

Why I ran my first ultra? By Michael Pate

As many of you know, I constantly told people that I would never run anything more than a half marathon. I can honestly say, in the back of my mind, I knew running an ultra would happen sooner or later. Like most (if not all) runners, I struggle with the idea of distance. Now, I have been running for a long time, since I was around 6 years old. Running has always been a part of my life. It became more apparent as I grew. I became more serious about running while in junior high. My junior year of high school, I ended up joining the cross country team. While I'm being honest, this was one of the most difficult challenges of my running carrier. I have, for the majority of my life, enjoyed running, but running competitively just about killed my love for running. The following year, I decided to drop cross country all together. Needless to say, I still ran, just not competitively.

While in college, I toyed with the idea of joining the cross country team, but with a full schedule, working two jobs and the idea of running competitively again, I came to the conclusion that it wasn't in my best interest. My workload eventually became overwhelming, from which I dropped running altogether. I ended up taking a little over a year off from running, fell into a lifestyle from which was less than desirable. Needless to say, I met my then girlfriend/fiancée. She, at the time was on the cross country team. She kept persisting that I join her on her runs, for which I did for a few, but being out of shape and a weird dislike for running kept me from joining her. A couple of months after our relationship ended and the persistent depression looming over me, I did the one thing that I had come to dislike. Running became an oasis for me, a sort of meditation if you will. Now that's not to say it was easy, I was at constant battle with myself. The thought of running, my ex, stress, all of it was a struggle. With these thoughts, I found myself putting on my shoes and heading out the door. I started off at shorter distances and a much slower pace, but soon found myself challenging myself to go further, to go faster.

Upon graduation, I ended up moving around to different parts of Tennessee (Knoxville and Nashville), at which, I found myself looking for fellow runners. What I found was an eye opener. I never thought I'd meet some of the most inspiring, influential people. It was the Nashville running community that introduced me to the idea of running an ultra-marathon. Of course, at this point, I was still hesitant to the idea of running any distance over 13.1 miles. It wasn't until I moved to Woodland, CA and joined the



Golden Valley Harriers that I decided to sign up for my first 50k. Through hearing the same inspiring stories and suggestions of ultra marathoning from fellow runners and friends, did I decide to take on the challenge. My first training run for Way To Cool was a difficult 15 mile run, to which

I had trouble walking for a week straight. The next few training runs became easier, with the occasional thought of “Why am I doing this?”, but I persisted and overcame these thoughts.

I couldn't have been more prepared for this race. I was stoked, excited to take this challenge head on. I set a goal of finishing the race with a time of 4:30, but being my first ultra, wasn't sure where I'd land in respect to this time. For the majority of the race, it rained, it hailed a couple of times, some of the stream crossings seemed nearly impossible to pass, the trail was muddy, and oh yeah, there were a couple of rainbows. Neither of these things deterred me from giving this race my all. I ended up crossing the finish line with a time of 4:52. Not too far off from my goal. If anything, I now have a goal for the next 50k. Thinking back on the days leading up to this race, and the race itself, I am glad I finally overcame my stubbornness and listened to my friends. With this, I hope to continue my newly found love for ultra running.

TIME (CHIP) FINISH		PACE MIN/MI	
04:52:32		9:25	
Ranking (Finish)			
OVERALL	MALE	M18-29	
69 / 618	57 / 395	12 / 27	
Race Summary			
CHIP START TIME	8:03:35 AM		
DISTANCE	31.1 Miles		
GUN TIME	4:52:46		



If there is one piece of advice I can give anyone, whether you are just getting into running or are a seasoned runner, there is no distance too great to achieve. From a standstill perspective a mile seems far, but once you have run that mile, do you realize how short it really is. Overcoming the thought of “distance” is hard, but it is not impossible.