

AURA NEWS

Arkansas Ultra Running Association

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From the Editor

HAPPY 2022



Congratulations to all who were able to start their year with us at the 24th annual Athens Big Fork Trail Marathon. This race is always a great way to test one’s mettle and to start the year off with a reminder that YOU are capable of doing hard things.

Much appreciation to everyone who volunteered! We had more volunteers than ever, especially at the start/finish. This was a tremendous help and allowed me to greet almost all of our runners as they crossed the finish line. Thanks also to everyone who made a contribution!! I can’t wait to celebrate our 25th year with you!

Congratulations to those who were able to make it out to the Ouachita Switchbacks in spite of the weather. We would like to say thanks to Tommy and all of his volunteers for putting on a great event in some really cold temperatures.

I hope to see you all at White Rock! Good Luck Friends - Keep Pushing Yourself Forward This Year!

-Happy Trails-
Stacey Shaver-Matson

Upcoming AURA Events



LOViT 100



Feb 25 & 26th

[Click Here To Register](#)

[Click Here to Volunteer](#)

White Rock Classic 50k

Saturday, February 5th

Due to a landslide the race will utilize an altered course. As always, the course will be well marked and we will have a good time while getting in some hill work!



[Click Here to Register and for More Race Info](#)

Please bring cash for parking and for the donation can. The event is free but it is not free to host so please help cover Lisa & Podogs out of pocket cost for this free/donation based event. **Thank you in advance.**

Important Notes:

*We have a new start/finish area, [Shores Lake Recreation Area](#) at the Pavilion

*\$3 required to park and for day use - **EXACT CHANGE PLEASE** so this process can move quickly and smoothly

*Avoid the recreation area, campground area, parking area, at the top of White Rock Mountain, this is not part of the course! This is important as we could lose access to this course. We will enjoy the amazing view at the Sunset Point while running the Rim Trail




*We can no longer have alternative starts - as in running to the top, riding bike back, starting at the top and running to the start/finish area. We have to start at the starting line and finish by crossing the finish line for both distances.



March 18th - 20th
3 Days Stage Race

Become one of the Syllamopeople
[Click Here to Register](#)

Brought to you by Arkansas Ultra Running Association and Race Directors PoDog Vogler and Lisa Gunnoe

REGISTRATION OPEN	FOR THESE UTS EVENTS
	<p>Ouachita Trail 50 - April 9, 2022</p> <p>Register before March 1st to guarantee your shirt size and before the price increases.</p>
	<p>Styx & Stones - April 23, 2022</p>
	<p>Mt Magazine Trail Run - May 14</p> <p>Registration Opening ???</p>

Don't Let Age Stop You! Just Keep Moving

AURA Member and UTS Lite Participant, Dale Powell, now holds the 70+ age group records for Schorchin Squirrel 14 mile run, Mt Magazine 12 mile Trail Run, Cossatot Half Marathon, Sunset 6 hour endurance Run, Lake Ouachita Vista trail 14 mile Run, Hot Springs Nat. Park 18 mile Run, and Athens to Big Fork 17 mile Run.



Athens Big Fork Trail Marathon

By Jeff Beason

In 493 B.C. the Athenians were under attack from the Persians on the plains of Marathon, Greece. Outnumbered 4:1 the Athenians sent a messenger the 150 miles across rugged, mountainous terrain to Sparta, asking for help. The Spartans agreed, but would not join the fight, due to a religious celebration, until the moon was full. The messenger returned with the news.

By the time the messenger, Pheidippides, returned, part of the Persian army were heading towards Athens while the remaining Persians had been defeated. News of the situation needed to get to Athens, so Pheidippides was on the run again. Legend says that he arrived and proclaimed victory, then collapsed and died.

The modern marathon is much less intense than the one Pheidippides ran. Most are on nice smooth roads, relatively flat and usually there are many other runners to keep you company. The one of the exceptions to this is called the Athens-Big Fork Marathon. It starts in the small community of Big Fork, Arkansas and runs to a town called Athens via an old mail route trail.



