

ARKANSAS ULTRA RUNNER
ASSOCIATION

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UPCOMING
RACES & EVENTS

TAHOE  200
ENDURANCE RUN



AURA NEWS

From the Club President George Peterka



First a big congratulations to Stacey Shaver and Chris Baldwin for finishing the Tahoe 200. That is a very impressive achievement.

Stacey Shaver 84:54:43

Chris Baldwin 96:23:23

Next I wish to thank Tom Aspel and his volunteers for putting on the Mt. Nebo Trail Run. That is always a fun race.

The Hot Springs N. P. Trail Run went fine in spite of the rain. It might be better if it was a little more than 2 weeks ahead of the Traveller. I think some people didn't want to risk injury with the Traveller so close.

The biggest AURA event was the Traveller. I wish to thank everyone, especially Thomas Chapin the RD, for all the work they put into it. I did not run. I was working at the Pig Trail aid station. The week before the race the spillway was overflowing and I was wondering if we would have any problems driving over it to reach Pig Trail. Fortunately it stopped flowing before the race. It got a little warm in the afternoon. I knew ice would be a big seller. We brought 250 lbs to Pig Trail and used most of it for the runners going out. After the runners went through, we went to Williams Junction and bought 110 lbs more for the runners coming back. 93 runners finished out of 156 starters.

We have new race directors for the Swampstomper. James Holland is handing it over to Kiran Hanumaiah and Eric Knight. The race will remain the same and slots are reserved for UTS members when it fills up. Still I would encourage you to register early. Registration should open soon.

That is about all I have for now. Looking forward to seeing everyone at the Sweet Spot 50K.

Sweet Spot 50k

Race #5 of AURA UTS

Nov 10 at 8am

- The race is on the [Ouita Coal Company Mtn. Bike Trail](#) at Illinois Bayou Park.
- The trail is a 10.7 mile single track lollipop shaped loop with 316 feet of ascent and descent. You will run this loop 3 times.
- You will run back to your car when you finish each loop. So you may have drop bags or supplies in your car.
- There will be 1 aid station and 1 water drop on each loop.
- Directions: Just off I-40 Exit 78. This is one exit west of Hwy 7 in Russellville. Take Exit 78, Hwy 64 east, towards Russellville and the parking lot is on the left just before you start crossing the lake. See [Map](#). The sign says Illinois Bayou Park.
- Race directors: [Tom Aspel](#) and [PoDog Vogler](#)
- Registration Link :<http://www.runarkansas.com/SweetSpot50K.htm>

Sweet Spot 50k



Race Directors
Tom Aspel
&
PoDog Vogler

Sunset Lake 6/12/24 Hr Endurance Challenge

Race #6 of AURA UTS
Nov 23-24

Please register in advance so we will know how many people to prepare for and minimize the need for data entry on race day. We are planning to chip time the race this year and Saturday morning the 24 hour race will be in progress which could create issues with race day entry for the 6 and 12 hour.

Location: Sunset Lake, Benton

Times: The 24 hour run will begin at 7:30 p.m. on Friday, November 23. The 6 and 12 hour runs will begin at 7:30 a.m. on Saturday, November 24.

Check-in will be 45 minutes prior to the start time of the event you are running. As mentioned above, advanced registration is strongly encouraged to expedite the check-in process.

Course: The course will follow a one-mile paved loop around Sunset Lake (The certified distance is 1.015 miles.) There will be lighting on part of the trail loop after dark but it is recommended that the 24 hour runners bring a flashlight or headlamp unless they are comfortable running in the dark.

Entry Fee: **None** – **Donations will be gladly accepted** to help offset costs which include pavilion rental, food and drink.

Few Frills: Water, Gatorade and soft drinks will be provided along with chips, pretzels, cookies, crackers, peanut butter, bananas, and boiled potatoes. If you want something else, feel free to bring it either for yourself or to share. Runners are encouraged to bring a water bottle and/or another personal container either marked with their name or carried with them to minimize the use of disposable cups, thus avoiding unnecessary trash. There is room to set up your personal gear, ice chest, chair, etc., along the course near the pavilion.

Other: No DNFs – Runners will be credited with the total number of miles completed (completed full loops only) regardless of how long they run (or walk, hop, skip, crawl, or a combination thereof). Runners may stop at any time they decide they have had enough fun! Runners are free to take breaks whenever desired and for however long desired. Mileage credit will be based on completed.

Race Website: <http://salinecountystriders.com/races/61224-endurance-run/>

6/12/24 Hr Challenge



Questions may be referred
to **Pete Ireland**

LoVit Trail Marathon

*Race #7 of AURA UTS
Sat. Dec 1st at 8am*

It's Hunting Season You MUST Wear Orange

- **Distance:** 26.2 miles (approximate)
- **Location:** Shangri La Drive on Lake Ouachita, near Mount Ida
- **Directions:** Shangri La is located 25 miles west of Hot Springs and 12 miles east of Mount Ida off of Hwy 270. You will turn onto Shangri-La Drive and make the first left which is OLD HWY 270. Look for signs posted for the run. Registration will be set up 500 ft down OLD HWY 270. Parking will be at that location and along the road.
- **Course:** on the Lake Ouachita Vista Trail, a single track foot path. This contains no significant creek crossings.
- **Aid:** There will be a total of 6 aid stations set up along the trail; all will have water and Gatorade, along with various goodies. Drop bag service will be available.
- There is no application or entry fee. There will be a waiver to sign and a can for donations to cover run expenses.
- Please keep your own time and check in at the finish.
- Check out more information on the Lake Ouachita Vista Trail <http://lakeouachitavistatrail.com/WP/>
- **Accommodations:** Shangri-La Resort will be renting hotel rooms and cabins for the weekend of the LOViT Marathon. The restaurant will be closed but rooms are available. Anyone that is running the LOViT Marathon and is looking for a hotel on Friday or Saturday night can call Shangri-La Resort at 870-867-2011. Be sure to mention you are running the LOViT marathon!!!
- Registration Link: <http://www.runarkansas.com/LoVitTrailMarathon.htm>

