



Western States 100

By Chris Dalton

First off, I attribute my finish to my awesome crew (Cristina, my mom, Jon, James), my pacers (Ollie, Ian and Jon) and all the great volunteers out there on race day. I couldn't have done it without them.

After getting up at 3am and having a larger than normal breakfast, I walked to the start line. I checked in and then sat in a chair for a bit. I wasn't really nervous about it, I wasn't even thinking that I had to run 100 miles. It was just another long run.

The first 15 or so miles weren't too bad. Climbing up the Escarpment wasn't that bad, I chowed down on a waffle and took it pretty easy. There were a couple times in the high country when I got stuck behind a group of people but I thought to myself, this is a good thing, they are forcing you to slow down, don't get too excited. Somewhere around mile 20 I fell on the trail, it wasn't bad and I wasn't too shaken by it. The ground was soft and I did a nice roll to avoid a lot of damage. I got to Duncan Canyon at mile 24 and I was doing ok, the volunteers had mentioned that they hadn't seen any other year where people wanted so much ice. I couldn't really tell how hot it was, I just started packing ice early figuring that it was getting warmer.



Before the hike up to Robinson flat, I sat in the stream with about 5 other people. One of the other runners was joking about how next time he will bring beer to this pool party. I then hiked up to Robinson flat and got to see my crew for the first time. I got there feeling pretty good and I was really happy to see everyone. I could tell that some other runners were struggling as early as mile 20 but I was feeling pretty good. I fueled up and hit the trail. The next couple miles were pretty good and I was feeling great minus the bathroom stop I had to make. I did my best to smile and think of all the training that had gone into this run and how there are a lot of people thinking of me while I'm out here. While I was out there for a long time by myself, I never felt alone. At Dusty Corners, mile 38, Martin Sengo ran up to me and was super pumped to see me. His enthusiasm was a big lift to my spirits. I was starting to feel the heat, I loaded my bandana with ice and got washed down by the aid station volunteers. Four people hit me with sponges at the same time and it felt fantastic. I powered on into the canyons.

Moving down to Swinging Bridge, I remembered Mark Murray telling me to get into the water below the bridge. When I got there, I made my way down, removed my pack and sat in it for about 2 minutes. I watched about 5 people pass me over the bridge but I easily hiked past all of them going up Devil's Thumb. It didn't take long for me to get to the aid station at the top. They had popsicles and they were awesome! I had heard from others that the popsicles at this aid station were going to be amazing, they definitely lived up to the hype. I saw a large group of runners sitting at the aid station tired from the big climb, I just packed my bandana and moved on. On the way down off the thumb, there were a couple of pockets of extremely



hot air. It felt like opening an oven door and that blast of heat hitting you. When I got to El Dorado Creek I again made my way down to the water and sat there for about 2 minutes, not many others were going down to the water but it felt good sitting there and cooling off.

The run to Michigan Bluff was pretty good. I was still a little behind where I would have liked to have been but I felt surprisingly good at mile 55. I got to see my crew again, they loaded me up and fueled me up but I had to take care of a blister that had formed somewhere within the canyons. I got a Band-Aid and some tape, cut it open and then taped it up. It was painful to run on, this was one of those things that I didn't really plan for but I just had to roll with it. Other than the pain in my foot I was in good spirits. I made my way to forest hill where I was very excited to pick up a pacer. Ollie and Ian met me on Bath Road and we ran into the aid station. Before this race, both 100k's that I had done previously, I felt miserable finishing, but getting to mile 62 at Forest hill I felt surprisingly good. I swapped for more some dry socks and shoes, double checked the tape on my foot and then set off. Ollie was ready and we were both pretty pumped to make it down to the Cal 1 (the best) aid station.



We ran down to Cal 1 and coming in I got to see everyone from GVH. Andrea was the first to call out "Is that our 161?" And I said, "Yes, it is". I think Kelly was the most excited out of the bunch with a big "WOOOOOO" as he saw me. I came in right behind a couple other people so a lot of folks were busy helping the runners including Dean Karnazes (author of *Ultramarathon Man*). Leaving the GVH aid station I had a lot of energy. It was so great to see everyone I knew. At that time, I still thought 24 hours was within range but it was getting harder and harder. Cal Street was a pretty good section with Ollie calling every flat and downhill an "opportunity" to move a little faster. We made our way down to the river slowly but we were getting there. At some point I realized I wasn't going to make the 24 hour mark, but I didn't let that change my mood. It seemed I was passing people who had given up on the 24 hour mark and were just walking it in to make it in time for the "golden hour" (hour 29-30). I didn't want that.

The river crossing was great. It was still a little warm and the cool water felt good initially. There were some spots where it got pretty deep, up to my belly in depth but I just held on to the rope and moved on. We hiked up to Green Gate where I got to see the crew again and it's a good thing that there was the big hill after the river crossing because my legs tightened up a lot going through the cool water. The hill gave my legs a little bit of time to loosen up. Ollie had finished his pacing run and now it was Ian's turn. Ian was a little less aggressive on forcing my pace, but he definitely kept me moving and gave me a lot of good advice. I was starting to feel a little sick to my stomach and started to get sleepy. The aid stations were a challenge to get food down. Ian wouldn't let me have my watermelon, instead trying to get me to eat something with a little more calories. The more I took in the worse my stomach felt. Not to mention I was starting to get grumpy. The miles were clicking off but I didn't feel like I was getting



anywhere. Ian was doing his best to keep me upbeat but I was sinking into a hole. Every time my foot didn't land perfectly flat, my shoe would push into the blister that was there. He definitely had to put up with me at my worst. Between miles 85 and 92 I was feeling pretty miserable but I did get to run with Dean Karnazes for a while. We chatted about other runs he had done, he seemed pretty excited for me that it was my first 100 mile run. He usually took a bit longer at the aid stations and then slowly caught up to me. Then somewhere just before highway 49 he took off.

We made our way to the Pointed Rocks aid station and my crew was there again to help me out. Jon hopped in to pace me for the last little stretch. Being my best friend for 15+ years, he knew how to push me. I was starting to get irritated with how much he wanted me to move, but we were getting it done. There were a couple times where I told him that running this was a terrible idea. He had mentioned something like "this puts into perspective the whole, 'I could do this all day' kinda thing huh?" I laughed and said, yeah I've been doing it all day, literally. Getting to No Hands Bridge was pretty awesome. The aid station there was very cheerful and at that point I knew there was only 3.4 miles to go. I complained to Jon for a while and we eventually made our way to the last climb of the day. Going up the hill to Robie Point was the first time where I actually realized I was going to make it. That was probably one of my favorite parts of the race. I had been fighting for so long and there was finally a light at the end of the tunnel. I told Jon that the entire run I was just running from aid station to aid station and not thinking about how far I had to go. But now I could think about the finish line. I got to Robie point and didn't take anything from the aid station. They asked what they could get me and I just said I'll keep going. My crew met me at mile 99. I had told them that I wanted everyone to run with me the last mile. So we set off slowly to the finish. It was a lot of fun having the crew there running with me that final mile. I was so thankful for all they had done for me the entire day. I tried to say something like "I appreciate you guys" but I don't know how much of that actually came out. I was pretty exhausted.

Getting to the track I shed my vest and started circling. I could see the finish line. I got a big cheer from the crowd when the announcer said that this was my first 100 mile run. Crossing the line I was most excited to just be done. 27 hours 22 minutes and 56 seconds and I made it from Squaw Valley down to the Placer High school track.


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