I am number 60, just right of center

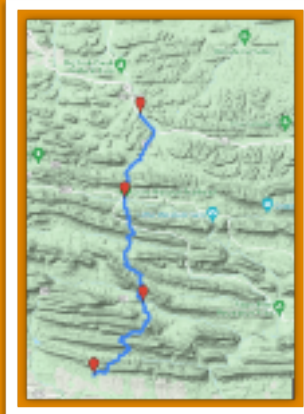
After the heartbreak at Leadville, my wife informed me that I would be running in this marathon. She had arranged everything, including time off from work and getting me registered. I was excited and nervous. I had just failed at a mountainous race, how would I be able to do this other one?

This race has 8 mountains on an out and back course, meaning 16 climbs. Some of these are actually steeper than Hope Pass in the Leadville 100, although not as long.

I went into this race, admittedly undertrained. It seems that this is easy for any of us to do in those races immediately after the holidays, but add that I had been fighting a cold the week before and you have a recipe for a disastrous race. I was not about to pull out of this one, I had wanted to try it for way too long..

Athens Big Fork Course Map

The morning started off in the mid 30's with a light rain. The temperature was suppose to get into the low 50's. I knew that the rain was to only get heavier as the day wore on. As we took off, I ran with my friend, Ken. We kept a decent pace, but I wasn't feeling great. I guess my lungs were not back a full capacity, I just could not catch my breath. I told Ken to go ahead and run his race, I didn't want to pull him down. In my mind, I was thinking that I could turn around at Blaylock Creek aid station at the 8.5 mile mark and accomplish the shorter 17 mile "fun run", but I refused to make that decision until I got there and took a minute to reset my mind.



By the time I got there, the rain was still light plus I saw friends and family there, it was a small mental uptick, so I decided to continue for the full marathon.

One of the toughest climbs in the race is right after leaving this aid station. As I climbed, that's when the RAIN started, I would not be dry again until I was finished. Runners often hear Forrest Gump comparisons ad nauseam, but I felt like I was in that movie. Not the running parts, but the scenes of the rain in Vietnam.

"We been through every kind of rain there is. Little bitty stingin' rain... and big ol' fat rain. Rain that flew in sideways. And sometimes rain even seemed to come straight up from underneath."

We all go through ups and downs during a race, this one will cause you to do it mentally and physically. I was no longer counting miles, I was counting mountains. I knew there were a total of 8 each way, 16 ascents, 16 descents. Forget the GPS watch, when I hit the top of number 8, I knew a downhill and a little bit of dirt road, then back to the start-easy enough, or so I told myself. Many times the "out" is much easier on the mind and body than the "back" in a race like this.

All the rain had started turning the trail into creeks. I asked myself out loud if I had signed up for a trail race or a duathlon. The small creeks and streams that I had crossed on the way out, were deeper now and flowing a little faster. Up to this point, I had never made the connection that Pheidippides ran a mountainous trail to Athens to carry a message of victory and here I was on the old route that was for mail delivery...to Athens.

Things started coming apart on me somewhere around the 9th or 10th climb, my thighs began to seize on me. All the braking I had been doing on the downhills because of the mud was starting to take its toll on me. I kept telling myself, just make it to the next aid station, just after mountain number 11. I could sit down, reset mentally and get some food. This would be the aid station where my friends and family were. (It's also the one known for their "Arkansas Crepes"-pancakes with peanut butter and jelly.) The few minutes of rest and some nutrition were exactly what I needed. I felt ready to finish. My legs felt like they were coming back. I wasn't sure how far it was, maybe 8 miles or so, but I knew I had 5 mountains left. I got a rhythm in my head, 3 mountains, an aid station, 2 mountains, then some dirt road, and 3/4 mile of paved road, then I would be done.

Blaylock Creek Aid Station as my wife and cousin make sure I get fluids



And that's where my problems started. It was actually 4 mountains, before the next aid station. While it didn't change the distance, it can be demoralizing when you expect an aid station and you see another damn mountain. I was towards the back of the pack by this time, so I was alone on the trail. I started to question whether I was still even on the course, I saw the marking but I was second guessing them. By now the worst rain of the day was hammering me as I started to climb that fourth mountain. The sound of wind and rain inundated me, I couldn't

hear my feet hit the ground. My legs were getting worse than they had ever been. My calves were starting to cramp, visibly.

This is probably the lowest I have ever been while running.