LOViT Marathon



Race Director
Phil

Wasatch 100 Race Report

By George Peterka



Well it really begins with the Western States disaster. During training for WS100 I got another stress fracture and had to take 6 weeks off to let it heal. So I went into the WS100 not properly trained and had just a terrible day. I was out of WS100 at mile 43 and was actually OK with it. I've been trying for a couple years to quit doing these 100 milers and finally this was it. I'm out. I'm never doing anything longer than a 50K. I'm done. Why? Because they're too hard. It hurts too much. It takes a lot of training, during which you have good chance of getting hurt - and then you go run the race anyway. A man would have to be insane to want to run a hundred miles. Doctors say exercise is healthy but I'm starting to wonder if that applies to 100's. Especially since I'm supposed to stay out of the sun after my basal cell carcinoma.

So I returned home and started training hard for Wasatch (which I was not going to do because it's a 100 even though I was registered for it). I was mad at myself for having done so badly at WS100 so I trained hard. I ran 14.5 miles around Sunset Trail and the next day spent 3 hours clipping the trail as cross-training. Repeated this all summer long. Trying to do a double lap on weekends. I also did weighted squats on non-running days. The clipping loosened everything up nicely. I had trouble with hamstring tendinitis before and couldn't run up-hills. That was healed now and bending during trail clipping stretched out the tendons so that I was able to run all the up-hills.

The Full Moon 50K came and I ran well. The next day I bought non-refundable airline tickets and hotel reservations and Wasatch was a go. I continued training and ran well again on the Mt. Nebo race, my last run before Wasatch.

Flew into Salt Lake City on Monday Labor Day and stayed at the Alta Lodge at 8,500 ft. elevation for altitude acclimatization. Hiked that afternoon to 9,500. Next morning drove to 9,500 and hiked to 10,500. That afternoon rode the tram to 11,000 and hiked between 10,500 and 11,000. Repeated this on the following day. The highpoint of the race is 10,500 ft and you are above 8,000 for a good part of the course so I needed altitude training. Was a little worried if I didn't overdo it with the legs because it was a lot - but the breathing was definitely getting easier.

The next day (Thursday the day before the race) was a rest day. I left Alta at noon and went to the pre-race meeting in Salt Lake City. This is the best pre-race meeting ever. It was over in 20 minutes. The RD told us what we needed to know and didn't waste time introducing and thanking a bunch of people. I met up with Deb Baker, my pacer.

I relocated to a Motel-6 one block away from where the race buses would pick up the runners at 4:00 AM and drive them to the start.

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The first 2-3 miles are level and then you hit Bair Canyon, a 4-mile single track trail that climbs 4000 ft. straight up the mountain. They call this the Conga Line because you are stuck in your place and you cannot pass till you reach the top. Near the top we got daylight and pretty views of the Salt Lake and Antelope Island. On top you get on a gravel road that runs level and then joins a much wider and smother gravel roads that goes downhill.

I decided to something pretty stupid - but it worked out OK. In the WS100 I was pretty much the last runner in the race, arriving in aid stations just before cutoff. I wanted to be more towards the middle of the pack this time. So I ran the next 3 miles as fast as I could possibly run. I opened up my stride and let gravity do it's thing. People were saying things like "nice running" as I flew past them. I think what they meant was "has this idiot completely lost his mind?" You have to understand, I was mad at myself for the WS100 so I just attacked this.

I reached the first aid station at mile 12 but it was only a water drop. I realized I made my first mistake of the race. I had a good breakfast on the bus, but that was a long time ago. I had only one Humma gel with me and that was gone half way up the mountain. I was hungry and the first food was at mile 17 still 5 miles away. I left a granola bar and a pack of crackers on the bus. Why didn't I stick them in my pocket? I was good on water. I refilled in the creek during the climb.

At mile 17 I got food and my first drop bag. I shed the shirt and rubbed on lots of sunblock. I also had a hat with a handkerchief safety pinned to the back to protect my neck against the sun. Pretty stupid when I think about it. I'm running south pretty much the entire race. My back is in the shade. Well I soaked it in ice water and used it until it got hot later in the day. Then it had to come off.

Miles 17 to 32 are really pretty. You are high up, around timberline so you have great views. In some of the groves the Aspen were turning yellow and the Maples red and it was very colorful. There are no major climbs, it's just nicely rolling and very pleasant and scenic.

Mile 32, Big Mountain is the next major aid station with first crew access and the next drop bag. This is where it gets hot. A sweet volunteer lady took care of me and rubbed on a ton of sunblock. I drank a bunch but couldn't really eat much in this heat. I read in the race directions that the next 13 miles will be very hot and we should take double the water that we normally carry. So I did something I never did before. I listened! I took 2 water bottles for this stretch. There is an 8 mile stretch followed by a 5 mile stretch and you are mainly descending on ridges. There are no creeks. It was sunny and 90 degrees in Salt Lake City, little less up here because we we higher up. There was a nice breeze blowing so it wasn't that bad. They said it was the third hottest Wasatch and they've been doing this race since 1980. I was covered with so much sunblock I looked white. I was shirtless and had to go very slowly on any uphill and take of the hat to prevent overheating. I could have used more water on the 8 mile stretch but it was OK. I drank a bunch at the next aid.

