in both legs that I had battled for the last 10-15 miles had gone away. When I realized what had happened, I almost had to stop to make sure I was ok. Is it possible to have just run 35 miles and feel good? I ran into Grahamsville and met my crew at the school parking lot feeling like the race had only just begun. I felt amazing. This I can't explain, but I attribute it to hard training, a positive attitude, and sticking to my race plan. By the time I met my crew, I had finished all my gel packs and all my water. Perfect. Refuel, refill my pack, and hydrate. I was right on pace according to my schedule, and Steve was running with me for the next 5 miles. We had only been friends for roughly 1 year but had run together and talked together many times. He was an asset to my crew and to my race. Steve was accompanied by Ethan and his wife Shane, close friends whom I can always rely on; Ethan is also a fellow Marine. They would crew me for the rest of the day, unselfishly donating their time, energy, and fuel to help get me to the finish.

We left the school at mile 43.5. Steve ran with me for 5 miles, leaving me with 1.5 miles until the 50-mile mark; another huge mental hurdle. Could I really run 50 miles? Questions like that are what I put out of my mind that day. One step at a time, keep moving forward and the end will come. We ran past the Rondout Reservoir where bald eagles are frequently seen and known to nest. There wasn't one cloud in the sky, the temperature was in the mid-70s, and it was beautiful, peaceful, and serene running past the reservoir heading towards the town of Sundown. Those 5 miles went past like they were standing still as we talked about the joys of running and life. My crew had a chair ready for me, along with food and fluid refills. I sat down and they put bags of ice on my knees and my neck. I am truly blessed to have friends like this.

Peekamoose Road...a road that I knew and had traveled many times...just not on foot. As I passed the sign for Denning, I thought to myself 'I bet you never thought about running to the Town of Denning.'. My crew was waiting for me just past the Peekamoose parking area and the Blue Hole. Apparently, the DEC officers at the parking area didn't like the idea of Ethan parking on the side of the road waiting for me...but Ethan is a Marine and used his power of persuasion to talk her into allowing it until I arrived. The public has been frequenting this area much more and leaving the place trashed. To curb this behavior the DEC has been hanging out there more often, and it seems to have been working. I was happy to see my crew when I did because Peekamoose Road is one long incline and I needed a quick break.

After running for many hours in open sunlight, I was getting a nice tan but welcomed the canopy of trees that Peekamoose Road provided. With the Rondout Creek on my right side I cruised up the road past Buttermilk Falls Brook, a popular waterfall that

people frequently climb, and another smaller waterfall at Bear Hole Brook. Soon I would reach the last hurdle of the day; the decent down the mountain where Peekamoose Road becomes Watson Hollow Road. Roughly 5 miles remained between me and the finish line.

While the descent down the mountain road was painful, I was able to keep the pain in the back of my mind as I reflected on what I had already accomplished. At the bottom of the hill, my crew took my vest and I ran the rest of the race (about 3 miles) comfortably without it. Ethan and Shane checked on me frequently, about every half-mile, to make sure I was hydrated. With a quarter of a mile left, Davis Park and the finish line were just around the corner. I grabbed the American flag from the back of Ethan's truck and headed towards the end, full of emotions.

I crossed the line at 12 hours and 55 minutes, almost 1 hour longer than I hoped and planned to run. It was difficult. It was painful. It was awesome. I wouldn't change a thing about that race, even if it meant coming in 1 hour earlier.

I can't say thank you enough to the volunteers and crew that set up this race and took the time to make it so worth running. This may be my first year running this race, but it certainly will not be my last.

Scott Hayes