



Hardrock Hundred Mile Endurance Run

July 14-16, 2006

by [Lisa Butler](#)

Prologue:

This is a pacer's view of about 41 miles of Hardrock Hundred. It says virtually nothing of my runner except that he was my reason for being out there abusing myself. He can tell his own story if he so chooses...

Pacer's Report:

There I was minding my own business... running my usual runs, lifting a little weights though not often enough, getting Thai massage, acupuncture, and biodynamic manipulation... generally trying to take care of myself all the way around. And then it happened, I was asked to pace at Hardrock 100 (HRH). Since I'm unable to turn down a friend who begs politely and Hardrock is sooooo beautiful, I said Yes.

So, in the weeks leading up to HRH, I added the Incline (a particularly fun bit of masochism in Manitou Springs - check out www.inclineclub.com for info), a vertical mile of topsy turvey railroad ties with a 41-68% grade. I know it sez "No Trespassing" but this is Hardrock training!! I also went up Pikes Peak weekly for a couple weeks (1.5 inches of snow in on one day June) and subjected myself to the Leadville Marathon Pukefest.

I went out to Silverton on Wednesday just in time to harass my runner as he checked in. Several friends from the North Texas Trail Runners (NTTR) were also in town for the fun, so I got to visit with them. Met a few folks from the Ultralist though didn't get to spend time with any of them to get to know them in person... faces to put with the names are always good though.

I stayed at the Silverton Hostel -always a good value. Not quite as well kept as the last two years, but still decent. The place was packed with runners and pacers. In fact, 1/3 of the town was runners and crews... the other 2/3 were split by townies and tourists eating ice cream and jerky. Once again, half the businesses in Silverton were for sale, a few surprisingly still in business, and most of the old standbys still the same. I did discover that Silverton is not as full of drunken rednecks as Leadville since I managed to leave my truck (with Ipod and camera in it) and my room unlocked for the entire weekend and didn't lose even an ounce of Perpetum to thieves... unlike Leadville where my truck got peed on by a drunk and egged while I slept in it in downtown Leadville. I will never again put the panic button out of reach while I'm sleeping -it would have been justice to see the drunken little shit pee all over himself when the horn started honking!

The plan for pacing this year was a little different. I was going to skip Engineer's Pass in the dark in favor of seeing some of the course in the daylight and pacing my runner into the finish. All did not go as planned. I ended up going over Engineer's again since my runner needed to make up some time overnight. By morning, I was sleep deprived and not feeling well at all. Saved by a pancake and coke at the aid station, I continued with my runner up Handies Peak. Oh mi gosh! What a beautiful place and a lovely 14er to climb. The meadow was absolutely awash in color from the wildflowers. I have never seen so many varieties of Indian Paintbrush! The recent monsoons had greened everything and brought the flowers out in force. We'll not mention the mosquitos (virtually unknown to us on the Front Range) and the biting flies. There were several people camped in the meadow, a particularly obnoxious Denver news reporter who filmed my runner between opportunities to deride his wife and daughter for being too slow and for not climbing all the way to the top. There was also a young couple who trekked up the peak very quickly after being (literally) stumbled upon while taking a smooch break in the grasses and flowers. Had they been IN the race, I'd have reminded them that we were at mile 60... not 70.

Coming down off Handies was an experience that will not soon be forgotten. It was steep, treacherous, and had lots of loose shale and gravel. Hmmm... seems to me that describes many of the descents on this course. I was struck by how sadistic the course was and had visions of the founders of this race giggling with madness in their eyes (either that or too much beer in one of the local joints) that anyone would be masochistic or foolish enough to attempt the course.

By the time we got to Sherman I was wasted. A few raindrops, a nice dirt nap leaving colorful temporary tattoos on my hand, elbow, hip, and knee, and a very loooong road didn't help that. BUT, my dear friends Dave and Paula Billman from the NTTR were there to help us out. They helped the Aid station crew get us macaroni and cheese (absolute heaven) and potato soup. More coke was just the thing and I think my arse caught up to us just as we were leaving for Pole Creek. I was restored, as was my runner.

The next ascent took us up Cataract Gulch. There was a rushing stream with almost continuous waterfalls up to timberline. Again, the wildflowers were glorious and for now, we were in the shade. We flirted with the stream, jumping from rock to rock across it several times. Once above timberline, the stream came and went, often becoming just marshy areas that couldn't be avoided. Onward and upward we went, over hill and dale, the views ever more spectacular, a herd of elk, several yellow-bellied marmot, but no aid station. Finally, high on a hill sat a lonely goathead... oh, I mean, on a hill was a greenish lump showing above the grass. It was a tent sitting next to an ez up with lovely warm broccoli and cheese soup and more Coke.

Goodness knows, you'd think I was a Coke addict the way I'm writing about it. But I'm really a decaffeinated anti-soda person, EXCEPT at altitude and during Ultras. So there I was, staving off nausea and a sleep-deprivation headache with Coke. It's medicinal... trust me, I'm a doctor.

After leaving Pole Creek, it seemed to be more marsh than trail. The ground, not to mention our feet, was constantly wet and cold. The sun was going down and the breeze was cool too. We bundled up in everything we could find in our packs, which wasn't enough but would have to do, and headed upward again. It was very dark by the time we reached the top of our climb and headed downward toward the faint glow that was the aid station at Maggie's Gulch. Not an official crew point, but my runner's crew was there with HOT pizza. MMmmm good. What a way to end my pacing section. And I was pretty done in at that point. Craving a hot shower and a toothbrush much more than the pizza but I wouldn't have turned it down for anything. Another friend, Mark Dick (also from NTTR) was there to pick me up at the end of my long and "hilly" pacing stretch. I was so grateful to see that Jeep (that is no longer a city jeep) and not to have to walk down the 4 miles of 4WD road to the car at the bottom.

After a few hours sleep, I went to the breakfast and saw many of the runners. Some were ecstatic after finishing one incredibly tough race. Some were less than thrilled at having had to drop. Having seen that much of the course, I can say that anyone who runs any of that course gets the designation of Ultra Badass in my book. IF someone trains properly, both mentally and physically; and if the weather is right; and if, as they say, "the good Lord's willin' and the creek don't rise" they might ... MIGHT finish. But whether they do or not, they will be treated to many glorious views, mountain blessings, and phenomenal moments.

Once again, I'm grateful for the opportunity to pace a friend through the tough spots and the beautiful ones. I'm so thankful to his family and friends that crewed him and helped me help him. I'm forever indebted to my NTTR friends who helped both of us in the tight spots where we needed them and gave the support and good cheer to keep us going. Of course, the wonderful aid station personnel who provided the food we so badly needed, who lugged all that stuff over long distances and rough terrain only to sit there for long hours suffering through the scenery on sunny days in the mountains waiting for smelly, crabby, and tired runners to come partake of their offerings. Then there were the mountain spirits who kept me amused whenever they popped up among the flowers and rocks. And, of course, those wonderfully sick minds who came up with and worked so hard to put on this event so that we could all share some suffering in the name of fun. Some people would not call it a "vacation" if you could barely get out of the car and walk after an hours drive... I call it phenomenal!

Epilogue:

I arrived home after a 6 hour drive through the beautiful mountains to find my lovely little home baking in the sun. The front range hadn't seen rain since I left. Inside, my house was 92 degrees... outside it was at least 85. I turned on my

whole house fan, opened up every window and door, and sat out back to enjoy thai curry noodles with veggies and a cold Bristol IPA. By this morning, I'm walking as if I actually paced through the mountains... people are looking at me funny and laughing.

Lisa B

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