Mile 45, Lamb's Canyon is the next major aid station with crew and drop bag. This is the end of the heat. Can't tell you what time it was since I never carry a watch. I don't want to know what time it is until I cross the finish line. But it was a afternoon. It's all cool shade from now on and sunset is not far away. I ate a hot dog. This was good. I was OK on hydration but I was low on calories. In this heat, I had eaten very little and I knew I must take in calories because I have big climbs coming up. When I was about the leave the aid station I got a surprise. A lady asked me "Are you George? I'm Deb's friend Karen Helfrich and my runner dropped so if you want I can pace you from here to mile 67 where Deb will take over." I said, "sure, whatever, let's go" and off we went.

I had one little problem. It couldn't be helped. I had a drop bag here with my headlamp and all my warm clothing and it was too hot to wear any of that clothing. So I had no choice but to carry the bag in my hand for 3 hours until it got cold and dark and I could wear the clothing. I looked funny running down trails carrying this big bag in my hand. One guy asked me "So instead of a backpack you carry it in your hand?" Wonder if he thought I'm going to carry this stupid bag for 100 miles?

Karen was wonderful. It was so nice having somebody to talk to and she took great care of me in aid stations. She finished Wasatch 10 times. It was an honor to run with someone like that. I usually do these things without a pacer but it sure is nice to have one. The race was much better now that we were out of the heat. And it wasn't too cold either. Did the whole night in just a T-shirt and vest.

Mile 67, Brighton aid station. Here I picked up Deb Baker as my pacer. The aid station is inside. Got some food in me to prepare for the 2000 ft. climb that follows and out we went. It was cold going out of that lodge. I put on a jacket for about 10 minutes till I warmed up and then stored the jacket and continued to climb. It's a shame we were in the dark. This would be a really nice section to see. It's all granite with steps cut into the mountain and boulders and you pass by 3 alpine lakes. I was worried about this climb because it's steep and by this time I will be tired. I took it slow and we reached the top easily. Deb took a photo of me kissing the sign marking the highest point in the race 10,467 ft.

Next we had a really steep and nasty descent down some mountain bike trails. I don't know much about biking but you have to be insane to ride this. There is an aid station followed by a short steep climb "the grunt" up more mountain bike trails. After this it gets easier. The course levels out with only minor rolling hills. Which was good because by this time I wasn't enjoying the climbing any more - if you know what I mean.

Around mile 80 it started to get light. We were treated to a beautiful sunrise and great views because we were high up. This is such a beautiful course. I'm just sorry that I couldn't see the night-time portion in daylight. We could see Deer Creek Reservoir down below which is encouraging because that's the finish line. I had been looking forward to finally getting some easy miles with gentle downhills and I was disappointed when that was not the case. The downhills were brutally steep V-shaped bike trails difficult to descend on dead legs.

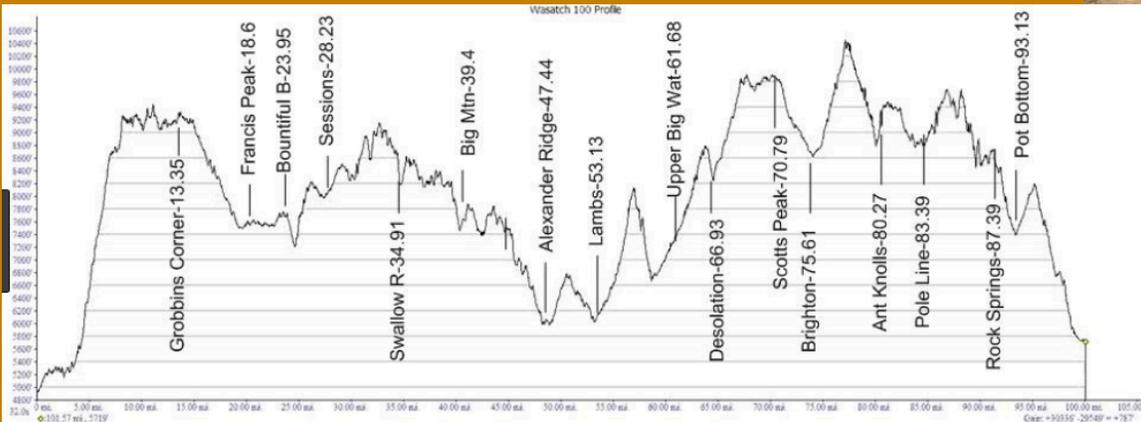
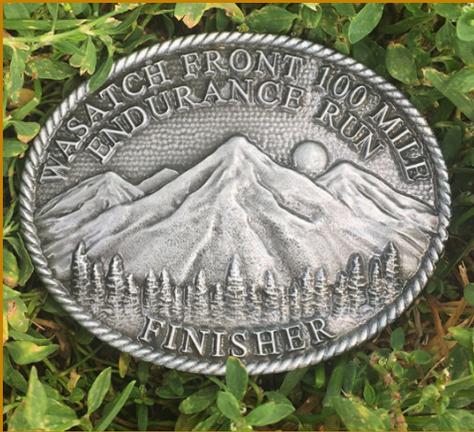
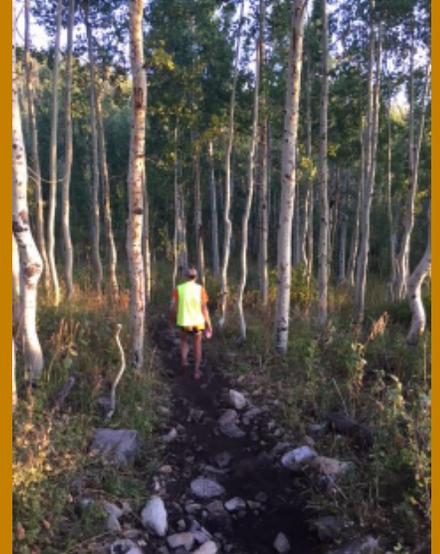
At mile 85 we finally got down of this mountain and onto gravel roads. The roads were easy miles and I was ready for some of those. By this point it isn't fun any more. You just want it to be over. I shed that night-time clothing into a drop bag at mile 90. The last 10 miles were hot and sunny again. It's scenic going around the reservoir on a rails-to-trails section for the last 5 miles but I was just too beat up to care about anything at this point. The soles of my feet were killing me. Every pebble I stepped on hurt. I just wanted it to be over.

