



Running Briefs



Running Club North
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An Equinox fall to remember

(This story was submitted in a response to the Editor's call for "Marathon Mishaps")

By **MICHAEL RICHMOND**

Equinox 2002 - At the very top of Ester Dome is the steep decline which turns in on a bank, to the right, as you head downhill on the out-and-back's return. I dropped down that fairly quickly, excited that all the big hills were vanquished. There had been heavy frost at 2,300 feet the night before, so the rocks and vegetation had thick rime ice on them, the more so since that slope is a northerly aspect, and shaded.

I noted that a frequent stream of people headed up at the same time, since that part of the trail is two-directional. So, to be nice, figuring they were pretty tired, as I had been then, I ran to the side a little, so no one would have to break stride going uphill.

I took the uphill bank a little and immediately slipped on the ice, and my body slid to that fairly steep face, rotating at the same time. I felt my head grind across the cold, icy rock/dirt face. I came to on my back, sprawled flat. I hadn't lost consciousness, I was just stunned, and was afraid I'd broken my nose.

A few people stopped and asked if I needed help, but I said I was all right. After a few minutes of collecting myself and doing a trauma assessment, I stumbled down to the nearest aid station. The kind souls from one of the ski patrols looked

me over, and said they thought my nose was probably only lacerated, not broken.

Heartened by that, and beginning to feel colder, I took off down the Chute. My next memories are very sporadic, marked by hypothermic behavior. I was very cold. I'd lost significant body heat when I sprawled on the ground in my sweaty wet gear. I just remember knowing that I could not stop, that I had to run as hard as I could to stay warm. Also, that I had trained so hard that season, it was not going to waste.

The last mile was especially grueling, because I pushed myself harder than I was accustomed. I lunged past the timing station and collapsed on the grass. For the most part, I was happy with my time, which was about 15 minutes slower than what I felt I was capable of, not accounting for hillside face-plants.

My problems were not over. I wasn't thinking too clearly and just sat around cold. A couple of friends expressed concern about the blood on my face. Then they showed me my bloody knees. I didn't even know I had scraped them up. By then I was shivering uncontrollably and losing coherency of speech and thought. My good friend Rebecca, who is a healer and massage therapist, bundled me in blankets in her car and got the heat going. That did the trick.

After about 20 minutes I was able to warm up enough to go back outside and feel a part of that special

time at the end, when you are so happy to be done, and sharing that with all the other finishers. I got some good fluid replacements going and started eating. Some people checked out my crusty-dried, blood-streamed face underneath my friend Rebecca's funky Farmer's Market hat while I was wrapped in her blanket.

So that was my first official marathon. It still is my best time on the Equinox, and stands as my goal to beat one of these years.

It's also my favorite marathon; I wouldn't trade those memories for anything.

Editor's note: Downhillers get the right of way!

And the next time Michael Richmond, a National Weather Service forecaster, runs the Equinox, he's not ceding it. So watch out.

HELP!

Running Briefs is published six times a year, give or take a month, in January, March, May, July, September and November. Without contributions from Interior Alaska running enthusiasts, newsletter recipients would be subjected to drivel exclusively from the editor. Spare us that by submitting story ideas to:

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Word to the wise: lay off the Spirulina

By JOHN LYLE

A year ago, when I first spotted James Woodhull warming up for the 2006 Hilo to Volcano 50-kilometer Ultra, he had a look of intensity which I interpreted to read, "I eat nails for breakfast, you got a problem with that?"

It just so happened that as we both dashed for a final pit stop three minutes before the start, we struck up a conversation.

"Looks like you put in a fair number of miles each week," I said, something of an understatement.

"Oh, about 100 miles a week", he replied modestly.

"Kinda looks like that," I said, smiling. "Hills and long distance, you must have those down pretty well too, yea?"

"I do at least one 30-miler a week, with as much elevation and hills as possible," he said.

If I had any doubts before that point, I was now certain that this guy was serious about training for ultras. And I had no reason not to believe he was also serious about running ultras, especially the one starting in less than two minutes.

As we are often reminded, appearances can mask other realities.

The reality with James Woodhull was that, despite his fierce look of determination, here was a kind and gentle soul whose approach to running ultras matches the way he runs his life. And though I knew there'd be several contenders in this relentless uphill slog, the truth was they'd all have to contend with James Woodhull.

At the gun James' wide strides quickly put time and distance between himself and the frontrunners, his long arms loosely swinging in synch with a clearly audible, unique breathing pattern. I managed to hang close for the first six miles to

Kea'au, at which point the course follows a steeper grade to the finish in Volcano Village, 25 miles up the road.

