

"The heart has eyes which the brain knows nothing of." This is a quote from Charles H. Perkhurst that defines my existence. People have made a major impact on my heart in 2005. They touched it, they embraced it and they broke it. It is what makes up my entire being and it is what drives me to succeed. I don't give up on anything or anyone because I see things through my heart that others can not comprehend. What I was about to encounter in Newark, Delaware on December 17-18, 2005 did nothing to change that trend. A group of seven ultrarunners from five states and different walks of life met at 7 a.m. at White Clay Creek State Park to participate in the first ever 100-mile race in the state of Delaware.

The race was the brainchild of fellow ultrarunner and my friend Carl Camp. He, on a whim, designed the course, set a date and invited people to participate. I first heard of his idea on a warm summer's morning in mid-July as he and I drove to Vermont to run in the Vermont 100. I agreed without hesitation to run in the race. How could I pass up an opportunity to not only participate in a 100-mile race in my own backyard but also be one of the first to ever do it.

Even as Carl described the Fat Ass format of no aid, no wimps, and no awards I was not deterred. Details were sketchy at the time but a plan was solidified on that trip. A 100-mile race would occur in Delaware sometime in the first part of December and I would be there.

There were many questions going through my mind in the months leading up to the event. First of all should I indeed make this a race or just relax and enjoy the time on the trails? I put a lot of thought into that question but in the end the answer would be easy. This is my home and I would be running with friends. Certainly I wanted to win but there was no need for me to give it my all at the expense of losing out on the experience of sharing my time with others. I wanted to be an example to my friends that running one hundred miles is not as difficult as it might seem. My ultimate goal became to mentor my friend Rick Palmer. A guy who has just as much, if not more, physical ability than I do but lacks confidence in that ability. We trained together, we planned together and in the end we ran together.

The Friday before the race was just like any other day. I got up at 4 a.m. and went to work for a full day. I honestly didn't give much thought to the race at all. Later in the day as I drove to Rick's house to attend his daughter's 12th birthday party I wondered if the normalcy of the day was a bad thing. I enjoy the excitement of traveling to an event and the hype of a pre-race briefing. I use that excitement to get me emotionally prepared for a race and mentally focused for the task at hand. Since the event was in my hometown there would be no travel involved and with only seven participants a pre-race briefing was not required. I desperately needed to find a way to replace the motivation normally generated from those sources.

When I arrived at Rick's house his family warmly greeted me. It seemed everyone in the home knew who I was even though this was our first meeting. The birthday girl in the background waved and yelled my name and his four-year-old son gave me a hug upon my arrival. My thoughts at this moment were far from running 100-miles as once again my heart took over. Unless you've lived alone for a significant amount of time you can't appreciate my feelings. My own nieces and nephews treat me this way but these were complete strangers. It was something I wasn't used to but enjoyed the attention.

As always when I'm with a group of people the conversation quickly turned to running. I was okay with that because it puts me at ease and others around me seem generally interested in what I have to say. The atmosphere in the home was festive because of the birthday party but I could sense that Rick was extremely nervous about the next day. We talked about running 100-mile races but did not talk a lot about our upcoming challenge. There were some things that I intended to discuss with him too but running a race was just not important to me at the time as I was enjoying the family environment.

I left Rick's around 8 p.m. no more excited about the race than when I arrived. I did, however, feel as though I gained something from my visit. I learned that running is indeed important to me but at the same time the love I felt in that home is something running a 100-mile race could never bring. It wasn't necessarily his children or parents or brother alone that brought that feeling but rather the entire family together. It's a feeling I could have with my own nieces, nephews, brothers, and parents but have put my job and hobbies ahead of that. If I want that feeling it's there but I have to make it a priority in my life.

It was just about 9 p.m. when I got home and instead of packing a drop bag for the race and preparing my food I just went to sleep. I didn't feel a sense of urgency to get these things done. Something just didn't feel right about the whole thing. I wasn't excited, I wasn't motivated and honestly I didn't want to do it. I never seriously considered bailing because I gave my word that I would be there. My word is my bond and for me to break that would be out of character. I slept restlessly with the knowledge that I had a lot of work to do in the morning before I could leave.

My alarm sounded at 5 a.m. and instead of rolling out of bed I just reached over and hit the snooze button. Hitting the snooze button is something I never do. I did this several more times before finally forcing myself up to get ready. I was sluggish and not motivated but I forced myself to do the things that needed to be done anyway. I started pulling warm clothes out of my closets and drawers and shoving them in a duffel bag. I packed several sweatshirts, long sleeved shirts, six or seven pairs of socks, a couple of knit hats, three or four pairs of extra gloves and an extra pair of tights.

I planned to start off wearing tights with shorts underneath, a long sleeved polypropylene shirt with a tank top underneath and a light jacket. I had stepped outside earlier in the morning and thought the temperature was moderate enough to consider not wearing a knit hat but gloves would definitely be required. I set these clothes aside as I continued to erratically toss clothing in my duffel bag. Along with the clothes I gathered other necessary items such as spare batteries, headlamp, handheld flashlight, and moleskin. All of which I just purchased at Wal-Mart the night before. The cheapie Wal-Mart lights really concerned me but having had my good light demolished in the mountains the weekend before I had no choice but to go with them. As far as food went I would have to make a stop at a local convenience store to pick up some peanut butter and jelly so I could make sandwiches. I did, however, have four packs of Power Gel, two bottles of Rocket Shot, two bottles of ginseng, a can of Starbucks Double Shot, two cans of Sobe Adrenaline energy drink, a ½ gallon of Gatorade and two gallons of water ready to pack into my cooler. I knew I was going to need some solid food during the run but hoped that the little aid that would be on the course would supply this for me.

My mother, who has crewed for me at five of the one hundred-mile races I've done, arrived at my home just before 6 a.m. I say crew but she has been more than a crew for me. She understands how I think and knows what to say when I need her to say it. She also knows when it's better to be silent. It's a good feeling when I'm in the middle of no where on a trail with the knowledge that someone is out there waiting for me to return. Anyway when she arrived I quickly finished packing and loaded up my car so we could leave. We made the planned stop at a convenience store so I could get PB & J and some Oreo cookies. Luckily for me it was at this time that I also realized I had forgotten my water bottles. I would have rather had my hand held bottles but I would have to make due carrying a bottle of Evian Spring water the entire way. This told me just how much I wasn't into this thing. How in the world could I forget my water bottle? Later on at the start line I would find that I also forgot my watch. It's a good thing I was close to home or all this could have really taken a toll on me mentally.

