

Hello to everyone that supported and followed my race in Badwater.

I've been back from Death Valley for about five months now. Sitting here on the couch, watching the snow fall and temperature drop, it is a little hard to imagine the heat and blisters that made the 135 mile race so challenging. For just that reason however it is possible to do 100 mile plus races more than once. The pain and suffering tends to blur with time and only the sense of accomplishment and camaraderie remain. What follows is my story of the race. I hope you enjoy it and maybe gain a glimpse into what makes these races so addicting. And if not, you will probably just be reaffirmed that ultra races are crazy, that's ok too.

I would like to thank Kay Drew (Samori) for talking me into the race and Ann Heaslett for declining doing the run. After reading about this race 5 years ago, I had convinced myself that I was never going to do the race since it was hot, long, all on road and required a large crew. Since I don't really like heat and I had never run over 50km on the road I figured it was smart on my part to skip this "world's toughest" ultramarathon. In my mind it was the distance that was the most intimidating; I have always been pretty wiped out after 100 miles on trails and figured another 35 miles just may not be possible. With a crew ready to come to Death Valley to support me, it made the conclusion inevitable. So the running voice in my head eventually overcame the practical voice and I acquiesced to Kay's quest to find a runner so she could go to Death Valley, crew and be part of the Badwater experience.

In warning to all, especially if you are a long distance runner, it is best not to watch the "Running on the Sun" video. This is a documentary on the Badwater race which made Kay wish to go to Death Valley and me be intrigued enough to say yes to entering the race. After I said yes to entering I held out a secret desire for the Badwater race committee to NOT pick me for their 2005 event. The race only allows 90 runners into the race, so I figured I had about a 50:50 chance of getting in. From the video it appeared they were looking for runners with some sort of disability, tragedy or flamboyant personality. None of these really fit me, so I sent in my entry and running resume not knowing if I would be selected.

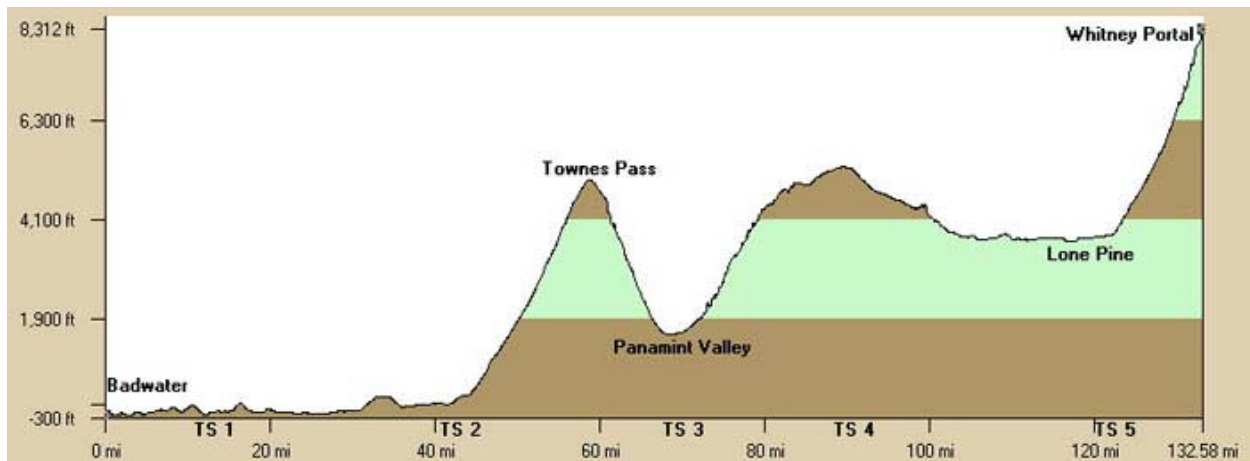
Come January of 2005 we were told to expect an entry confirmation soon, it arrived via email near the end of January. Here I was getting ready for the Birkie (a 52km ski race) and hanging out in below freezing temperatures all the while knowing I would need to figure out how to get acclimated to the dry heat of Badwater.