Here I was, on a 25% grade, winds howling, rain pounding, all I could do was dig deep and hope for the best. I was in too far to quit, all I could do was push on. After watching Leadville slip away, I could not let this one get me also. Athens-Big Fork was not going to break me. There was no option, other than finishing. Plus, there was a burger for me at the finish line and that sounded like it would hit the spot.

Finally the rain had let up and I was on a little downhill, then I saw a creek crossing. There are many creek crossings in this race, but this one had a directional marker for runners that I remembered. I knew that just beyond it was the last aid station! Then, I could hear the volunteers. Going into the last aid station is a boost to the moral of any runner and a boost was needed at this point.

One mountain left to conquer. Now, on paper, this last mountain isn't all that bad. In fact it's probably the shortest climb of all, but I wasn't dealing in theories. I had around 22 hard miles on my legs by this point. Most of those were either hard climbs or steep, muddy downhills. What got me over that 16th climb was my mind. I was all but done and I kept telling myself that I was a finisher. I just had to prove it by getting over one more mountain. I hit the crest of 16 and through the trees I saw a field in the valley below, the valley where the finish line waited.

As much as I love downhill running, this was not the time for it. My legs and the mud would not allow me to enjoy that last slope. I slid down the best I could, then found that dirt road. Just a couple of miles to go. I decided that I would alternate running and walking. While I wasn't moving fast, I was moving and soon, I could hear cars. The highway was near.

While we like to think of race finish lines where there are lots of people cheering and encouraging the runners, this is not the case in most trail and ultras. Especially at small runs like Athens-Big Fork. I came up the road and turned into the Big Fork community center and was greeted by the race director, Stacey, and the time keeper. That was it, no crowds, no frills, no medals. But I did get the pride of accomplishment and the deep-self satisfaction of finishing one of the toughest trail marathons around and that's better than any medal collecting dust. I went inside, changed into dry clothes, got my burger and went home.





ABF WINNERS

Bee Miller - FULL Overall Female (Above)
Evan Armitage - 17 mile Winner (Middle)
Brian Hurley FULL Overall Male (Right)
Natalie McBee -17 mile Female winner
(Not pictured)
David Samuel #1, creator of this event
and holds the records for most runs at
ABF. He is 24/24!! (Below)



Team Jackass at Turn Around Aid
(center of page)

OARA HAM operators (Right)

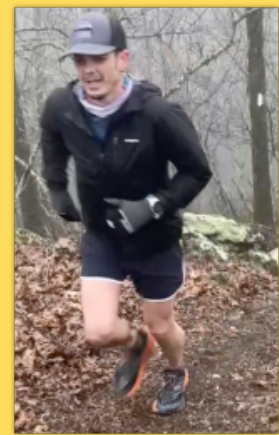
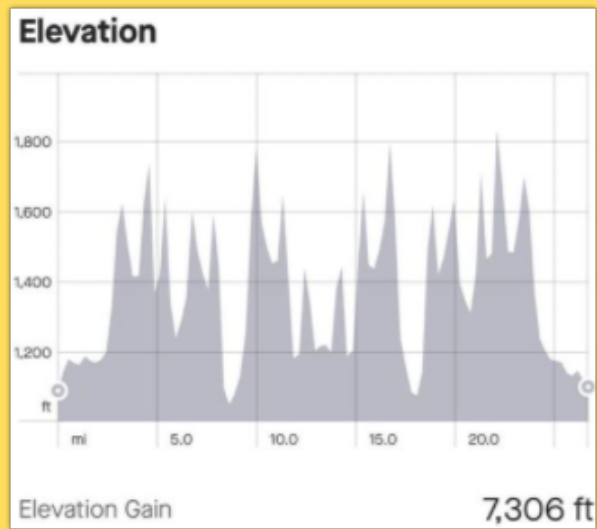
Blaylock Creek Aid/Fleet Feet LR
(Far Right)