We arrived at the Middle Run section of White Clay Creek State Park just after 6:30 a.m. We were the first to arrive, which concerned me a little. I was worried maybe the others were having the same second thoughts I was having only they decided to act upon them. In the distance I saw headlights coming up the road and immediately felt better. Ed Schultz from Gaithersburg, Maryland pulled into a parking spot and came over to me to introduce himself. It wasn't long after that when Rick, Carl and the rest of the gang arrived. Also showing up for the start was one of our local trail experts and ultrarunner Hunt Bartine. Hunt would be there to help get things going and to guide the lead group around the trail the first time. Hunt and Carl quickly set-up a makeshift aid station which included all the necessities and more than what the average Fat Ass run would provide. Since there were only seven of us running we each introduced ourselves to one another and posed for a group picture before starting. Carl gave some quick directions and answered a question or two before allowing us to start.

It was a cold, clear morning with little wind and temperatures hovering in the mid-20's at the start. The predicted forecast was for the temperature to rise into the low 40's as the day progressed so I had hopes of stripping down into my shorts and tank top by mid-afternoon. Rick and I started together as planned with a

realistic goal time of 22 hours. We had discussed this time for awhile and both of us seemed very confident in our ability to achieve this. I wanted to run at least 50 miles in the daylight and more if we could. That meant we had to be halfway through the run by 5 p.m. Actually I was sure we could get to the halfway point in 9 ½ hours without pushing too hard.

The layout of the course included what was advertised as a 9.6-mile loop and a 2.9-mile loop, which we would go around 8 times. A member of the local running group, the Traildaws, had measured the long loop to be exactly 9.6 miles but there was some discussion as to the accuracy of the 2.9-mile loop. Some thought it was short others thought it might be long. Rick considered using his GPS as we ran but I warned him if the course was short we would make up the distance at the end. I guess my warning hit home because he decided against using it.

Hunt Bartine led us from the start on a consistent pace of about 10 minutes per mile. I felt pretty comfortable allowing him in the front at the start because he would keep us from getting lost and also keep me from pushing the pace too hard. The first 300 yards of the route is on a downhill slope on gravel road with the remainder on somewhat easy trails.

White Clay is not an area that I spend a lot of time training in so my familiarity with the course was limited. Still out of the 7 people that started I had more experience on those trails than 4 of them. Experience aside no one could have been sure what the trail conditions would be like with the recent foul weather Delaware has had. In the previous weekend we had some significant snow and ice accumulate but in the days leading up to the event the temperatures had moderated and we even had some rain showers. It never crossed my mind that all or some of the trail might still be covered in the white stuff.

The first part of the trail was in excellent condition. There was no snow, ice or mud until about a ½ mile in. The terrain, however, is not smooth all the way down the path. You really have to stay alert for that stray rock or root hidden by the fallen leaves that could trip you up. The first 3.5 miles leading up to the water tower is basically on flat terrain with somewhat difficult footing at times. The sharpest incline is probably a 150-foot climb up a snow/ice-covered hill on an uneven surface after the first water crossing. When running these trails in the Summertime I felt as though I was out of civilization but in the Winter the leafless trees exposed an occasional single family home off to the right of where we were running.

Once up the first climb we continued on the trail always seeming to veer right when a choice of trails had to be made. The markings put up by Carl and local trail runner Phil Nissen were excellent but still I was glad to be guided the first time around by Hunt. We would travel another mile or so on the trail before hitting the second water crossing of the day. This time a little more attention had to be paid as we used large circular stepping stones to cross over a 12-foot wide creek. The water came right to the top of the stones and as I crossed I thought to myself how glad I was we didn't get anymore rain. Anymore water and the creek may have swelled over top of the stones meaning I would have had to get my feet wet less than 3 miles into the run.

After crossing the creek we immediately turned right and continued on a flat, soft trail for another ½ mile or so before making a sharp left up onto Snow Goose Trail. As we turned I found what I would considered a significant marker all day/night long. It was a house on my right with a newly constructed concrete swimming pool in the backyard. I have somewhat of a fascination with swimming pools and this was a very unique looking structure that I looked forward to seeing each time around. After we made the left there was short hill before the trail leveled off again for a few hundred yards only to gradually rise up to the water tower. We ran all the way up the rise but Rick and I had earlier identified this as a hill we would later walk as the run progressed and the miles piled on. Since the course is virtually flat and our goal time was not aggressive we had to identify several spots along the way where we could walk.

As we turned right to go around the tower the trail continued on a very slight uphill rise on soft terrain. The route would eventually lead us down a somewhat steep, icy, uneven path and make two or three turns before ending at a wooden turn post. It was at this point that both Rick and I decided it was warm enough to strip down to our shorts. I was able to quickly slide my tights off while Rick took a little more time to do so. Hunt and I continued on knowing Rick would soon catch up. At the post we were directed to make a

right hand turn and then led down another soft, easy trail for ¼ mile or so before being led onto a corn field. In the morning hours I had no problem making my way through the icy, hard dirt made uneven from the plows but when the temperatures rose later the icy, hard dirt turned into sloppy, shoe sucking mud. The frozen dirt made it an easy ¼ mile run across the field before reaching Polly Drummond Hill Rd. There was the most beautiful sight in the distance as we approached the road. A family of deer was grazing in the fields not paying any mind to us as we ran through. Carl had left a few gallons of water just before the road crossing but every time I went by I either forgot it was there or had enough water at the time. The road we were about to cross is a fairly busy rural highway. Delaware may be a small state but there sure are a lot of people who live here meaning at times traffic is bad. Each time I crossed the road I checked and double-checked for cars before heading over to the other side. Personally I never had any close calls. We were now on our way to what Rick and I considered the toughest part of the course, the Judge Morris loop.

Once across the road we went about 200 yards running on a bicycle path before veering off to the left to catch the Judge Mo trail. I thought to myself, as we went by, that this would be a great place to take a breather if needed later in the run. Instead of veering to the left to catch the trail we could veer to the right and either hang out in the parking lot for a few moments or if needed use the bathroom that was located in the area. Having not even gone around one time we certainly didn't need a break yet so we went left and headed out on the trail.

The Judge Morris trail is supposed to be 3.6 miles long but Rick and I swear it's much longer. It's one of those trails from Hell that seems to go on forever. There is absolutely nothing difficult about it other than the mental aspect of when is it going to end. Hunt led us about 1/8th of a mile on the trail before a choice of going left or right had to be made. It's a loop section so we could choose either way. Rick and I had always gone right on our training runs so we chose right again. Almost immediately after turning right we went over a short wooden bridge and then turned right once more. The terrain at this point was very soft and easy to run on. After we made the right off of the bridge there seemed to be a gradual incline that continued most of the way around. Inside the loop there were two park benches about 1 mile apart that I pointed out to Rick. I jokingly told him these would be good places to rest if we needed to later on. I said it jokingly because I had no plans to do too much resting especially not in the middle of the woods. I also used these benches as mental markers helping me to locate how far I was from finishing the trail.