Knowing that I would be running 135 miles I decided I had better have some sort of a plan, but I knew from the previously mentioned video that I wasn't going to be training like some people featured in it. The weirdest training was the person that would pull a tire behind them on a highway overpass in Florida, they don't have many hills to train on there. It is still not clear to me what the tire was supposed to do. Not thinking I would be pulling a tire around any time soon, I decided to rely on some feedback from friends that had done heat training for other races. This led me to getting into Bikram Yoga where they keep the room at 95 F for the 90 minute class. I'm pretty sure that yoga, plus some sauna time and one extra long run, is what made my Badwater experience manageable and now that it is 5 months past, a great experience.

In any case let's get to the race itself.

The Race

Start - Badwater	mile 0
Aid 1 - Furnace Creek	mile 17
Aid 2 - Stovepipe Wells	mile 43
Aid 3 - Panamint Springs	mile 72
Aid 4 - Darwin Turnoff	mile 90
Aid 5 - Lone Pine	mile 122
Finish - Whitney Portals	mile 135



In a nutshell, Badwater is the following:

- 135 miles starting at 282 feet below sea level and climbing to over 8000 feet at the Mount Whitney Portals
- 81 competitors from around the world (13 from Germany alone)
- 67 men and 14 women (82% finish rate)
- 46 rookies (me) and 35 veterans
- Youngest is 28 and the oldest is 70 (both finished)
- Cut off of 60 hours (my goal was to be between 35 and 40 hours)
- Possible highs of over 125 degrees with road temperatures over 140F (official high was 118F while the measured high in the car was 127F)

Pre-Race Supplies: 30 gallons of water, 200 pounds of ice, 20 pounds of dry ice, 8 gallons of Gatorade, 6 large coolers, peanut butter sandwiches, crackers, chocolate, strawberry pop-tarts, 5 pairs of shoes and socks, white sun suit, flashlights, heart rate monitor, medical kit, 5 crew members, 100+ race volunteers, 2 vehicles, hat, sunscreen and more.

Race Planning

Serious planning began a couple of weeks prior to the actual race. My crew was freshly put together by Kay and ready to know what they would need to do during the race. The crew was comprised of Deanna Letts, Steve Wessel, Mike Hardiman, and Jerry Vondruska. I was happy to have 5 people since it would be easier for them crew me and still get some rest during the race. In hindsight I couldn't have asked for a better crew. Anyone willing to take a week off from

work, come to Death Valley, stay up for hours on end, help triage my blistered feet and track my stats for the medical study are worth their weight in gold.

During preparations, their main questions revolved around knowing what they should be giving me during the race for food and liquids. The most difficult question they had was what to do if it looked like I wasn't going to finish or if I got really sick. I couldn't answer this question definitively since I had not had either problem in my past races (knock on wood). We all agreed to plan the best we could and not to worry about having to drop out of the race until the race made it a reality.

As I said earlier I knew training would be crucial and knew I would need to run a bit more, bike a lot more and doing Bikram yoga to get prepared for the heat. I did do one extra long run (100 km) that I think did help me get through Badwater, but it wasn't as much as I had planned and the extra biking was non-existent. The most helpful training was probably doing hot yoga 2-4 times a week for 90 minutes each time. So the yoga helped and I know the 100km run helped since it taught me how to eat more while running. I've never been a good eater during a race and could always get through the 50 & 100 milers without a lot of food, but figured the extra distance and severe weather would require me to take in more food than I normally would. Based upon what I learned during my 100km training run, my food of choice was going to be peanut butter sandwiches and saltines.

Leading up to the race I ordered 4 extra pairs of shoes since I had read that they tended to melt when the hot road surface reaches into the 140's. In addition, I got a white sun suit I would need to wear during the day to keep the sun off me. It still seems strange to me, but when in the sun the best thing to do is cover up completely. Finally, the last new thing I needed were strobe lights since the race required that I wear them at night while running.

As for raising money for MS, I was horrible at getting the word out and many close friends ended up learning about the race through the magazine article the Sunday before the race. I had started to put together an email a month prior to the race, but it got busy and I am terrible at asking people for money (even for a good cause) and talking about these crazy races I do. In the end I left for Badwater without letting everyone know what I was doing. So I'll apologize to Koose and Julie particularly since they mentioned it would have been nice to hear about the race ahead of time. Next time I plan to do something crazy I'll let everyone know. I guess that would be now since next Fall I am organizing and planning a little run of a 1000 miles along the Ice Age Trail from Door county to St. Croix state park, but I digress.