It was just across from the Farmers Market that I made the first of many emergency pit stops as the undigested Spirulina I'd eaten for breakfast became a force of its own. Sadly, each time I bailed out and sought cover, I watched as James' long, even strides became more distant as he ascended the mountain.

The Spirulina slowly ran its own course and I was able to make up some time, finishing in second place, four minutes back.

"Next year, no Spirulina," James joked at the finish.

I couldn't have agreed more.

Jan. 20, 2007

Hilo to Volcano 50K ultra

The 5 a.m. Hilo weather was clear, warm and sunny. Stars shined brightly overhead. Gnarled, twisted trunks of old growth ironwood trees took on eerie shapes in the shadows cast down by lava-red street lamps. Tide pools wound through the Japanese Gardens in Queen Lili'okulani Park. Waves gently lapped at the reefs and shore. Birds had not yet awoken. Silence prevailed.

Nearby at the Suisan Fish Market, fishermen drank coffee and joked as they prepared their gear for the day.

The Early Risers Club, the first shift of faithful, true believers, began their daily ritual of walking, jogging, limping and hobbling the 1-kilometer circle around the Japanese gardens, just as they had done for decades; just as they would do for as long as they could. These are the true heroes and heroines, I thought to myself. Not in it for glory, PR's or hardware, these humble folks celebrated the effort and the journey as they and their friends and family made their way, round and round,

some beginning at 4 a.m. and others finishing after dark. Each footstep seemed to reflect a small yet significant prayer of thanks and mindfulness.

Across the road from Coconut Island, Race Director and Big Island Road Runners Club President Wayne "Big Dog" Joseph outlined the course rules and gave last-minute instructions. James Woodhull was back this year to defend his title, as were local favorites Susan Cordell, Amy Ray-McWhinney and Heidi Hansen.

At the start it was evident that James would use his well-proven strategy of putting distance between himself and the others, while in contrast Cordell, Ray-McWhinney and Hansen ran together laughing and talking virtually the entire way. Cordell and McWhinney finished together, less than a second apart in 5 hours, 32 minutes, while Hansen was just three minutes back. Cordell holds the women's record with an impressive time of 4:21.

Slowly, but surely, gaining on Woodhull was 42-year-old David Carlsson, also from O'ahu, who used a shortened, highly-efficient stride. Carlsson managed to catch a gracious and humble Woodhull near the end, finishing a minute ahead in 4:27:33.

While many races favor fast younger runners, this one was custom-made for their elders. The average age of the male entrants was 55 years. Only 24 people started the race and 19 finished, hailing from across the Hawaiian Islands as well as from California, Washington, Minnesota, Michigan, Illinois, Maryland and Alaska (Anchorage runner John Wells).

Speaking with David Carlsson

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Certifying a course: complex

By CORKY HEBARD

"Certification of road races in the United States is done under the auspices of the USA Track and Field Road Running Technical Council (USATF/RRTC). Courses certified by the RRTC are also recognized by the Road Runners Club of America (RRCA). For a time to be eligible for record consideration it must be achieved on a RRTC-certified course. Runners have a right to a properly-measured course. RRTC certification is an assurance to the runner that times will be based on a properly-measured distance."

— Quoted from the Course Measurement Procedures Manual.

Most of us are not going to set a national or state record but we still want to know the distance is as advertised, especially if it is an event like the Chena River Run or the Midnight Sun Run which normally include out-of-town guests and sometimes invited runners.

Although there are a number of ways to measure a course, the experience of the USATF/RRTC has shown that the "calibrated bicycle method" is superior to all others because of the speed and accuracy with which it can be performed. The measuring wheel, electronic distance meter (EDM) and, as of this time, GPS are not acceptable methods for course certification. I was told by the editor of Measurement News, the newsletter of USATF/RRTC, that some folks are working to perfect the GPS method but have not worked out the inconsistency bugs yet.

The calibrated bicycle method is performed with a device called a Jones Counter which is attached to the front wheel of the bicycle and counts revolutions of the wheel. To calibrate the Jones Counter it is necessary to have a certified calibration course. Our local calibration course is 800 meters long and is along the shoulder of Chena Pump Rd. It was

surveyed by fellow runner Pat Kalen, a professional land surveyor. Since the calibration course is flat and straight the EDM is acceptable for establishing the calibration course.

The first step is to calibrate the bicycle. At least four rides must be made along the calibration course, riding as straight a line as possible. This gives the "working constant," which is converted to the number of counts per kilometer or per mile as desired. A short course safety factor of 1.001 is included in the constant. This adds approximately five feet per mile which insures that the course is at least as long as advertised.