It seemed as if Hunt was slowing as we reached the halfway point of this particular section. We had been going up a while and Hunt seemed to be moderating his pace to save his energy for the downhills to come. I was okay with the overall pace we were keeping but once we slowed I was uncomfortable. I grabbed Rick's attention and commented that one of us needed to take over the lead but being on single track trail made passing very difficult. We continued going up slowly for a while longer before in the distance we saw another runner coming our way. It was Ed Schultze, apparently he had chosen to go in the opposite direction we chose. He seemed a little bewildered that we were going the other way so Hunt assured him all of us were going on the right direction. The only other words spoken between us were good job and keep it up before we moved on.

Ed's presence made me even more determined to pick up the pace. Rick made no attempts to take the lead but made some comments to the affect that we needed to get moving in hopes that Hunt would pick it up a little. I could certainly understand what Hunt was doing and up to this point he really was effective but now it was time for a change. In the distance I saw the trail open up and when we reached I passed both Rick and Hunt to take over the pacing duties. At first I wondered if I did the right thing because now the trail seemed to be going down rather than up and the once smooth runnable dirt became uneven and icy. One thing Hunt can do is run the technical trails, maybe even better than Rick and I. He gained on me a little as we went down but with the knowledge that the trail would level off again and a faster person would need to be in the lead I played kamikaze and went down as fast as I could. Sure enough it only lasted about 100 feet before it leveled off and we were again on flat, soft, level dirt trails. At this point I didn't want anyone else but me leading the way so I put in a few quick sprints to make sure I maintained the pacing duties. Rick and I had a goal of 1:30 to do the first 9.6 miles and in order to do so we couldn't lolly-gag the last couple of miles.

When we reached the end of the Judge Mo trail Rick was running right on my tail and Hunt was a little further back. Hunt did a spectacular job of guiding us around the first time but from here Rick and I knew exactly how to get back and it was time to pull away from our tour guide. We ran from the trail towards the parking lot and then back to Polly Drummond Hill Road at a quick but moderate pace. I didn't want either of us to expend too much energy but in order to make our goal time of 1:30 we had to be quick. We safely crossed the road and made our way across the still frozen cornfield. We then made a right back onto the trail and ran the short ¼ mile back to the wooden post where earlier in the run we started this out and back section.

At the post we turned right and ran about 50 feet before turning left onto one of the most difficult sections of the course. This was a moderate downhill section on a very frozen, icy, uneven, and sometimes rocky trail. More than once I almost slipped and fell going down. I tried my best to run off to the side of the trail in the briar but that was even slippery at times. No matter how warm it got during the day this section never got any easier. The ice and snow never melted completely and obviously the rocks that were there were not going to disappear. The good news is that this section was only about 100 feet down before it leveled off. As we went down there was a church on the right next to the trail. I thought to myself that later on I might stop in and say a little prayer to God asking him to protect us throughout the night especially on this section. When finally down we still had to be careful because the ice and snow really got bad as we made our way closer to the third and final water crossing. I took really small; quick steps hoping to maintain some kind of speed while at the same time keeping my balance on the ice. In the distance I saw a yellow paper plate off to my right with an arrow pointing to the right. The trail then led us over a short wooden bridge before reaching the water. The creek is probably about 16 feet wide and maybe 6-8 inches deep. If I didn't have to go through it eight times I probably wouldn't have even worried about using the stepping stones. That knowledge in hand though I took my time and carefully placed one foot in front of the other onto the uneven stones in the water. There was no doubt in my mind that at least one time during the day I would miss and get wet but I didn't want to do it right from the start. Even though concerned I confidently jumped from stone to stone and hardly had a drop of water on me after I crossed. It was now Rick's turn to get across. I didn't stop to watch for fear it might make him nervous. I just kept moving forward toward the final and hardest uphill on the course. Rick and I had agreed long ago that we would walk this uphill in entirety each time that we went around. Now with the hill being covered completely in ice and snow you would think there would be no question. Rick learned a valuable lesson the first time around. Don't trust me when it comes to running strategy. I never want to walk for long periods of time and to be honest it was going to take just as much energy to walk that icy hill than it would take to run it. Each time around I ran at least half way up ice hill before reaching the grassy section and then running all the way up to the parking lot from there. Rick wasn't too far behind as we made it through the first 9 ½ in 1:33.

When I reached the lot my mom was there offering encouragement and ready to satisfy my every need. She's done this so many times she knows exactly what to say and she knows exactly what I need. Normally I prefer to get in and out of aid stations quickly but our goal wasn't too aggressive on this day so we had some time to play with. Also I had to take into account that we had just gone 9.5 miles without stopping for any kind of aid and would have to do that seven more times before finishing. My mom quickly helped me re-fill my water bottle while Rick headed over to his vehicle to get some aid.

Even taking our time we spent less than 5 minutes before heading out to do the short loop. We left the parking lot in the opposite direction than what we started the long loop in. After leaving we immediately entered the woods and hit some icy, rough, trail that went downhill. It was more treacherous earlier than later. Not because the conditions got any better but because with the early energy I wanted to run down while later I was content to take my time. Once down we crossed a short wooden bridge that was covered in ice before the trail led us up gradually on less icy terrain but still on a hard and somewhat uneven surface. This type of trail continued for maybe ¼ mile before it led us out to a meadow where we turned right and ran another 50 yards in the open air back toward the trail. Again in the woods the snow and ice continued to be a factor. The trail was virtually downhill but the ice was not conducive for speed. I had to take my time and concentrate on every step I took or risk falling on my face. There was one tricky right hand turn that I had to be aware of each time I made my way around. There were no land markers to help me remember exactly where the turn was so I was constantly concerned I was going to miss it. I never did miss it though. This part of the trail ended with several bridge crossings that led us off to the left onto