Sometime during our preparation we were told there are 3 things you never pass up in Death Valley and they are water, ice and gas. In hind sight there could have been a problem, but with this advice and our planning we managed to never be short on any of these key items. Ice was by far the most critical and it saved me during the sweltering hot days when the heat would burn at my lungs. Of course there was the panic attack at the starting line (which I did not hear about until later on) when my crew realized they had left the sandwiches and saltines at the hotel located at Furnace Creek. But in true crewing fashion, they found another crew to help them out so I wouldn't have to wait 3 hours for my first food.

So let's look at the race as it unfolded from the day I arrived to the day after I finished:

Pre Race Exploration

When I arrived I did not know how much heat acclimating I should do, but knew it was 116F from the car's temperature gage. I wanted to acclimate and stay hydrated at the same time so I decided to walk around during the day and relax in the air conditioning at night. I didn't wander far from the hotel area on that first Friday afternoon as the heat was very oppressive. While walking around on the Furnace Creek golf course Friday, my first night, I realized two things: It never gets cool in Death Valley and it is really dark at night. The stars were spectacular against the lightless horizon, but the heat was still debilitating so getting inside was important.

The next day it was just as hot, but it felt slightly less oppressive. I wanted to see what I was getting myself into so after breakfast my first thing to do was to head to Badwater itself. Going 55 miles per hour down the highway, with the windows down, made driving the first 17 miles of the course backwards go quickly, but I was surprised at how hilly the course was and how thirsty I was getting. When I reached the starting line, I felt as if I were on some



other planet. All around, the ground was covered in over a foot of salt deposits. Way up on the side of the mountain next to Badwater there was a sign that simply read "Sea Level". Walking out on the visitor's deck you come upon a pool of water (brine) with fish and plant life in it. After reading about and seeing this I was encouraged to persevere through this race. If a fish could live in this environment I figured I could manage it for 60 hours.



On the way back from the start I stopped at the Devil's Golf Course to see an even more bizarre landscape. Here there were clumps of jagged dried salt domes you could walk out on. The problem was the ground was so rough you couldn't walk in a straight line. I like running off road, but walking through this made me happy we would be running the race on the road. The last spot to stop prior to getting back to the hotel was the canyon with the natural bridge. Another anomaly of Death Valley is

that water is what has formed most of the natural formations within the Valley. At the foot of the



canyon in the parking lot was a sign warning hikers of flash floods, though at the time it seemed pretty unlikely. Walking up the canyon I could see evidence of flowing water and after coming around a bend, there it was, a 50+ foot tall archway. There definitely must be large quantities of water flowing down this canyon sometimes. Later I learned most of the flash floods are caused by water coming from the mountains 50-100 miles away.

Saturday night was more interesting as the team made a last minute decision to meet half way between Death Valley and Las Vegas to transfer all the stuff from the crew's minivan to mine so they had room to shop the next day in Vegas. With all the water and ice we thought we needed for the race there would not be enough room in the one minivan for gear, 5 people and supplies. So come Saturday night I headed out of Death Valley and to the border town of Pahrump. I was surprised to find a glitzy town just inside the Nevada border, but that's what gambling will get you. After I found water (40 gallons) I headed to Burger King for dinner and then staked out the Golden Nugget casino to wait for the crew from Vegas. Like I said before it never gets cool in Death Valley and now I could say the same for Pahrump. Of course it continued to be a dry heat.

Along with supplies I brought Jerry back to Furnace Creek with me. It was nice to have some company after a few days exploring the area on my own.

Pre Race Day Exploring and Check-in

As it was going to be the last full night's sleep, Sunday was a late morning start. We had to be at the parks visitor center by 3pm for the pre-race meeting and medical check-in. With a few hours to let Jerry see what he was getting himself into we decided to head out to explore a bit. I would have liked to get to this high point overlooking the Valley and starting line, but it would have taken too much time. As I had seen the start area and natural bridge the day before we decided to go to the painted canyon.

We started up the canyon, but it was already hot and I was already thirsty. Once again the canyon showed signs of water erosion with the water washed pebbles and smooth sections of stone. As we walked up I was glad to get more acclimation to the heat, but it also became quickly clear that my water bottle would be empty before we got back to the car. Countering the desire not to dehydrate myself was the desire to get to the end of the canyon to see what was there. I figured I could drink more water once we got back to the hotel so we pushed up the canyon. Since this was going to be the last extended period I would be in the heat until tomorrow at the starting line, it was good to stay out as long as possible.