A course must be measured a minimum of two times, either with one rider covering the course twice or by utilizing the two-rider method. RCN has two Jones Counters so David Bloom rides the course with me. This allows for independent interpretation of the "shortest route" and two sets of calculations that are compared for accuracy.

A straight course is fairly easy to measure but most courses like the MSR or CRR are circuitous and require careful attention to the shortest route. A race course is defined by the shortest possible route the runner could take and not be disqualified. When making a turn the rider must ride within one foot of a curb or road shoulder. When going through a series of reversing curves (i.e. Morris Thompson Dr.), the rider must ride back-and-forth from shoulder to shoulder including up on the sidewalk. At intersections or turns where a shortcut is possible the shortcut must be monitored or coned off to keep the runners on the measured route. Mile or kilometer points are also established while measuring the course. Once the course is measured the bicycles must be calibrated four more times. This gives the "finish constant." The working and finish

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after the race - as massage therapists worked ropy knots out of his legs - he admitted to being "a little sore," mentioning that he'd run a 100K mountain race on O'ahu the weekend before. Carlsson knew Woodhull would set a fast pace and decided to let him go, focusing instead on running as efficiently and relaxed as possible in hopes of not blowing up. His strategy and technique proved themselves in the final kilometers of the race.

While your faithful correspondent didn't log the miles needed to attempt the ultra, he did join two other geriatric codgers on a relay team, Geezers on Fire (aka Team Glucosamine), which somehow managed to set a masters course record. One of the Geezers quipped, "Admittedly, the old record was not too hard; semi-flaccid, perhaps."

For the second year in a row, relay record-holders Los Crazy Vatos finished first. Their time of 3:06.41 - a 6:01 per-mile average for 31 miles from sea level to 4,000-foot elevation - attests to not only the importance they place on this event but also to their remarkable talent.

As David Carlsson downed bowls of Portuguese bean and vegetable soup, bananas and oranges, he explained how a year ago chronic, debilitating arthritis made it difficult for him to even walk short distances. He switched to a strict diet of raw, whole foods (grains, nuts, vegetables, fruits, beans) as outlined by Nathan Pritikin, and attributed his impressive recovery to his diet.

I asked Carlsson if he'd tried Spirulina.

"No, he replied. "But I have heard a few stories, and I think I'll pass!"

Editor's note: John Lyle, a retired Fairbanks teacher, lives part-time in Hawaii. E-mail him at kayak@gci.net for more information about running there..

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constants are then compared and the larger is called the "constant of the day" and is used for course length calculations. The start or finish line may need to be adjusted slightly to achieve the final correct length.

Once the calculations are completed, a course map is drawn and the detailed application is filled out, the documentation package is submitted to the USATF/RRTC National Certifier for Alaska. Once the submittal has been accepted a certification number is issued which is good for 10 years or until DOT or race management make changes to the route. Other certified courses in Fairbanks besides the MSR and CRR are the 5K and 10K Alaska Senior Games courses.

As a point of interest, the Equinox Marathon was measured using the calibrated bicycle method and also with a measuring wheel, but it is not a certified course. While the length is measured as accurately as possible, due to the rough trail, it is not the type of course that USATF/RRTC will accept for certification. Most courses do not need to be certified but they should be measured carefully so the runner feels their time is meaningful for the advertised distance.

Editor's note: Corky Hebard is a longtime local runner and RCN volunteer. Thank him for his hard work.

RESULTS

The following is a non-comprehensive list of recent local running results. The runner's name is followed by the name of the event, date, "chip" or "net" time when available (as opposed to the "gun" time, which would be slower at larger races), overall placing, and for women, place by gender. A runner need *not* be an RCN member to be listed.

Paulette Goodwin	50-mile Huntsville TX	12/9	9:38:47	87/18
Donald Aycock	Marine Corps, DC	10/29	4:13:11	6,062
Kellie Mitchell	Marine Corps	10/29	4:29:31	2,523
Keith Richard	Dublin, Ireland	10/30	5:29:28	
Mark Lockwood	NYC	11/5	4:06:19	13,986
Roger Topp	Philadelphia	11/19	4:43:11	5,021
Dietr. Hildebrandt	Las Vegas	12/2	3:52:17	1,144
Joe Trubacz	Las Vegas	12/2	3:29:52	427
Bob Eley	Sacramento CA	12/3	5:30:34	3,592
Elden Johnson	Honolulu HI	12/10	3:59:39	1,981
Laura Snyder	Phoenix	1/14	4:21:54	
Kevin Brinegar	Carlsbad	1/21	2:45:57	6
Carol Williams	Miami 1/2 Mar.	1/28	2:35:30	4,566/901