another farmer's field. We ran straight from here for another 200 yards before reaching our second road crossing of the day. The road we were about to cross was no where near as busy as Polly Drummond Hill Road but still I made sure I was alert before I crossed each time. We crossed over and headed to the left in a diagonal direction and again ran straight through a farmer's field. This time the terrain was very even and easy to run on. I did notice, however, that after about 100 yards of running there was a slight incline in the route. I again identified this as a spot where we could walk later in the run. Since we were still fresh there would be no walking this early so we continued at a moderate pace up the short incline. Eventually the field veered to the left and led us back into the woods. The trail, at this point, led us directly behind a housing development. I was so close to one house that I felt as though I was intruding on the inhabitant's privacy. I was very concerned that as we ran late at night with our headlamps shining we would spook these people. I didn't obsess on that concern and decided I would worry about that when and if it happened. We ran through a muddy section across a short wooden plank bridge and then immediately across a long wooden plank bridge before heading back out on to the field again. There were only a couple of cornfields on the course but with the uneven dirt making for difficult footing I never looked forward to seeing them. I really couldn't build any speed on these sections even though they were flat because of the rough terrain. The course led us on this field for about 200 yards before directing us back to the trail. The trail then descended gradually on a very easy running surface that had little or no snow cover. The scenery was beautiful as we ran alongside a creek with the view of houses in the distance. We got about halfway down this section before Hunt Bartine met up with us again. He snapped a couple of photos and then guided us across the road back toward the start/finish area. Once across the road the trail became icy but only for a short period of time. The course then led us on a winding twisting path on flat terrain for another ½ mile until we reached a wooden bridge that crossed a small creek. After we crossed the creek we had to make our way up a very icy incline toward the parking lot. Again I figured it would take as much effort to run this section as it would to walk so I opted to run as much as possible. When I reached the grassy area I ran up to the parking lot and met my mom. Rick followed right behind and yelled that we did that loop in 34 minutes for a cumulative time of 2:07 for the first 12.5 miles.

Now that I had run both the long loop and the short loop I was able to form my own opinion about the true distances of each. Based on my splits while I was fresh, I concluded that the 9.6-mile loop is a little short (somewhere between 9.0 and 9.5) and the 2.9-mile loop is long. (Closer to 3.5) No matter how you slice it the course is at least going to be 100 miles in the end if both loops are taken 8 times.

My mom again tended to my needs as Rick went to his vehicle to care for himself. We both quickly refilled our bottles and took care of any other needs we may have had and headed back out on the long loop for the second time around. Still feeling strong we ran at a consistent pace from the short road section to the trails. Even though I appreciated Hunt's company the first time around I felt better that it was just Rick and I now. We could follow our strategy a little closer and dictate the pace we wanted to run the entire way. It was only a little after 9 a.m. and still very cold outside. I was feeling comfortable stripped down to shorts while still wearing the two shirts and a jacket I originally had on. Rick actually looked like he was steaming hot with sweat pouring down his face. The only reason I knew it was still cold outside was because the sweat coming off of Rick's head was forming an ice layer on his knit hat. If either of us had been shut down to a walk we would have frozen to death. Rick took the lead most of the way on this loop just as he did when we trained together. I think he felt pretty comfortable up there and I was certainly comfortable following his lead.

We talked a lot while we ran. We have some common life experiences so we never struggled for topics of discussion. There are times in real life when I let shyness overcome me but on the trail I am a totally different person. I am never intimidated by anyone nor am I inhibited. I speak freely and act accordingly. Participating in running events has taught me many lessons, which in turn have helped me become a better person not only on the trails but also in the real world. Rick listened as I talked and I listened as he talked. There were no real struggles on this loop and the time flew by. We again took the Judge Morris trail going in the direction where every thing seemed to be going uphill. It was on this trip around that Rick and I finally smartened up and decided that the next time we would take the loop in the opposite direction. This would not only allow us to feel the positive effects of the downhills but also trick us into believing we were seeing new scenery. The latter of the two reasons for the change I believe was more important because it

would help our morale. Beating us up physically with the uphill terrain was no where near as bad as seeing the same thing over and over again.

As we came toward the end of the Judge Mo trail we met up with Phil Nissen, a local runner, who was out for a morning stroll. He took a couple of pictures of us and encouraged us on. It was a big lift having someone from out of nowhere cheer us on. We maintained a moderate pace heading out of the Judge Mo trail on our way back to the parking lot. The cornfield was still frozen and fairly easy to run on but I knew it was only a matter of time before it became a mess. The long, steep, icy downhill a ½ mile from the parking lot was still a challenge but having done it once already made it easier the second time. I did a walk/run up the icy hill and then ran through the grassy uphill in to the parking lot to meet my mom once again. Rick continued to follow his strategy of walking most of the way up and met me in the lot a few seconds later. I still felt pretty good and Rick didn't express any concerns up to this point. He did seem a little upset that the loop took us a little longer the second time around but I think honestly that he knew each loop would be slower than the previous one. We didn't talk much about time because it was way too early to worry about that. Besides our 22 hour goal allowed us plenty of leeway for mistakes. While my mom refilled my water bottle I drank a Sobe energy drink and chased it with a bottle of Boost. I wasn't hungry or feeling depleted but I always like to refuel before my body tells me I have too. We were 22 miles into the run so I knew it was only a matter of time before I would start needing the calories. Just like the last time Rick and I wasted little time before we left the parking lot to conquer the short loop.

It was still too early to consider any walking at this point especially on this easy so called 3-mile section. We ran as we left the aid station and continued to run until we returned. I'm not sure why but I found this little short section to be my favorite of the entire course. There was really nothing challenging other than the ice. The scenery was nice but not what I would consider spectacular. The only thing I can think of that made this my favorite part of the course was that I was able to get through it quick. Not having aid for 9.5 miles could have been stressing if I would have allowed it to be. Conversely it was such a relief knowing I would have aid after only 3 miles. Anyhow Rick and I blitzed through this loop the second time almost as quickly as we did the first. I think I heard Rick say we did the second 12.5 miles in 2:23 for a cumulative time of 4:30 for 25 miles. Not very impressive but our goal was to finish in a decent time not to impress anyone. Before heading out on the long loop for the third time I sucked down another Boost and ate a few Oreo cookies. I also thought it would be a good time to start muling food so I packed my one pocket with Oreo's and stashed a peanut butter and jelly sandwich in the other. My bottle refilled and my body refueled I was now ready to take the loop the third time. My mom gave me something to look forward too upon my return as she promised to have a Charcoal Pit hamburger waiting for me.

Rick and I were now ready for the third loop and this time we were joined by Scott Hodukavich. He came out to put some training miles in and to also satisfy a curiosity he had about ultrarunning. Scott and I did most of the talking because we knew one another from the past. Scott and I worked together over 15 years ago and we hadn't seen each other since so we had a lot of catching up to do. Rick seemed content to hang behind and play second fiddle but did occasionally chime in with a comment or two. I tried to keep talking because I could feel myself losing it already and communication is a method I always use to keep my mind off of any trouble I might be in. It's not uncommon for me to lose energy very early in a run. I sometimes have difficulty getting in the zone I need to be in and struggling early is just an effect of that. I knew that as long as I moved forward and worked on getting focused that I would be okay in time.