In the end we went as far up as we could without scrambling over some large boulders blocking our way. So with water running out and the chance to twist an ankle becoming a possibility, we decided to head back downhill to the car. When we got back to the hotel we expected to see the crew, but they had not yet checked in. We headed over to the visitor's center and filled the car with gas to be as ready for tomorrow.



With the crew still absent my imagination began to create a few ridiculous scenarios. I figured they must have stayed up all night gambling in Vegas and forgotten all about the race. I couldn't blame them, how could the starkness of Death Valley compete with Caesar's and the MGM Grand in Vegas. Plus it was air conditioned. What concerned me the most was I wanted my crew to be there for the required pre-race meeting, but secondly that they were ok so they would be able

to crew me for the next two days. So yes, it was selfish motivation, but that is what pre-race jitters will do to you. There was no reason for any worry, as the crew arrived all excited and apprehensive at 3pm. We then spent the next 2 hours hearing about the race history, meeting the race favorites, getting our goodie bag, listening to the long list of race rules, begin told about the two studies going on and finally getting a group picture taken.

So with the meetings done and the crew all here it was time to get back to the hotel to organize my stuff for the race. This race was different than other ultras since all my stuff would be in two minivans and it would be the only aid I would have available to me since the race itself did not have any aid along the course except for emergency services. Most ultras have aid stations with food and drinks and drop bags for new clothes.

Race Studies

As I said earlier, during the pre-race meeting we were told about two races studies which were looking for volunteers and I thought what the heck, I'm not racing and it should be interesting to get the race data back. After standing around to sign up for the heart rate/ gps study I signed up for the blood study. Both would provide interesting information on how my race went and provide an occasional distraction during the race.

The first study was going to monitor my heart rate and gps location for the entire race by a team from UW-Milwaukee. This information was the most intriguing to me and I can't wait to see the actual data. Unfortunately the gps kept going dead due to the battery dying. I am most interested in knowing how much I was stopping, walking and running during the 135 miles. In general, I managed to keep my heart rate below 150 bpm the first day and below 130 bpm the second day.

The second study concerned electrolytes in the blood. They took a baseline sample before the race and then would take it 3 more times during the race (43, 72 and 135 miles). They also wanted my team to keep track of everything I ate and drank as well as peed or threw up. Sounds real glamorous I know. The crew had the hard part keeping track of all the little bits of food and drink I would take in over the next 38 hours. I do know that during the race they were able to

tell me my electrolytes were good each time they drew my blood. I'm still waiting to get some feedback on how the studies went overall with comparisons to other runners.

Having never worn a heart rate monitor I had two concerns, one that it would chafe and cause additional pain I did not need or it would convince me I was going too fast or slow making me affect how I ran for the worst. The other study, concerned me less since there wasn't much extra for me to do.

Race Morning



Though we had 2 cars to crew from only one could be brought to the starting line to keep congestion down. It was rewarding to finally get to the starting line at 8am in the morning after 5 months of preparing and planning. I had the best sleep ever the night before the race so felt refreshed in the 90 degree heat. I had trouble eating anything though and was only able to stomach a Powergel. So this made me a little nervous, but from past races I knew the race jitters would go

away once I started running. I also knew that I would need to eat a lot since later in the race my stomach wouldn't be up to eating much.

Badwater to Furnace Creek to Stovepipe Wells



Once I started it was a relief to finally be going after wondering if I would even be at the starting line. The first 17 miles flew by as the heat wasn't yet oppressive and my entire crew was stopping every mile or so to give me a new water bottle and any of the food I needed. By the first time check at Furnace Creek it was getting very hot and the road seemed to stretch to the horizon. On the next leg to Stovepipe Wells there was a long valley to get through that never ended and then a ridge line to go

over that led to another small valley filled with scrub brush and sand dunes and the next time check. The wind was coming out of the South and trying to cook me alive. What saved me, and most the other runners, was the continual aid supplied by the crew. So getting a new water bottle full of ice water to drink from and keep my white sun suit soaking wet every mile (or more frequently) was critical to the Badwater success. Of course, even though my crew was able to pamper me continually along the race course, it wasn't all easy. The evaporation from the cotton

fabric made the heat and wind bearable, but the eyes still burned and throat felt parched most of the time.