We reached the finish line at 1:40 PM. Out of 300 starters there were 187 finishers and I finished in 83th place with a time of 31:39:30. The heat wiped out a lot of people. We rested for a while until Deb's husband Jason came to drive us back to my motel. We did not stay until the award ceremony. I wanted to finally get out of this heat, shower and lay down in a bed. I talked with the race director and thanked him for putting such a well organized event. They will mail the buckle, plaque and one drop bag to me.

I owe Deb, Karen and Jason a lot of thanks for helping me through this. It was really nice being with them and they took great care of me.

Once I got to the motel, I showered and climbed into bed. I was going to rest for 2 hours and then go around cornered to Denny's for a nice after-race dinner. You guessed it. That didn't happen. I didn't climb out of bed till it was time to fly home the next morning.

It was a great race. I loved every minute of it and I can't wait to do another 100. And so the cycle continues. After 19 100-mile finishes and 9 100-mile DNF's you'd think I'd have enough. Nope. I love this crazy stuff too much.



Pacing Chris at Tahoe200 A.K.A. Someone Passed the Race Report Off on SB

By Sharon Bennett



I hate race reports. Hear me out. I love that people are out there doing awesome things and writing about them. I love their journey. It's just that sometimes the minutia of these reports can be a little much for me, and I find myself wondering why I am reading about someone's 4th sock change, or a life changing Skittle at mile 20. That's why when Chris Baldwin asked me to write this report about pacing him at Tahoe200 Endurance run, I told him to shove it. After some consideration and a sub-par amount of begging on his part, I decided I would give this whole chronicling of the event a shot. I'm sorry in advance.

What you should know is that this whole journey started on July 3rd of 2017. I went to run down by the river with two strange men (Chris Baldwin and Ronnie Daniel) that I joked around with on the Arkansas Traveller 100 Facebook page. Because that is what normal people do. They go run with internet strangers after dark, down by the Arkansas River. I had been watching "Six Months to Traveller" (an instant classic), recently joined AURA, and was excited to meet more people in the club. They were trying to raise money to cure Reid Landes's Plantar Fasciitis by holding an event called "Landes over Water", which raised six cents. I count that as a victory. Anyway, running back and forth over the big dam bridge a million times, our friendship was born. Many training miles and beers have occurred since.

On Friday September 5th, I flew from Little Rock to Reno, getting into South Lake Tahoe at approximately 10PM. I met Chris's wife Judy at the condo they had rented. She told me to grab some sleep and be ready to go to Brockway Aid Station (mile 50) at 1AM to meet Chris. I didn't think anything about the fact that I didn't have much time to rest. The plan was for me to pick up Chris at Heavenly, which is at mile 102, so this visit to Brockway was just to pop in and cheer him on and then sleep during the day.

When Judy and I arrived at Brockway, it was incredibly busy. There were crews parked everywhere on this trail head, preparing for the arrival of their runners. After nearly running over beloved ultra-runner Catra Corbet, Judy and I found a primo spot near the port-a-potty, and prepared for Chris's arrival. We thought Chris would be super happy we parked there.

Our guy came in, not looking just the greatest. He was pretty happy to see us. I was worried about him after learning he that he ran out of water on a stretch earlier in the day and was having a bit of a hard time mentally. Chris was also expecting there to be hot food available at some of the earlier aid stations, and was a bit disappointed that there was not any. You get your heart set on something like that and when it's not there, it's just a big letdown.

Judy and I got him into the back of the van at around 4:45 AM and we all took a little snooze. I thought he would sleep a little longer, but at around 5:30 he wanted out. There was a 6:30 cut off at that aid station that he was weighing heavily on his mind. He got very little sleep, which concerned me. Also, fun fact, Chris farts a lot in his sleep. I don't think this is shocking to any of you.

Once awake, we got him fed, socks changed, butt crack Desitined, and back out on the trail for about a 1500ft climb before he would drop down into Tunnel Creek, the next aid station which was approximately 15 miles away. He was trying to stay positive and I thought maybe he would get better when he got back out there and the sun came up. The temps were around 40 degrees that morning, which helped. It seemed like some of the climbs went on for forever. Judy and I drove from Brockway to Tunnel Hill to wait on him and catch some sleep.

Tunnel Creek aid station, mile 65 – The crew station is on the side of a busy road and there is construction going on. Judy falls asleep. Sharon does not. Again, not concerned about the two hours of sleep I had the previous night because I would get to sleep all day. Right? After a bit, Judy receives a text from Chris saying that he is having a rough time, has had a little bit of a break down, and he wants to know I will start at mile 65 instead of 100. The only concern I had is that I had not been in Tahoe long enough to acclimate to the altitude change, and that I was going to wheeze like a pregnant hippo on every hill climb.

Crew Captain Judy and I went back to South Lake, grabbed my gear and headed back to Tunnel. Shortly after arrival, we met Chris coming off the trail head. He looked pretty down. He was saying he just didn't know if he could finish and that the task just seemed so enormous. He wasn't at a place where he could carve it out into sections in his head. We got him into the aid station and found that he had fallen behind on hydration and nutrition. Quickly as possible, we parked his Desitin coated booty in a chair. Judy cleaned him up while I gathered aid station food. The goal was to get Chris hydrated and calories back into his system, then evaluate. I gathered a plate full of pancakes with syrup, which he devoured pretty quickly. Thankfully, there was also an angel of an aid station worker named Todd McIntire, who saw the situation and provided assistance. He made Chris sit at Tunnel for an hour and drink four glasses of apple juice. That may sounds really simple, but those liquid calories worked wonders! The kindness Todd displayed was absolutely morale boosting. A caring aid station worker can make all the difference in turning a runner's race around. After all that and a quick change of shorts with an ample coating of anti-chafe, Chris was ready to go back out after an hour.