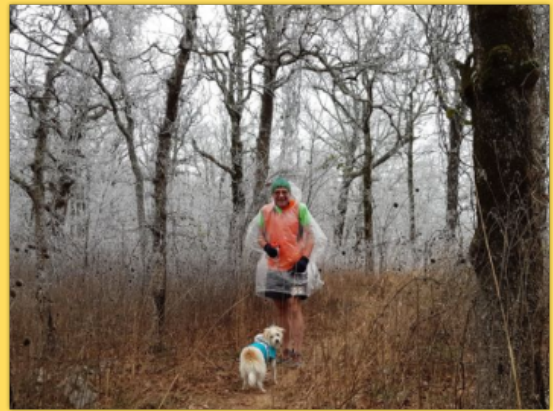


ATHENS BIG FORK TRAIL MARATHON





OUACHITA SWITCHBACKS 50K





Spirit of Syllamo Adventure Run

By Rusty Harvey

Trail running has an odd lure that consumes my life. I organize most of my time in an effort to get to the trails. I do not know why but they call me back over and over. I am particularly captivated by adventures that require struggle to accomplish. These types of journeys become part of who I am. So, when I designed my own route, I wanted something to capture these feelings. I ended up finding the Spirit of Syllamo – a 105-mile trail run.

I live in North Central Arkansas, near the Sylamore Ranger District. It is part of the Ozark St. Francis National Forest; 1.5 million acres of land. It took almost a year to create a route. Designing it was a daily conversation with Jake Anderson. We debated on starting locations, the length of the route, which trails to use, and ease of access for crew vehicles. We trained on the course, recording distance and elevation change from trailhead to trailhead. A massive spreadsheet accumulated all our data. The plan was for me to run 100+ miles in February of 2021. If that attempt was successful, we would invite runners to experience the adventure in December of 2021. As we designed it, we called it “Syllamo 105,” signifying a route in excess of 105 miles, but later we named it “Spirit of Syllamo.”

Syllamo was a Native American and part of the Creek Tribe. It is said he was one of the most skilled hunters in the area. The area is a highlands range, described as “broken” by the National Parks Service. By definition, highlands are plateaus carved out by water. It is rugged, dense, and inconsistent. In a single mile, you might traverse a rock garden, soft pine needles, and a sand pit. The next mile might cross a creek, ascend a mountain, then descend to a waterfall. The heart of this district is Blanchard Springs.

Blanchard Springs accommodates hundreds of people, offers camping, recreation for the family, and stunning scenery. As Jake and I designed a route, we knew that Blanchard was our start and finish location. Then we had to pick the time of year to host the race. Winter is optimal for trail running. Temperatures are generally comfortable and the leaves fall off, exposing scenery. Plant overgrowth, bugs, and small critters go dormant. Lack of daylight was the only challenge because we wanted to showcase as much as possible. The solution: a loop, then an out and back course. This design allows most miles to be seen during daylight hours.

The loop is 35 miles on the Syllamo Mountain Bike Trails. I started before sunrise but got to see the entire section because a small part at the beginning is repeated. The Syllamo trails boast some rugged features but highlight how Native Americans lived in this area. Water sources are abundant and there are food plots for wildlife. There are rock formations, sheltered hollows, and overlook vistas perfect for hunting. Whatever is needed to survive, this area provides. True to a Highlands region though, the land does not stay the same.

After the loop, the course follows the North Sylamore Creek Trail. This trail feels as if you are in a different forest. Climbs become longer, steeper, and more rugged. The features of Sylamore become more striking. I often trip or veer off trail because I am distracted by the beauty. My run in February was the first time I had traversed everything in a single effort. I remember thinking this area not only provides ways to live, but also reasons to live. The Spirit had captured me and I knew I was going to finish. I continued and approached the Ozark Highlands Trail as daylight faded.

The Ozark Highlands Trail is intended to be wilder and more primitive. The foliage changes, water sources are less frequent, and the mountains are taller. The trail borders a full wilderness area called the Leatherwood; the feeling of being remote is more distinct. The topography is off camber, loose, and more varied. It is almost as if the mountains no longer care if you survive. In my mind, the Ozark Highlands Trail accomplishes the goal of being wild. The route continues to the terminus of the OHT, then returns to Blanchard. I finished in 33 hours and 35 minutes. I hugged my wife at the end, surrounded by a few friends who helped me pull off the attempt. It was simple, peaceful, and beautiful. After I recovered, Jake and I invited others to take on the challenge the same way I did.