The worst part was when you looked ahead and followed the road as far as you could see it only meant 15-20 miles. Then even when you get to the top of a ridge you still can't see any sort of destination since everything kind of blends together. On the first long climb I started seeing signs of the leaders coming up on me and sure enough about mile 35 the two fastest runners caught me as if I were standing still. I suppose I shouldn't feel too bad since I was passing runners which started at 6am just like I was being passed by those that started at 10am.

I kept thinking of the Leadville 100 race where you can see the finish line at mile 60. One almost begins to think it is too far to run, but by taking one mile at a time I kept getting closer and closer. As I ran I would think occasionally how nice it would be to be truly on vacation and driving through DV for the pure enjoyment of it, that would have to wait for some future time though (and not for the race again mind you).

Stovepipe Well to Panamint Springs to Darwin Turnoff



After leaving the 43 mile time check I knew it was going to start getting tough even though the sun was about to go down. The next 18 miles were all uphill and my feet had begun to blister to the point that I could not run. After a failed attempt to walk in sandals to avoid irritating the blisters it was necessary to take some drastic measures. I asked Jerry to cut the back and toe box out of my shoes so no part of the shoe would touch my blisters. After walking forward another mile or so in sandals Jerry was done with the first shoe fix. Unfortunately we immediately knew there would be a problem when I tried to run. With the entire heel cut out the shoes acted more like clogs and would not stay on my feet. In addition, my toes still felt a little cramped. So as I continued down the road Jerry started to modify my larger shoe size (14) with just a hole in the heel and toe box. Amazingly this did the trick for the remainder of the race, for the most part. With the feet fixed for the moment I was again looking forward to nighttime for cooler weather and the potential to see a bunch of shooting stars and maybe even

some aliens, but it was not to be. The sky was quiet and even through all the sleep deprivation there were no hallucinations.

Running over a long distance is tedious at times (I know it's hard to believe) and you begin to replay past events in your mind, but also focus a bit negatively on what is happening at the

moment and what you wish were happening. The classic thought for me during the race was when ever I was running/walking uphill I would wish to be going down and whenever I was going down I would give anything to be able to go up again. The killer at mile 65 or so was coming over Townes pass into Panamint Valley. There was a 9% down grade which kept going on and on and on. This is where the blisters and toe pain really kicked in. For about little bit I tried to go backwards downhill. Going backwards is easier on the toes and quads, but it is a little disorienting so I finally figured I would just end up causing some worse catastrophe so turned back around to abuse my feet more. When going downhill at night you can see a line of lights ahead of you showing where the runners were, from this I would try to gage where the bottom of the valley was so I knew how much more there was to go. This never seemed to work very well as the bottom seemed like it had to be around the next corner and then there would be one more corner.

One big thing that changed at night was I stopped drenching myself and changed into shorts and a short sleeve shirt. That was the best feeling in the world at the time. I no longer had to worry about the heat taking me out of the race. I also knew that the second day, when it finally arrived, was supposed to be much cooler (only 110F).