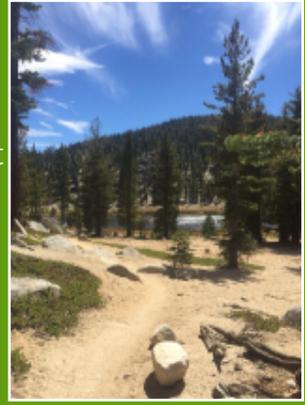


As we were leaving Tunnel, he kept telling me that he just can't see doing over a 140 more miles of climbs and rough terrain, that he just couldn't see finishing it. Pleasantly-ish, I told him to shut his mouth area up, and that we were just going to go to the next aid station at Spooner Summit which was approximately 17 miles away. That's all we had to think about. Nothing else.

Over the next several hours, I made it my mission to get my runner on a strict schedule of hydration, salt, and food. I'm glad Chris is a good sport because I was so, so very bossy. I just knew that there was no way I was letting my friend quit or get derailed with things like nutrition that can somewhat be controlled. Now, If only I could apply this wisdom to my own races.

After an hour or so, he was moving pretty good again. He was back to making jokes and farting. That's how I knew it would be ok. I just realized how odd that sentence is after I typed it. He also told me that he was going to keep going until they took his bib. I don't think I have ever been more proud. I knew at that point there would be no more talk of stopping, and that there would be no further mention of not finishing. I think we both just relaxed a little then and fell into a groove.

The scenery from Tunnel to Spooner was just beautiful. We traveled along easy to moderate trails, dodging mountain bikers that seemed hell bent to destroy us. Chris and I didn't run just too much through here. He was getting his strength back and was walking with purpose. We did get passed by someone who looked like Greg Brady, wearing really short shorts. I saw this person again at Housewife Hill so I am 100 percent certain this was not a hallucination.



During this time, our pal Ronnie Daniel was making his way from Arkansas to Lake Tahoe via what felt like the most delayed flight in the entire history of aviation. I kept in touch with RD throughout the day to keep him aware of the changing situation. We both knew we were going to have to shift the schedule around and that he would now need to pace and additional section. He was going to have to jump in at mile 100ish, Heavenly aid station.

As the sun was setting, we arrived at Spooner Summit. Really odd location for an aid station. It was on the shoulder of an incredibly busy stretch of highway. It seemed like a funny challenge to make ultra-runners cross a road with heavy traffic at mile 82 of a race. It was also windy and getting colder. We replenished and got some hot food. One thing that I am pretty sure of is that this race possibly ruined the egg burrito for me for a while. With our packs filled, we started the next 20 mile section.

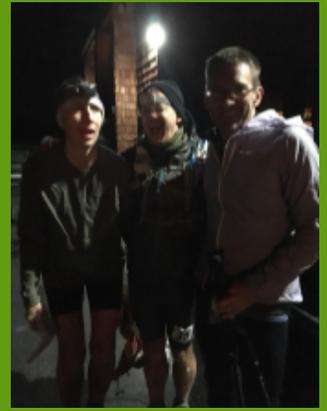
Running in an ultra like this made me learn to appreciate what we have in Arkansas. I think one of the longest stretches I've seen between aid stations is maybe seven miles? At this race the average was 20 miles between aid stations. Also, I didn't have the usage of Chris's drop bags due to the timing of my arrival. There was no crew spot in my sections so I had to pack enough fuel for 40 miles at a time. That's a lot of Lara bars and gels. Then there's water! Add 3 liters for that. On top of that, a Patagonia Houdini, gloves, hat, two lights, batteries, extra shirt, etc...I pushed the limits of my UD AK Mountain Vest.

Things got real on the section from Spooner to Heavenly. Out of the aid station, as typical we had a sizable climb, roughly around 2000 feet. The lady at the aid station was kind enough to remind of us this as we were walking out. She exactly said "Oh hey, are you guys ready for this next one? It's 2000 feet of gain!" Neat. Thanks.

We had started catching and passing other people by now, which felt pretty good. We made it partially to the top of the climb when Chris was absolutely exhausted. Going on little sleep, I agreed to a trail siesta. He had an emergency blanket but it was only big enough one and a half of us. So, my dear friend snuggled up under the blanket and I got the edge of it. In the dark, under the California stars, I froze my ass off, and listened to Chris snore for 20 minutes. Despite the less than wonderful nap accommodation, I did feel really lucky to be there with my pal. It was humbling to be a part of something that was so important to him. That he entrusted me to take care of him for this stretch was mind blowing, considering I have not even completed a 100 mile race to this date.

Before I died of hypothermia, he woke up, and we shook off about a million pounds of trail dust. The march toward Heavenly continued. This section is really just a blur. Literally remember very little except that we checked the Gaia hiking app every 4.5 seconds. I am utterly shocked that neither of us bit the dirt on this part as it was fairly technical. I remember tapping him with my poles occasionally when it looked like he was walking off down into a ravine. I also remember working endless switch backs that felt like they were pushing

us further and further away from the Heavenly aid station. I was just really over it at this moment. Chris was the same, and he thought that someone was messing with us. Every time we thought it was close, it wasn't. Exhausted, hungry, and freezing, we finally dropped into the aid station at around 5AM on Sunday. Ronnie and Judy were there to greet us. We joked around and laughed about everything that happened on the way there, all the funny skit ideas we had, sleeping on the cold ground, Greg Brady's short shorts. I was so happy Ronnie was there. It felt like our team was complete.