I thought it would be wise to back off a little and try to regroup so we walked some uphills and generally took it easy. I was struggling internally but did not express how I was feeling to either Rick or Scott. I had to deal with my problems quickly and on my own so as not to affect Rick's morale. Turns out though that Rick was having troubles of his own. He was tiring and feeling some pain. We were about 2 miles into the 3rd loop when he started to express how he felt. He continued talking negatively for some time before I finally told him that he wasn't allowed to be in pain until we reached the 30-mile mark. I believe that at 30 miles we're all on equal terms because at that point everyone generally feels bad. Make it there, block out the pain and move forward to the finish. I could tell he wasn't a believer of my philosophy but he did grin and bare it for a couple of more miles until we reached the 30-mile mark.

The cornfield leading to Polly Drummond Hill Road was now completely thawed and had turned into a quagmire but we made the best of it and trudged through. It was at this same point that I told Rick we had reached 30 miles. He immediately shouted back that we're not at mile 30 yet. This is when I finally realized what I was up against. This guy was too smart. He was trying to bring reality into a fantasy sport. He was trying to make sense of a non-sensible event. Yes he was tired but he wasn't injured or sick. He was allowing his mind to shut him down physically. I tried desperately to get him to understand that. He was really struggling and continued to convey that message to both Scott and I. As he struggled I started to feel better. I was able to overcome my early problems using the experiences I've had in past races. I knew I would struggle and I knew I would overcome. The confidence in my ability to do so was built around lessons learned from failure. I've failed in the past, learned what I did wrong, resolved the issues, implemented the positive changes and then watched them work. Experience is what Rick lacked and without experience there could be no confidence. I was well aware ahead of time that this might be the day that Rick struggles mightily just to learn the lessons that all ultrarunners have to learn at one time or another. Our planned 22-hour race could quickly turn into a 28-30 hour race. It would be up to Rick whether he wanted to learn how to overcome or whether he would allow his mind to overcome him.

We managed to get through the 3.5 miles of the Judge Morris trail before making our way back to the start/finish area. As we started back Rick was still grumbling about how uncomfortable he was but moving forward. I've been in his position so I knew how he felt but I also knew that he was the only one who could save himself.

I didn't tell my mom of my struggles or Rick's when I entered the parking lot but went right for the burger she got me instead. I drank another bottle of Boost and this time sucked down a container of ginseng. I was hoping to find a way to pump some energy back into my body. I needed to have something extra. I needed it to not only carry myself but to also help Rick get through a tough time. I was certain he could overcome his troubles if he would just allow his mind to relax and allow his body to accept the pain. He was fighting and I had to try to find a way to get him to stop.

After refueling and getting some encouragement the three of us went out together to do the three mile loop. Rick's mood was still down and his energy level low and it showed in the comments he was making. When I made mention of something positive he would find a negative. If I saw a downhill he would make mention of the uphill directly after. Scott even noticed it and made mention of how negative Rick was being. It was a fight and I was getting frustrated. I wasn't feeling all that great either and tried to get him to understand that through 35 miles no one was feeling good. Fight it off there will be another life and then you'll die again, come back to life again, etc. I couldn't get him to understand that. He was dying and not fighting. Rick's negative attitude was killing him and frustrating me. I was able to use the emotion generated from the frustration in a positive way. I ran harder and with more authority. I held back my comments until I thought them through thoroughly. This was a critical point in Rick's run and anything negative coming from me could have potentially shut him down right then and there. I was so focused on trying to help Rick that at one point I wasn't paying much attention to where I was running and slipped on an icy spot. I was able to maintain my balance but in order to do so I contorted my body in an awkward position tweaking my right hamstring. I was concerned for a split second about the minor pain that shot up my leg but it left as quickly as it came. The scare brought me back into my own run and helped me balance my thoughts between helping Rick and staying on my feet. We continued on, stopping to run a few short uphill but mainly running at a steady but slow pace. As always I used my run/walk method to get up the icy hill towards the parking lot and even tried to talk Rick into doing the same. I took a peek back and saw him giving it a shot and thought to myself he's still got some life left in him.

Rick wasn't ready to leave for the fourth loop right away so I set out on my own with Scott by my side. We weren't moving all that fast so I was sure that Rick would soon catch up. I looked behind as we entered the trail and was happy to see Rick was only about 200 yards behind. I think Scott was worried we were going to leave him behind but I assured him that he would catch up eventually. There were a few walking hills coming up soon where Rick would be able to catch up. It was to my surprise when Rick not only caught up to us less than a 1/2 mile from the parking lot but blasted by us with newfound energy. He had finally broken through a wall and defeated his first challenge. He was cruising along and I was having trouble keeping up with him. He pushed me for a good mile before once again giving in to bad thoughts. I was sure now that

he was letting the distance overwhelm him. He had to be thinking too much about how many more miles that he had left to go and it discouraged him. He was strong yet he stopped. His mind overpowered him again. His brain wouldn't allow him to relax and accept the fact he was going to be on the trail for at least 22 hours. If he could have done that he would have been just fine but instead he fought with himself. There was such an inner struggle and there was nothing I could do to help other than tell him he could do it. When I asked him where he found the energy to pick up the pace he told me he was angry with his father. His dad came out to build a bridge across the final water crossing and got lost when trying to find it. Rick became upset over the whole ordeal which in turned generated a massive amount of energy for him to expend. I told him that's what it's all about! Running with emotion! Find something that's burning in your soul and use that emotion to make you move. He proved he could do it when he used the anger that his father produced as energy to run. I begged him to find some other emotion that may be buried deep within.

We trudged along for the next few miles before making it to the Judge Morris trail. I was deep in thought when we arrived there and not paying much attention to anyone or anything. Unknown to me Rick had stopped to meet his girlfriend and children in the parking lot. I continued on with Scott by my side. We were about 100 yards on the trail before I realized Rick wasn't behind us. When I became aware of what was happening I stopped for a second to look back but then continued on. I was sure Rick would find the energy to catch up to us once again.

Scott and I slowly but consistently made our way around the Judge Mo trail. Occasionally I would take a peek back to see if I could see Rick. Once I even screamed his name to see if he would respond but it was to no avail. I was beginning to think he dropped out in the parking lot and went home with his girlfriend. We were about three-quarters of the way around the trail when I took a final look behind and to my delight he was there. He was moving quickly but he had a look of anguish on his face that told another story. I made a big deal out of how awesome I thought it was that he caught back up to us. In reality it was a big deal because even though we were not moving that fast Scott and I never stopped to walk. I was hoping that now he would realize that he could conquer the demons in his mind. He could run through that pain and despair if he just moved forward.