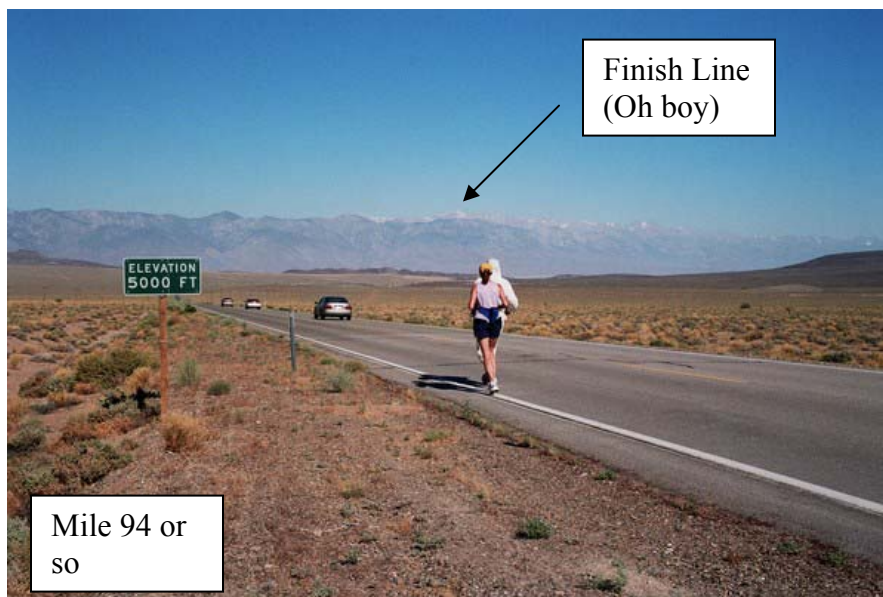
The crew had a smorgeous board ready for me throughout the day and I am still sad that I couldn't take advantage of all the good food. They would keep asking me if I wanted this or that, but mainly I stuck to saltines, peanut butter squares and strawberry pop tarts. Now mind you I still didn't eat a great amount, but by having the crew I was able to nibble all day and night. The heat unfortunately reduced my intake from 1/2 a sandwich to an 1/8 at times. The peanut butter on white bread was interesting as the bread would start off fresh, but in a matter minutes the hot dry air of the Valley would cause the bread to become toasted. During the heat of the day one of the unexpected treats were the popsicles. Refreshing, but almost too cold. By the end of the race I was only able to stomach some pop-tarts and liquids. It's just that after a while nothing really sounds good even though you know some food would be good for you. For the last 4 hours my goal was to keep eating a little bit and take my final Succeed cap about 1 hour from the top. As I had been taking the caplets every hour since I started it is logical to understand that I was sick and tired of swallowing these caplets and couldn't wait to tell them they should make a 1/2 size version. Especially since it was just one of these caplets that had caused me to through up around mile 80, I didn't relish going through that again.

Darwin Turnoff to Lone Pine to Whitney Portals

As I came out of the 90 mile aid station I knew I was coming into the easiest part of the course. I would have about 10 miles of gradual down hill and then 20 miles of flat to rolling road. Usually a 30 mile run would take be 5 hours or so, but after 90 miles it can just about double. Another thing I didn't expect was I could see the finish line already, but in the form of a hidden spot somewhere in the mountains that laid to the east. We could see the peak of Mt. Whitney and began to day dream of being up near the snow covered peak. This was at the same time myself and the crew walked and ran back into a valley which would be over 100 degrees by the time we got there. With the daylight back, the run downhill was encouraging especially since Kay was saying she wouldn't be able to keep up much longer if I continued to run 8 minute pace. The speed was a refreshing change of pace, but I quickly settled back into my normal 9 minute running pace. As the road was pretty curvy at this point Kay and I passed the time looking for shortcuts through the desert, but knew we couldn't any of them. We had come too far to forfeit the run just to make the run a few 100 yards shorter.

I told my crew to let me know when we hit 100 miles as I was thinking it would be a good spot for a mini celebration. It ended up being a Polynesian theme of sorts with Kay and Hima wearing hula skirts. I simply sat down in the makeshift shade and began to prepare for my last shoe change. This also meant we had to deal with the blisters that were continuing to get worse and affect my ability to run. A couple dozen pin pricks later and my medical crew had managed to drain the blisters and reapply moleskin in some key places to get me on my way once again.

I was trying to explain to my girlfriend Suzanne how I manage to get through a long race without becoming overwhelmed. Since she is a tennis player I came up with the analogy that you don't begin a tennis match thinking how you are going to win the last point of the last game, but rather how to win the first point. In the case of a 135 mile race I begin by thinking about the first mile and try not to get much further ahead of myself, even when there are 20 miles right in front of me that I can see. I also tend to break the course up into chunks which I have done before. For example if I have 10 miles to go until the next aid station I try to think of it as a Black Earth 10 miler stuck in the middle of the race. Then near the end I began thinking, it's only 50 miles to go, only 50km, only a marathon, only Syttede Mai (20 miles), only Monona 20km and then 10km and 5km to go. I must admit that those last 4-5 miles dragged on until I just wanted to get in a car and have it be over NOW.