We all climbed in the van and talked for a little bit longer before everyone passed out for an hour. Soon, Chris was ready to go again! I went back to the condo with Judy to rest for a bit before I picked him up for the next leg.

Ronnie and Chris had a great day going from Heavenly to Sierra Tahoe and met us at around 2:30AM on Monday. Before Chris and I left Sierra Tahoe, he took a quick hour snooze. I think he might have had three hours of rest during this entire race. After his hour, he woke up ready to go. We ran for a large amount of the distance from Sierra Tahoe to Wright's lake.

The weather was perfect and watching the run rise in the Sierras was nothing short of magic. Chris was recharged, and stayed pretty with it until we reached the Desolation Wilderness. It turns out that he was severely hallucinating at this point in the race. I thought he was trying to engage me on deep philosophical conversations about ultra-running. "SB – do you like this? Do you like doing this?" I went on about how I love the challenges and complexity in figuring out each new distance, what keeps me going, what all of the friendships in our running community mean to me. He never said much back. It's probably because I later found out that he thought I was making him run back and forth in my backyard as a workout that we had to do to complete the race. He was literally asking me that was something I like to do. I sang so much George

Michael to him. He says that he doesn't remember it and for this I am incredibly thankful. The fun just continued on from there as I escorted him to Loon Lake so Ronnie could take him from there to the finish.



I think I'll stop here. This is way lengthier than I intended so anything further could possibly throw me into a state of self-loathing. My first race report. And my last, as I am now retiring from writing race reports. The important facts are that I ended up pacing Chris for approximately 80 miles, and Ronnie was with him for 70. He crossed the finish line at 96:23:23 and promptly ate bacon. This race was not easy. He is in fact awesome.

Chris, my wonderful and strong friend – you suffered so well. You never got short with us, you listened to us, and you worked to stay in a positive place. You were fixed on the finish, pushing beyond fatigue and pain to get there. You taught me a lot. I'm so thankful you let me tag along for this one. Proud is an understatement. You now owe me exactly seven days of Mt. Nebo repeats. Also, you can't grow a beard worth a damn.



Crewing Tahoe 200 by Nick Shaver-Matson



I've crewed for my wife Stacey several times at the Arkansas Traveler 100, and there are hundreds of us around these parts that know how grueling that can be. It's probably not "newsletter story" material though. We drive, we wait, we round up food, fill hydration packs, round up clean socks, they run away, and then we drive again. I recently crewed and paced for my wife at her 200 mile race around Lake Tahoe, and the experience was quite different when compared to crewing for the Traveler 100. Different enough to maybe warrant a newsletter story.

Differences between 100 and 200:

What's different about crewing for the Arkansas Traveler 100 and the Lake Tahoe 200? EVERYTHING. Every single thing. The drives, the distances, the waits, the supplies, the type of care given, the food, the sleeps, the crowds, the aid stations. It's like a completely different sport.

Getting to the race:

Well, first off you've got to drive or fly a couple thousand miles from Little Rock, instead of a 60 mile drive to Lake Sylvia. Stacey and I drove it, and loved every minute of the drive out. We spent four days driving out, but we could have made it in two days. Nevertheless, it takes a good three or four days extra just getting there and back at least. It was likely the best way to slowly acclimate to the altitude and to explore some new trails. For us, it was a full week well spent just getting there and back.

Driving to the aid stations:

The aid stations were almost always accessible via pavement, very little gravel road driving. We crew had our "home base" in South Lake Tahoe city, and almost always returned to home base after crewing. At the Traveler 100 that's not a very realistic option. The Lake Tahoe aid stations are about 20 miles apart for the runners, and sometimes the crewable stations are more like 50 miles apart. That leaves a LOT of time in between crewing. Like, 10 or 12 hours sometimes. Enough time to go back to home base, eat real food, sleep in a real bed, hang out, all that good stuff. No time for that at a 100 mile race. While overall there was a lot more driving to aid stations, it was spread out over several days instead of over one day. I found it much easier crewing the 200.

Waiting at aid stations:

There wasn't much waiting around at aid stations at the Tahoe 200. All runners were given a GPS tracker that they attached to their pack, and it constantly sent their location up into the internets. There was very little guesswork regarding "when is she going to get here?" We knew when she was moving, when she was stopped, how fast she was moving, it was just great. I know those trackers were expensive though, probably way too expensive for our local 100 mile races without the entry fees having to be bumped up accordingly.

The supplies:



There were quite a bit more medical supplies in Stacey's crew boxes for the 200 when compared to the 100. Lots of foot care supplies. Foot washing tubs. Lots and lots and lots of second skin. She was super serious about foot care for the 200, whereas at the 100 she could sometimes run the entire race without much more than maybe changing socks and shoes once.

Lots of batteries for headlights and waist lights. She had to make it through three full nights of running, and she had to be ready for a night of running as she left just about every aid station. Even if she was leaving out at noon, there was a chance she'd wind up running in the dark before she got to the next crew stop.

Lots of clothes. The temperature swings were pretty varied, she had to be prepared for freezing temps at night, so lots of long pants and shirts and jackets and gloves. Three to four days of running meant multiple changes to keep from wearing the same sweaty clothes for days. It's hard to convey how many bags of clothes she had in her crew kit. It seemed to me like perhaps if you took an entire running store's inventory, put it in gallon ziplock bags (well organized and labeled of course), put the bags into big tool boxes, that's what we were toting around from aid stop to aid stop. She was always clothed though, so it worked out great.



The food:

Every aid station had a chef cooking up meals to order for the runners and their pacers. Burgers, wraps, breakfast burritos, all really good and full of fresh ingredients. The food was just great. She usually left out of aid stations with a couple of wraps stuck into her pack. The eating didn't seem nearly as rushed as in the 100 mile races. Spending 20-30 minutes in an aid stop was very common, plenty of time to catch a breath and eat while the crew worked on her feet.