We wanted people to experience the Spirit of Syllamo in a similar fashion. You must provide all your own gear, water, nutrition, and crew. We marked the turns but promised nothing else to the runners who came in December. Unlike many other races, we did not offer a buffet of nutrition and an army of volunteers every five miles. We wanted the effort to feel like it is runner versus the wild. Future runs may modify rules to allow more people to experience the Spirit of Syllamo but we will maintain a requirement of self-reliance in the wild. We ended up witnessing a remarkable display of athleticism, determination, and love for trail running.

Jake Anderson set a record at 28 hours and 47 minutes. James Holland finished in 32 hours and 27 minutes. Chris Lyle finished with his watch officially reading 33 hours 59 minutes and 59 seconds. Finally, our lone female, Magdalena Casper-Shipp, finished in 37 hours and 14 minutes. She finished with a smile on her face and I am pretty sure she had another 100 miles in her. To be clear, everyone mentioned, myself included, was well prepared to accomplish this route. I was told James Holland finished four other 100 milers in 2021 and I watched Chris Lyle destroy my best times on local races. Jake targeted the route for months, then pushed himself to the brink of quitting to set a record. Simply put, Spirit of Syllamo requires struggle and offers the mixture of emotions that I love.

Considering variations in GPS data, the route is somewhere between 105 and 110 miles. The current average finish time is 35 hours and 40 minutes. GPS watches will record an excess of 33,000 feet of elevation change but Jake and I believe it could be in excess of 40,000 feet. It is approximately 95 miles of trail and 10 miles of forest service roads. What is more, there is opportunity for two different courses held on even and odd years. The Syllamo and Sylamore section will always stay the same but the Ozark Highlands Trail goes two different directions. We believe the second direction will be slightly shorter but more rugged and more elevation change. In December of each year, we plan to host 50 runners to experience the Spirit of Syllamo. We will also invite runners to take on the 35-mile loop. The Spirit of Syllamo is something special that we hope many will experience.

2021 - 105 Mile Finishers:

Jake Anderson – 28:47 – December 11th-12th, 2021
James Holland – 32:27 – December 11th-12th, 2021
Rusty Harvey – 33:35 – February 27th-28th, 2021
Chris Lyle – 33:59 – December 11th-12th, 2021
Magdalena Casper-Shipp – 37:14 – December 11th-12th,

2021 – 35 Mile Finishers:

Melanie Mathews – 8:57 – December 11th, 2021
Bobby Finster – 8:57 – December 11th, 2021

Current UTS Overall Standings

Rank	Name	50K FM	20M SS	NEB	AT	HSNP	6hr SUN	12hr SUN	24hr SUN	26M LOV	26M ABF	50K WR	100K LOV	50M SYL	26M RCM	50K OT	50M OT	50K S&S	18M MAG	Total
1	Daniel Arnold	26	9	26	109				83.05		58									311.05
2	Blake Miley	50	12	61	55	52				58	16									304
3	Shane Poland	61	62	72		63														258
4	Gabriel Harris	72	34	38					66.44											210.44
5	Bryan McCullar	12	40	9	32	29			51.49		8									181.49
6	Matthew Jackson	9	16	12	26	13		61.37		30	10									177.37
7	Stan Ferguson				93	35					29									157
8	Kenny Garner	11							62.29	41.5	41									155.79
9	John Haddock	44		32	79															155
10	Zac Morgan		51	50			46.14													147.14
11	Will Landreth	22	28								89									119
12	Brett Nguyen	8	3	13		2	40.87			41.5	9									117.37
13	F. Perez Colon	32	22	19	38															111
14	Matt Lewis	13			66						13									92
15	Stewart Gray			10		41					35									86
16	Aaron Dickens	19				23					21									63
17	Paul Turner			44		17														61
18	James Holland			11	46															57
19	Chris Lyle										47									47
20	Johnny Eagles	2	2	2					33.23											39.23
21	Brandon Allen	38																		38
22	Chris Wear	16									21									37
23	Robert Harrell	7	6			10				8	5									36
24	Lionel Burnett	4		4		7				18										33
25	Shawn Barlow								21.59		7									28.59
26	Cliff Ferren									24	2									26
27	Shawn Sellers			22																22
28	Jim Tadel	5		6							6									17
29	Josh Hinojosa									12	4									16
30	Timothy Via			16																16
31	A. Raghavendra	10																		10
32	Kyle Green			8																8
33	Alan Hunnicutt	3		5																8
34	Scott Irwin			7																7
35	Brian Kearns	6																		6
36	Donald Thompson					4														4
37	Steve George					3														3
38	Steve Griffin										3									3
39	Stephen Rush			3																3