The last 60 miles I began asking about landmarks along the course and how far away they were and I only pestered my crew worse over the last 20 miles. The race booklet had a mileage map which pointed out landmarks every mile or so. So whenever we passed a road crossing or something that might be on the map I would ask how far we had gone. Every 100 yards was an achievement at times and

knowing I was making progress seemed important to my mental state. Progress was even more important, and slower, after the big blister explosion at mile 117. Having to walk the rest of the way into town was not pleasant to think about, but the new tingly and squishy feeling in my foot was distracting a weird sort of way.

This then led up to the first time I noticed myself getting ornery and tired of this crazy race, it happened going into Lone Pine at mile 122. I had just walked 5 miles on the blister from hell and really needed to sit down to take a load off my feet. Hima claimed I wasn't a bad sport, but I was getting frustrated since the last 5 miles seemed like a marathon and this hotel that was supposed to be right ahead...never was. Finally we made a turn in the road and low and behold there was our hotel and the race hotel right in front of me. Coming up to the hotel we passed a runner that was reduced to a slow hobble since his calf was cramping up and causing excruciating pain. So on the bright side I only had one raw blistered foot, and 13 miles to go.

Did I mention the last 13 miles is all uphill and keeps most everyone walking. With the vast majority of the race done my crew was positive in letting me know that we really were getting along ok and that every half mile down meant less to do.

After spending time in the air conditioned hotel, I knew it would be tough to get going again, but with fresh cloths on and ready for the nighttime we pushed off. The adrenalin began to kick in for both me and the crew. We had been out for 34 hours and knew the race would be over in under 40 hours if I could just keep moving forward. As we were at the foot of Mt. Whitney, the next couple hours of walking were spent trying to figure out where the finish line was and which peak was Whitney. It was easy to follow the road, but it was hard to get past the mental barrier of having to walk for another 6 hours.

Apart from the crew keeping me going we had a surprise visit from Anna about half way up the mountain. She had spent the last 34 hours working on the website and trying to keep it as up to date as possible considering how spread out the race was. So while entering names and times for people as they passed through the time check stations she happened to notice my name next to Lone Pine. If I had known she was only 10 feet off the race course in a hotel room I would have detoured to say hi. Instead, she took a break from the website and drove up the road until she found me walking toward the finish. We talked a bit and commiserated over the lack of sleep both of us were managing through. In my case I would be able to go to sleep in the next 4-5 hours if all went well, but she would be up for most of the remaining 20+ hours of the race. If it wasn't for all those race volunteers, Badwater would be much less enjoyable or doable.



A big set back came when we finally figure out we would have to go up this big switchback that was cut into the side of the mountain. The switchback looked too far away to be part of the race and too steep to be able to get up. As we climbed higher and got onto the killer switchback I would pause to rest every now and then, at which time we could look down into the valley and see numerous car headlights progressing slowly our way. I knew most would finish, but it would be a tough night for many and a 3rd sunrise

for even more. I felt bad for everyone behind me and envious of everyone ahead of me. Time thinking of others would have to wait however as I continued my personal journey to the edge of my ability. The end came quickly after that and I was able to complete the last 13 miles in only 4 hours and finish about 1 hour after sundown.

I mustered my strength to run the last 100 yards. After crossing the finish line and being relieved I was asked (told) by the race director to run across the finish line one more time, but with our headlamps off. The headlamps had messed up the official finisher's photo he had taken. I didn't mind recreating the finish line photo, but at the time I wasn't too concerned about having a quality photo of the finish. They are nice to have now though. I knew things weren't quite done for the night. We wanted an official team picture to commemorate the occasion and their efforts and my final blood draw/medical check was due. The big question was whether I had lost weight over the past 135 miles and if my electrolytes were still in balance. I disappointed everyone by gaining 4 pounds and having a good electrolyte balance even here at the end.