We made it back to the parking lot with some daylight still left. I originally hoped to get the first 50 miles done in about 9 ½ hours or at least in the daylight. There was no doubt we would make it before nightfall but 9 ½ hours was no longer realistic. I had no idea what time it was but the sun was setting so I knew it was getting close to 5 p.m. Scott had to call it a day after 22 miles and left us to do the short loop on our own.

I wanted to get in and out of the aid station quickly so we could get 3 more miles in before darkness. As bad as Rick was feeling he followed suit and was right behind me as I left. We walked up some minor inclines but ran most of the way around. The conversation Rick and I were having started to lead me to believe he might bail on me when we returned. He kept referring to himself as a 50-mile runner and not a 100-mile runner. I continued to try my best to change his thought process but it wasn't working. We were like two fighters going at it. He would throw a negative punch and I would counter with something positive. Neither of us would give in. The one good thing is that while we were talking we were also moving. Before I knew it we were again making our way up the icy hill to the parking lot. We had run 50 miles in ten hours and change. I was never exactly sure of the time and didn't really care as long as we got through the first half in the daylight.

Rick now had some support at his vehicle so while he was getting some help I ate some food and talked with my mom. I was feeling pretty good but knew the tough part was yet to come. Running 50 miles in the cold dark night with a tired mind and body was not going to be easy. Rick had battled the demons in his mind in the daylight hours and I wasn't sure how he would react to the darkness. This next stretch of 9 ½ miles would tell me all that I needed to know.

We slowly left the aid station to start the 5th loop somewhere around 5:30 p.m. I felt good and it was obvious that Rick felt bad. When we got on the trail I gave one last desperate effort to revive him from the dead. I was literally pounding on my chest telling him where to find the energy. He said he had no intention on running 100 miles on this day. That he had another race he was focusing on later. I fought back telling

him that if it wasn't important he wouldn't have gotten out of bed and made his way to the start line. He wasn't accepting anything I said and I knew for sure now it was over. When we reached the wooden post to make the right turn to the trail that would lead us to the cornfield I stopped and told him what I thought his options were from here. First he could come with me and run 10 minute miles around the Judge Morris loop or secondly he could take a nap for a couple of hours and then start back up after getting some rest. He chose to come with me so off we went.

The cornfield was starting to freeze back up so it was much easier to run through than it was earlier in the day. I crossed Polly Drummond Hill Road and ran up the bicycle path towards the trail. I looked back to check on Rick and sure enough he was still hanging in there. I reached the trail and ran consistently looking back occasionally to see if Rick was still there. He stayed within 50 yards of me for the first ½ mile but soon after he vanished in the darkness. I felt bad but at the same time I knew I did all that I could do. I did all the teaching I knew how to do; it was now time for him to learn on his own. It was now up to him to decide how important this run was. It was up to him to find the motivation. I cruised around the loop with massive amounts of energy. The emotional experience with Rick had fired me up.

Now alone in the cold, dark night I had to refocus my energy towards achieving my own goal. The first thing I did was glance down at the St. Anthony medal wrapped around my neck. My mom had given this to me several months ago along with a prayer card that helps in times of loneliness. I have to admit I've relied on this many times since she gave it to me and was doing so once again. I still had wasn't sure what time it was but knew that I had to get a move on if I wanted to be done before sunrise. I buckled down and kicked it into whatever gear I had left and made it back to the parking lot feeling good. When I arrived back at the parking lot Rick's dad asked me where Rick was at so I told him the story quickly. I assured him that Rick would be okay and that this would be a learning experience that he needs to have. Since Rick's dad isn't an ultrarunner I was certain he wouldn't understand what I meant by that. What could possibly be learned in the darkness of a 25° night? A person will learn what's important to him or her. A person will learn what drives him or her. A person will learn that he or she can survive under the most adverse conditions. If you allow yourself to be put in that position a lot can be learned. I didn't go into that detail with Rick's father. I just wanted to satisfy his concern that Rick was okay.

My mom was still there waiting for me in the parking lot. She had stood by my side under the most adverse weather conditions she's ever been exposed to while crewing for me. It's such a demanding job helping a delirious, sometimes unappreciative runner. Only a special person would have the dedication to stick it out for 12 hours and that would be my mom.

I sucked down one of my Rocket Shot energy fluids and also drank a Boost while my mom chatted with me. I never want her to worry about how I was feeling or how I was making out so I always told her I'm great no matter what. This time around I wasn't embellishing the story because I honestly did feel great. Before allowing me to leave she pumped me full of hot soup and made sure I had warm clothes on. It was getting a lot colder so I put on a hooded sweatshirt over top of the two shirts I was already wearing and then put a light jacket on overtop of that. I also put on a knit hat and 2 pairs of dry gloves. I did have one more thing to do before taking off; I needed to make a phone call to wish a friend a safe trip. No matter how focused I am I always know what my priorities are and what's important to me. I was now ready to take off and run the short loop for the 5th time.

Since this was my favorite section I was able to relax and breathe easy. The time allowed me to concentrate on what my new goals would be now that I was on my own. Finishing time never once entered my mind mainly because I wasn't sure what time it was. Maintaining my lead over the other runners was a priority but I was sure I was in command and didn't need to push too hard. My ultimate goal was to run the remaining 40 miles strong and never once struggle. I wanted to run hard to the finish and feel good at the end. I devised a plan on how I would accomplish this goal. It was a mental game from here on in and I was sure I could win any battle my mind put up against me. When I arrived back at the parking lot I hurriedly filled my pockets with food. The nighttime weather was going to be brutal and it was going to take a lot of energy to keep moving. I didn't want to get stuck on the trail in need of food. This would be the last time I would see my mom the rest of the night. She had stuck it out for 12 hours and now had to make a long 70-

mile drive back to her home to meet other obligations she had that day. I'm never sure how she's able to pull it off but she's always there for her 5 grandchildren and 3 sons.

I said good-bye to my mom and promised to call her when I finished. Before I left she told me one thing that really affected me emotionally. My younger brother had been calling all afternoon to check on me. He wanted to see how I was doing. My relationship with my brother has been a little strained over the last 3 or 4 months for reasons I just can not explain. He's always been there for me and has been more of a big brother than a little brother. It brought tears to my eyes when I heard that he called. It's been difficult for me to talk to him even though he's made attempts to talk to me. I'm just not sure I can live up to his expectations sometimes. I'm the toughest guy in the world on the outside and can withstand any kind of pain but on the inside it's a different story. I may be the most sensitive person in the world and can be affected by the most innocent words. My brother is tough both on the inside and out and it seems he expects the same from me. There are times that I just can't face him because I know I'm not what he thinks I am. I was tearful as I left for my 6th time around the long loop. I wished that my brother were there to watch me in this race. He, along with my mom crewed for me in all 4 races of the Grand Slam in 2003. I give him credit for helping me achieve my goal. He worked hard to motivate me and literally kept me in the race at Leadville at mile 70 when I considered quitting. This is our hometown and he wouldn't be there to see me finish.