Speaking of feet... at every crewable aid station we pulled off shoes and socks, removed any bandages and second skin, completely washed the feet, re-banded hot spots with second skin, and reinstalled clean socks and shoes.

The sleeps:

Runners get to sleep at 200 mile races. Stacey didn't sleep much, but she did at least sleep four hours over the three and half days. I think it made the difference between her feeling like a zombie at the end (as she sometimes does at the end of 100 mile races), and her feeling like a human, able to think and converse, able to walk. A few of the aid stations had really good setups for her to sleep. Quiet areas with inflatable mattresses and no light. For the pacers, this perhaps meant a little hanging out while the runner sleeps. Sometimes the crew would also hang out, but sometimes we would just get her all ready for her next run and then leave after she started sleeping. There was nothing more for us to do at that point.



The crowds:

Aid stations weren't really much of a party scene at the Tahoe 200 stops. Runners were much more spread out after a day or so. Runners were trying to sleep sometimes. It just wasn't a place for cowbells. They were strictly business. Medical care, food, fairly quiet, a few crew folks coming and going, very little waiting around because of the accurate GPS trackers.

Pacing: There was a bit more gear involved in pacing the Tahoe 200 when compared to the Traveler. Specifically - hiking pole and winter clothes. I only paced her for the final eight miles, but I got to pace through a sunset and a couple hours of running at night with lights. One of her pacers wound up running 50 miles or so because that was how far it was between the crewable stops. That's pretty much unheard of at our 100 mile races

around here. That meant that the pacer had to also prepare for a long span of day running, a long span of night running, warm weather in the day, cold weather at night, and a LOT more hydration packing. They ran out of water at least once, had to filter water some, and sadly had no filter to use one time when she ran out. It got pretty rough at times.



Summing it all up:

It was far away, it was expensive, it took a long time getting there and back, but it was a great experience. The best crew experience ever, for me. It was less stressful, in my opinion, than crewing for our local 100 mile races. I was much less exhausted at the end, not really exhausted at all. If you get the chance to make a trip to crew at one of these trendy new 200 mile races, I'd say go for it. It was a blast.



WILDFIRES TO WHITNEY - CALIFORNIA 2018

By Jon Lucas

There are old adages about the "best laid plans go to waste", "making lemonade out of a lemon" and "blessing in disguise". All would describe the summer 2018 vacation plans as an unfortunate turn of events led to a rewarding twist.

The original plan was to vacation in and around Yosemite National Park the end of July/first of August with something for everyone to do, and one day would be spent fulfilling a personal bucket list item of mine by hiking Half Dome. This was some unfinished business from the fall of 2012; the "Twins Travel" trip that year was to Yosemite, and the second day of running/hiking was an optional choose-your-own-route day. My choice was Half Dome. However, time was limited and, long story short, I made it to the base of the final 400-foot climb (the cables were down for the year) and was running short on time, and also debating whether to tackle the last climb without the cables, and how intelligent that may be. I took some photos and grudgingly turned around, even then keeping updates on my phone as trip leader Kathleen McComber was texting periodically for a status update and reminding "the bus leaves at 3pm". So, perturbed at getting so close to the summit, I filed it away as "unfinished business" and to quote Douglas MacArthur, said to self "I shall return". That "return" turned out to be six years later, July 2018.



However, as anyone following the news would know, a series of deadly wildfires engulfed the state of California, one of which was perched between the touristy towns around Yosemite and the park itself. The first reaction was probably denial; no problem, they'll get it under control soon. This attitude went on for days. Gradually, a gnawing, inevitable fear crept in, that this trip may not happen. Eventually, the entire park was shut down, for the first time in 30 years. Disbelief and amusement alternated (Really? The first time in 30 years just happens to be this week?). Thoughts quickly turned to salvaging the trip and "making lemonade out of lemons". So, alternative sightseeing was planned, but that still left a replacement for my personal item of the week.

Another bucket list item, although farther down the list, was to scale Mt Whitney, the tallest peak in the Lower 48 at 14,995 feet. Due to an odd quirk in geology, the lowest point (Death Valley) at -282 feet and the highest point (Mt Whitney) are less than 150 miles apart. Very odd indeed when you think about it. Death Valley is not a place to visit in July, but luckily that visit had already occurred, in December 2005 on a 60-degree day, in conjunction with a Las Vegas Marathon trip. (Death Valley and Las Vegas are about three hours apart) Ultra-runners will know about the Badwater 135 race, which connects these low and high points in the U.S. and, believe it or not, occurs in July, starts in Death Valley and finishes at Whitney Portal, the campground at 8,374 feet and gateway to Whitney summit hikes. A permit is required; one must obtain permits even to go to the bathroom in California. Well, not really, but it seems that way, and I wouldn't rule that out some day. But I didn't think it would be as difficult to get a permit for Whitney as the notoriously difficult permit process for Half Dome. Getting the permit is actually the hardest part of hiking Half Dome. Lack of permitting for the wilderness adventures of Arkansas makes one appreciate the Natural State a little more. Anyway, new plans for the week were finalized, one day of which would be spent hiking Mt Whitney. The Ranger at the permit station gave some good advice and also issued a warning to not leave any food or bags unattended as the marmots and bears had been active up there. Duly noted, and more on that later.