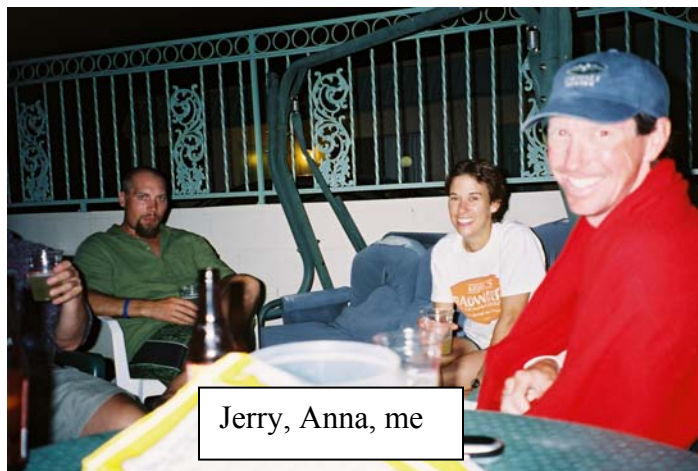


During the race time has a way of extending to infinity and go by in the blink of an eye all at the same time. So even when the last mile seemed to take more plodding steps than I could count it was done before I knew it.

Finding relief at the Trails Motel

After the hypothermia started to set in we thought it best to get back down the mountain and clean up. Walking to the car was the biggest walking challenge I had had all day. It was downhill and my legs were tightening up quickly, so they stopped bending. From these 100+ mile runs I have a sense of what a 90 year old person must feel like on a regular basis with arthritis and such. I have the benefit of knowing that a week later all the pain would be gone.

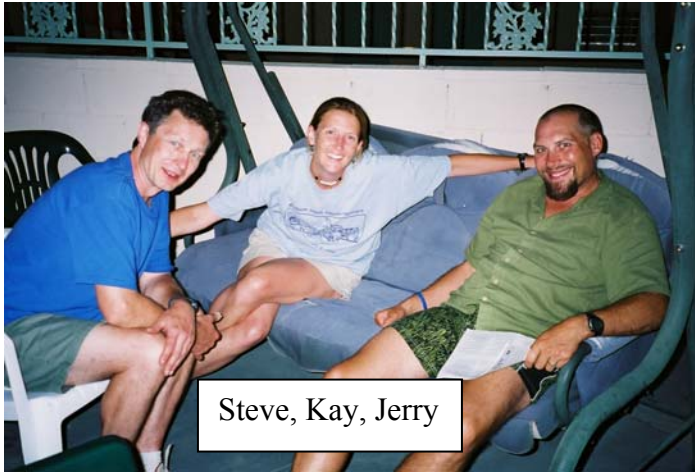
Once we got back to Lone Pine I wanted to go check out the race HQ and let Anna know I was done. The room was kinda a disaster with so many people making it their home for two days, but everyone was smiling and having fun. We didn't spend much time here though and I quickly placed my order for dinner with Kay who said she would bring it back to the hotel.



Jerry, Anna, me

So for me the next step was to walk back to our hotel and wash the grime of 3 days off myself. The hardest part was trying to balance in the shower on unsteady legs, while attempting to protect my exposed blisters from the salt and hot water running off my skin.

The foot pads were toast and I could not put much weight on them so it was a lot of hobbling around the room trying to find bits of clean cloths and food prior to Kay bringing over dinner.



When it was all said and done my first real meal in 3 days was spectacular. Kay and Steve went and got me a turkey dinner at the all night café with mashed potatoes and gravy. I scarfed this down on my hotel bed at 1am in the morning. Then just before I would lay down to sleep, we all congregated at the pool for a beer and margarita. I was done after 1, but the crew managed to outlast me as I went to bed. I got 5 hours in before the sun, by internal alarm clock and the little aches/pains would get me back up.

People ask how it was...I have stuck to my story that it is a great experience, but it is yet to be fun...even in retrospect. I was always wet, from the dousing of water, so felt coolish all day. My crew, Kay in particular, never told me a true temperature measurement during the day other than to let me know it was a tad bit hotter than 68F. This probably boded well as we didn't have a good thermometer and I might have been psyched out if I knew how hot it really was.

Post Race

After the race was over the crew asked me when I knew that I would make it. I wasn't 100% sure until about mile 72 and even then nothing was really guaranteed. Every mile that passed made the possibility of finishing more likely.

In retrospect I still don't know how I could have prevented the blister problems, there was just no way to prepare the feet for the heat and road camber. I did learn that even the leaders have major blisters, so I don't feel too bad about it. And since I won't be doing this race again...I won't have to worry about that either.

2nd place runner's feet



My bad foot (in comparison not too bad)



Thanks again to Kay, Deanna, Steve, Mike and Jerry for their support before/during and after the race, plus all those friends, family and donators who supported me through the Badwater experience.

Jason.