Most of the time I will squash sad thoughts because they could potentially shut me down but I never once squashed the thought of my brother calling me. Yes it made me sad but it also motivated me because I knew he cared. I knew what he would want me to do if he were there and that would be to win this race. Even though I knew no one was close I imagined someone was on my tail. I had to do this because it was the only way I would be able to push myself to run harder. I was racing an imaginary person that was always within a mile of me. The thought of that pushed me to run as much as possible without stopping.

As I ran the first 3 miles towards the water tower I saw a light up ahead. It was the first runner I had seen in a very long time and the first runner that I would have the chance to pass all night. Well at least that I know of. It's tough to tell whom you're passing with so many loops on the course. Anyhow the guy was a good ¼ mile in front of me so it took a while before I caught up to him. In the mean time I focused on him and didn't push too hard to catch up but rather maintained a constant pace to gradually pull closer. I caught up to him just before the second water crossing. As I pulled near I slowed to give him some encouragement and to ask him his name. It was Bill Losey from Cincinnati, Ohio. I had this guy pegged as a finisher the day I saw his name show up on the entrants list. I wished him luck as I went by and told him that I expected him to finish. He gave me some encouraging words and then we parted ways. Now that I had no one in front of me to catch I slowed a little as I made my way around the water tower. I was still feeling very strong but felt no need to run real hard. I wanted to run at a comfortable pace where I was breathing easy yet still giving a good effort.

I made it across the frozen cornfield and into the Judge Morris trail feeling really good. It's amazing how opinions can change over a period of time. The first two times around I dreaded this section but now I was looking forward to it. I cruised around with little or no problem until I got to the end. I was confused after crossing the wooden bridge as to whether I should make a right turn or a left turn. Just as I started to turn right David Snipes from Richmond, Virginia came running down the trail towards me. I told him that I had taken the loop in the opposite direction and was now confused as to whether I was going the right way. He turned me around and pointed me in the right direction. I was lucky he was there because he saved me from doing the loop a second time. I stayed with him for a few minutes and chatted a little. I told me I should shut my lights off just before entering the parking lot so as not to alert park rangers that might be in the area. This being a Fat Ass style run we had no permits to be in the park beyond operating hours so the authorities had no clue we were there. I'm sure it wouldn't have been a problem if they found out but I didn't want to be the one they questioned so I took David's advice and shut my lights off. Once out of the Judge Morris parking lot I put my lights back on the sped my way back to the start/finish area.

Since my mom had left for the day I figured I was left to fend for myself at the aid station. I figured wrong. When I got there John Harper from Team Slug took right over where my mom left off. He catered to my every need and then some. At this point I was doing really well and was just going to load up on water before leaving. That was until John offered me a cup of hot chocolate. It was as cold as you know what outside so hot chocolate sounded really good. He filled at least 16 ounces of hot chocolate in a cup, gave it to me and sent me back out on the trail. I took my time and walked a good 1/8th of a mile while drinking the hot stuff. It really hit the spot and warmed me up at a time when I needed it. As I walked I thought about how easy this section is and how I should be able to run the entire way without a problem. The time walking allowed me to mentally prepare for this section which in turn gave me the confidence to indeed run most of the way. I came up the hill into the aid station and went right to my car to grab some food that I stuffed in my pockets for later. John poured me more hot chocolate, gave me some soup, and made me a peanut butter and jelly sandwich. I ate every bit of it before leaving which almost came back to haunt me. He then fed me some encouragement and watched me go out for the 7th time.

John mentioned to me that it was 11:23 p.m. and I knew that I was 75 miles into the race as I left. I figured I had at least 6 more hours to go before finishing. As soon as I found out what time it was I immediately started to project what my finishing time would be. It was the first time since the early afternoon hours that I attempted to do that. A sub-24 hour finish seemed like a reasonable goal to shoot for so that's what I settled on.

The last 25 miles of a 100-mile race have historically been my toughest. I've been known to fall into such a state of despair that it's taken me up to 12 hours to finish from this point. I kept that thought in the back of my mind and was determined not to allow that to happen to me on this night. I knew that I had to run as much as possible because if I stopped for any significant amount of time it could turn into a death march. I was able to run most of the first part of the course comfortably only stopping to walk the big icy uphill after the first water crossing and the hill leading up to the water tower.

My stomach had been bothering me ever since I left the parking lot but I figured it was because I ate too much. I was sure that it would settle down over time but as I reached the Judge Morris trail things took a turn for the worse. I became nauseous and had to fight off getting sick. It was a struggle getting around the 3.6-mile loop but I managed to run slowly most of the way. As I exited the Judge Morris Trail I knew the loop was in the bag but I was concerned about the stomach problems I was experiencing. There were only 1-1/2 miles to go to get back to the finish and the only real challenge the course would offer would be the long, icy downhill right before the creek crossing. I had to figure out a way to overcome my stomach problems quickly. As it turned out my body took care of that for me. I made it across the cornfield and ran the short trail section before turning right to hit the downhill. As I made the right turn I vomited two times. The first time I've ever done that in a race. I immediately felt better so I concluded that I ate too much and my body just took its time rejecting it.

Now feeling better I made my way down the hill then turned right towards the creek and over the wooden bridge. I then carefully crossed over the water without incident. I still had the energy to partially run up the icy section leading to the parking lot and then ran all the way in from the grass. When I reached the grassy section I looked up at the parking lot and saw interior lights from someone's vehicle turn on. At least one person was still here to cheer the runners on. Turns out there were a few people still there including John Harper and Carl's dad. Both fed me encouragement when I entered and helped me get in and out of the aid station as fast as possible.