Hiking day turned out sunny and clear with a hint of "haze" in Lone Pine, CA. We in Arkansas are accustomed to the summertime "haze", but actually the locals said it was normally crystal clear in the desert there at 3000 feet, and the "haze" was actually wisps of smoke from the fires miles away. There were no noticeable effects on breathing that I could tell, though, so I wasn't too worried about it. The day's journey would be 11 up and 11 down---22 mile roundtrip. The first 4-5 miles were smooth trail with some good waterfall photo ops of Lone Pine Creek cascading down the slope. Then the trail turned rougher and more full body weight steps over rocks and ledges were required. These full-weight lift steps are what really sucks the air out of you. I'm getting older now, and admittedly more doubts start to creep in, like "you're not a spring chicken anymore" and "are you sure you really want to do this---no one is forcing you". So, I sat down on a rock to ponder options and re-fuel with a snack. I knew the next landmark was the Trail Camp, less than a mile away, so I decided, may as well go there, at least, and re-assess. Once there, in a vast clearing, the summit of Mt Whitney became prominently visible. Even though there were miles of switchbacks and climbing to go, mentally things got more encouraging as the summit was in sight, as the crow flies, even though by trail it wasn't. Whatever mental games work. I kept thinking "it's just right up there, it would be crazy to turn around now".

Leaving Trail Camp, an endless series of switchbacks ensued (97 to be exact), and no relief from the sun. Although the temps were mild, the exposure worried me a little. Sucking wind all the way, eventually the trail crested at the conjunction of the Pacific Crest Trail at 13,600 feet. A hop, skip, and jump (actually some downhills at this point) led to another junction where the Pacific Crest headed down the hill on the other side of the pass, while the summit trail headed onward and upward. Clouds were rolling in, and the inevitable high altitude, summertime weather concerns crept in. Are thunderstorms developing? A steady stream of hikers were making their way up, or coming down. I was envious of the downhillers mainly because of the weather concerns. I kept pressing on, however, as no thunder or lightning was ever heard nor seen.

Memories (or nightmares) of all those past Pike's Peak Marathon trips started flooding back, trying to remember the little breathing techniques that helped at high elevations. But I was 13 years older from my last Pike's Peak run in 2005. A rhythm developed of pushing for 50 yards, taking a couple of deep breaths, and pressing on another 50 yards, etc. The trail was full of boulders making high step overs necessary. After a half hour, the far end and final switchback was reached. Adrenaline started kicking in and the finish could be smelled. A light sleet had begun falling which turned into a heavier downpour of sleet pellets. I had on two layers of upper body clothing and some gloves, with a visor, and some shorts. Which was enough, as fingers, face, torso are concerns for me, but my legs never get cold. After 10 minutes, the small hut at the top came into view. One more last gasp of air and a final push for 100 yards. And Finally!

Not so wary of the weather anymore, but still keeping an eye on the surrounding clouds, I didn't want to linger long but long enough to soak in the 360-degree views. The Sierra Nevadas and forests to the West. Mojave Desert to the East. Scores of alpine lakes and jagged peaks. I took several dozen pictures and started back down. It's amazing (another recollection from Pike's Peak days) after sucking wind so hard coming up, how drastic the immediate change was going down. I ran some, and would have run more, if the trail had been better. But eventually I settled in a brisk walk, knowing a steady pace would get me back by dark. The long, steady 11-mile descent was fairly uneventful with just a few breaks to re-fuel. I kept a close watch on the time; I didn't want to be in the woods around dusk when all the animals began stirring. Bears were a concern and since this was California, also mountain lions. Surprisingly, a good number of hikers were met coming UP the hill around dark. Not sure that's something I would want to do even with good flashlights, but to each his own.

Unfortunately, darkness was descending fast, and by the time Whitney Portal was reached, dusk had just turned to dark. Being beat and bushed and in the dark, I barely remembered where the rental car was. A few folks were milling around the campground. Three guys were walking through the parking lot when one of them exclaimed "Hey, there's a bear!" A brown bear was rummaging through the garbage cans and the sage advice of the Ranger the day before about leaving bags unattended came to mind. Discretion being the better form of valor, the three guys turned back and headed the other way. My car was actually on the end of the row and therefore closest to the garbage cans, and the bear finished his rummaging, turned, and started slowly ambling that direction. Not really scared, but not really wanting to shake his paw, either, the only thing I could think to do was use the remote control to flash the car lights. I don't know if that worked or not, but the next time I could make anything out in the darkness, the bear had moved uphill a few yards to another level of the parking lot, so I seized the opportunity to hop in the car and head back to Lone Pine. Later, someone back in town said there were actually three bears roaming around the parking lot.

What a day! Looking back, I honestly have no regrets about missing the Half Dome experience. The Mt Whitney experience was a new one altogether and a memory of a lifetime, and how cool is it to have visited the lowest and highest points in the contiguous U.S. ? Yosemite had been visited several times already and who knows, although there are no plans anymore to tackle Half Dome. It's still there waiting.



From The Editor

Stacey Shaver-Matson



Big Thanks to George, Sharon, and Nick for sharing their racing, crewing, and pacing experiences! It was a nice glimpse into those races for those back home. Thanks also to Jon for sharing his Mt Whitney experience.

Thank you to all who volunteered for the most recent AURA Events! You are amazing humans!!! As always thanks also to those who participated.

Feel free to share your race stories whether they are part of our series or not. It is always nice to see where our members are running and racing. Keep the stories and pictures coming.

If you want to hear more about Tahoe 200 and see some more pictures, I have been asked to speak at the LR Roadrunners meeting this Monday the 15th at US Pizza, 2710 Kavanaugh Blvd, Little Rock at 6pm

For Race Results see the AURA Website: <http://www.runarkansas.com/UTSaces.htm>

Contact Me at
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[AURA Membership Link](#)



RETREADS

(Retired Runners Eating Out)

We meet the first Wednesday of every month at Franke's Cafeteria on Rodney Parham Blvd. The food lineup begins sharply at 11:30 a.m. Come early to the lobby and celebrate your latest adventure. Everyone welcome, retired or not. If you are late look for the table with the old runners in their t-shirts from the past, medallions, trophies, etc.

Questions? Call Lou or Charlie Ellis Peyton
680-0309