Rank	Name	50K FM	20M SS	NEB	AT	HSNP	6hr SUN	12hr SUN	24hr SUN	26M LOV	26M ABF	50K WR	100K LOV	50M SYL	26M RCM	50K OT	50M OT	50K S&S	18M MAG	Total
1	Laura Kearns	51	56	58	105	60		59.21		44	46									479.21
2	Ashley Gramza	40	45	47	75	38			58.46		29									332.46
3	Bee Miller	62			89					55	57									263
4	Missy Harken	12	28			20		60.4		33										153.4
5	Michelle Posey	28	34		51															113
6	Chrissy Ferguson	9		24			47.87			27										107.87
7	Kimmy Riley				62						17									79
8	Lisa Webb		16	38		26														78
9	Zoe Buonaiuto	16	22	30																68
10	Mary McDonald	3		8		4			24.67	21										60.67
11	Julie Ingle	6		18		7			29.23											60.23
12	Laura Stacy					49														49
13	Lisa Gunnoe	2							45.67											47.67
14	Shelley Sparks					32					11									43
15	Thaveep Leach			12					29.23											41.23
16	Tiffany Mallard										35									35
17	Cassie Brown	34																		34
18	Stacey Rodts										23									23
19	Kristi Martin	22																		22
20	S. Beckwith-Adki					14														14
21	Lori Dather					10														10

We have three participants who have run all of the UTS/UTS Lite races so far, Laura Kearns, Matthew Jackson and Dale Powell.

You are all doing amazing!! We still have 8 races left so keep it up. It's not too late to get out there and add numbers to the board. Anything can happen at this point.

*Please see the website for the Master, Grand Master and Senior division break down.

Current UTS Lite Overall

Rank	Name	15M SS	NEB	HSNP	6hr SUN	14M LOV	17M ABF	25K OTSW	25K WR	20K SYL	13M RCM	50K OT	25K S&S	12M MAG	Total
1	Brian Sites	53		43	34.27	52	54								236.27
2	Dale Powell	31	28	26	34.27	41	32	41							233.27
3	Corey Duncan		56	54											110
4	James Moy		45	32											77
5	Ian Thomas	42	22												64
6	Matthew Britton							52							52
7	Chris Baldwin						43								43
8	Shawn Bayouth		34												34
9	John Sheridan						26								26
10	Chris Davis		16												16
11	Tom Avery				11.69										11.69

Rank	Name	15M SS	NEB	HSNP	6hr SUN	14M LOV	17M ABF	25K OTSW	25K WR	20K SYL	13M RCM	50K OT	25K S&S	12M MAG	Total
1	Lori Talley	52		43	33.36		32								160.36
2	Erin Lytle				29.01	54	54								137.01
3	Dottie Rea	41		26	30.46	26									123.46
4	Susan Garrett			54		43									97
5	Krista Buck				30.46	32	26								88.46
6	Mandy Ferguson			32			43								75

AURA MEMBERS

Welcome new members to the AURA Family! We look forward to seeing you at future events!

As Always Feel Free To Share:

- *Send me your race/volunteer photos for the newsletter
- *Send me your race or training stories I am also happy to edit if needed
- *Share the AURA love by sending the membership link below to anyone interested in trail running
- *Email me or any board member if you have any questions or concerns

HIGH MILEAGE POINTS

If you have volunteered at any AURA event in this years Ultra Trail Series and you want credit toward the High Mileage Award then please email the race you volunteered at and your hours worked to me at mverrunnergirl@gmail.com

[Click Here To Register or Renew Your Membership](#)

[Click Here To See If You Need To Renew](#)

[Click Here To See Events In The Ultra Trail Series](#)

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Lisa Gunnoe - Secretaty

Katie Helms - Treasurer