It was getting very late now and for the first time I started feeling the cold. John gave me another cup of his magical hot chocolate before I went out for the 7th time around the short loop. I was hoping the hot chocolate would warm me up like it had been all night long but because I had slowed dramatically it wasn't working this time. I started to shiver and felt a chill down my spine. After about 500 yards of walking on the trail I stopped to put on the extra shirt I had tied around my waist. I thought it would be smart to remove the other two shirts first because they were wet and then put on the dry one. So there I stood in the middle of the woods on a 25° night bare chested for at least 30 seconds. All I could think of at the time were the college kids at football games that sit in the stands on arctic days with no shirts on. The only difference is they probably have 6 or 7 beers in them and aren't feeling any pain. After about 80 miles of running pain

was a given for me so the cold stung a little but I handled it well. I realized quickly that clothing alone wasn't going to cut it and I had to get moving again or freeze to death. I chose to move again. I couldn't go right into a full stride so I started off dragging my feet picking them up a little more with each stride. It wasn't long before I had a decent pace going again and my body started to warm back up. Once moving I ran the entire trail section through the field and across the road before walking a short incline up the second field. At this point I ran the rest of the way back to the parking lot. I was ecstatic when I got back because I met the only challenge the weather provided all night and I survived.

When I arrived at the aid station I wasted no time. I didn't accept any food or hot chocolate but rather quickly gathered my thoughts accepted some encouragement and immediately headed out for my final lap.

John told me that David Snipes had just started the long loop 10 minutes prior to me starting the short loop and that Carl was just on his way in from the short loop as I was starting. That meant that David Snipes had at least a 40-minute advantage on me on the long loop and Carl probably had 20 minutes on me. I used the thought of lapping them as motivation to run hard for the first 3 or 4 miles. I was running very hard for someone that was 88 miles into a race. I looked ahead for lights hoping to pick some one off. The only walking I did all the way to the Judge Morris trail was the hill after the first water crossing and some but not all of the hill leading up to the water tower. When I reached the cornfield the euphoria generated from the thought of lapping someone wore off and I tired. It was obvious that I was not going to catch anyone now. I was pretty sure that David Snipes and Carl had been taking the Judge Morris trail in the opposite direction than what I had been taking it. The only thing that could happen from here is that we would pass each other going in opposite directions.

I was spent having given so much effort to catch up to Carl and David. I still had enough energy to run but was certain that once I hit the trail there would be some walking. Sure enough as soon as I hit the intersection where I could turn right or left on the trail I met a short hill and started to walk. This would be the beginning of a mini-death march that would last what seemed like an eternity. I continued to put in spurts of running now and then but from about the halfway point until I exited the Judge Morris trail it was just about all walking. I did finally see David Snipes about a quarter of the way around as he was exiting the Judge Morris Trail for the 6th time. I stopped for a few seconds as we acknowledged one another. This was when I first found out that every other runner had pulled out of the race except him and I. I never questioned where anyone was at during the night. It was never a race against other people for me but rather a race against Mother Nature and my own mind. David told me the status of every other runner and even mentioned Rick bailed but may be back later to finish up. I was glad I took the time to listen to this interesting news but now it was time for me to move on and wrap things up. David and I wished each other well and headed in opposite directions to finish up what we started the previous morning.

Even with the short rest I was still tired from pushing so hard the first 3 or 4 miles getting out to Judge Mo. I drug my feet running sporadically when I could. I was looking for the park bench that I had been using as a landmark all night long but it never showed up. Before I knew it I was running alongside a creek with a highway and houses on my right. The scenery looked familiar but I felt like I was going in the wrong direction. Sure enough I was. Apparently I had taken a wrong turn and cut down the middle of the course instead of looping around. Fortunately after making the wrong turn and reaching the bottom of the trail I made a left turn instead of a right. If I had made a right turn it would have led me back to the parking lot meaning I would have cut the course. Instead I made a left and covered all the distance back around to where my mistake was originally made. When I got there I turned down again and this time made a right turn on to the trail that led me out. I did it the hard way but I managed to cover the entire distance. The mistake was pretty deflating and the fact that I walked almost all of the way compounded things.

As I exited the Judge Morris trail I felt a surge of energy having finished the last loop of what I considered the hardest part of the course. My legs felt heavy as I drug them along the bicycle path on my way to crossing Polly Drummond Hill Road for the last time. I walked across the street and part of the way across the cornfield before I made myself run again. I moved slowly looking more like an old man than a runner. I was sure I could force myself to drag my feet until I reached the icy downhill section and then run it into the parking lot from there. Everything went as planned until I reached the creek crossing. I had no problems whatsoever crossing the creek the first seven times so I had no concerns about the eighth. I tiptoed across

until I reached the halfway point at which time my foot slipped off of a stepping stone and I went plunging into the water. Not a fun thing to do in 25° weather but it could have been worse. I only had a short jaunt from here to get back to my car where I could change my clothes and I only had 3 miles to go until I finished. I pulled myself out of the water; feeling refreshed, and made my way up to the parking lot to change my clothes.

When I arrived at the parking lot I took my time changing my clothes. Even though I only had three miles to go I was certainly aware that if anything happened out there to shut me down I could freeze to death. Being properly protected from the cold weather was more critical to me than losing time. As I was dressing David Snipes was just finishing his 6th lap around the small loop. He came rushing over to ask me why I was moving so slow. Apparently he had busted it up that final hill so he could get in before I headed out so I didn't lap him for a second time. He told me if he knew I was taking my time he wouldn't have had to work so hard on that last hill. I just kind of chuckled at his comments because honestly I wasn't racing anyone at this point. My main concern was finishing up safely and strong. John made one last cup of hot chocolate for me and a group of guys watched me head out for the last 3 miles.

I relaxed walking down the trail, sipping my hot chocolate for the first several hundred yards of the last loop. John told me it was 5 a.m. when I started out for the final miles. I was certain I could do the short loop in less than an hour to finish in less than 23 so I felt there was no need to rush. I hit the meadow section at the same time I finished my hot chocolate. A perfect place to begin picking up the pace. I was very conservative as I reentered the trail off of the meadow because of the icy conditions. I had already tweaked my hamstring here once and fell another time so I thought it was wise to take it easy on this short section. I was tense running on the ice but I effectively maneuvered around the tough spots. Soon I found myself in the short field on my way to crossing the road. I walked one more short incline after I crossed the road and then ran it all the way back to the final icy uphill section before the finish. I used the same walk/run method I had been using all night to get myself up to the runnable grassy section that would lead me to the parking lot. Once I reached the grass the adrenaline started pumping and my pace picked up dramatically. I ran all the way up the final hill into the parking lot to become the first finisher of a one hundred-mile race in the state of Delaware in 22:42.

I crossed the finish line first but in my mind everyone who started this race was a winner. We all walked away learning something about our inner soul. We all had the courage to attempt a feat that most would shy away from. We faced difficult challenges and learned how to overcome them. In the end everyone accomplished something. I congratulate my friend, Carl Camp, in particular for being the first to step forward to organize a 100-mile race in Delaware. As my new friend John Harper said, "no other runner, group, or club can ever stage the first one hundred mile run in the First State again".

Dave Bursler

Bear, Delaware