



# Hardrock Hundred Mile Endurance Run

## July 14-16, 2006

by [Will Vaughan](#)

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A summary and some thoughts on this years Hardrock 100 from a first timer.

Being my first time running Hardrock (I paced 30 miles last year) I wanted to get as much time at altitude as possible and see some more of the course during training. Living in Durango (6500') made this fairly easy. I was able to do about 7-8 runs that got up to at least 12,000' and 3 of those were 10-12 hours and between 30 and 40 miles in length with extended time above treeline. Feeling pretty good about my training my girlfriend and I went to Silverton a week early to hang out and see some more of the course. We thoroughly enjoyed our time in Silverton before the run.

The weather was pretty bad leading up to the race but improved greatly in the two days before the start and by race morning it was looking pretty good, maybe a little too good. At the start of the race my legs didn't really feel that great but I kept chugging along hoping that they would feel better and enjoying the scenery. As we made our way up above treeline on the first climb it became apparent that the flowers would be great and after making our way through Cataract basin and down into Porcupine they were amazing. I couldn't believe how many pictures Blake Wood was taking while still managing to stay ahead of me!

I made a quick stop at KT where I saw my friend Bob Lyle before continuing on up to Grant Swamp. The climb was steep but not too long and before I knew it I was plunging down the other side. The soil and talus heading down was just wet enough that you could sink in a bit and get a good rhythm going while skiing down the scree on the steepest part. I still didn't feel great but I was having a lot of fun.

Upon entering Chapman I got to see my crew for the first time, my parents (Barbara and Skip), my girlfriend Dana and my buddy Gerald who would pace me from Ouray to Sherman and had come down from Fairbanks. It was good to see them and I soon headed out for Blix road which would take me to Oscars Pass. I knew this would be a tough climb and it was. It was just after noon, there was little wind and no clouds. This meant that it was hot and the flies were out. This was maybe the toughest part of race for me. My legs had not yet come around, mentally I hadn't quite gotten into the race and I took a couple of salt pills and drank a lot of Gatorade. I thought the Gatorade and extra sodium would help with the heat but instead my stomach wouldn't empty and I could feel myself becoming dehydrated. I needed plain water but foolishly I had used most of it to mix more Gatorade on the run. I'd have to make do until T-ride.

After the long decent from Wasatch I was really happy to see my crew in T-ride. It was really hot by now and they were ready. As soon as I sat down they had 2 glasses of cold water for me and a towel that had been soaking in ice water for my head and shoulders. After 15 minutes or so I had cooled down and gotten a good start on rehydrating. I took off to begin the 4400' climb to Virginus.

I had never been up this climb and it was steep! and oh yeah there were flies, not just a few but maybe 20-30 swarming around each runner for most of the way to the top. As hot as it was my legs were feeling better and mentally I was more relaxed and at ease with the task ahead of me (about time).

I cruised through the Virginus aid station (pretty cool up on the ledge) and began the long decent to Ouray. I'd thought that this would be a good place to make good time as the road is mostly gently sloping to flat. As it happened the people around me were walking the flats and jogging the downhills to save some energy. I adopted this strategy and was glad that I did later in the race.

I got to Ouray feeling as good as I had the whole race, my legs were good and I was peeing on a regular basis again. I met my crew who fueled me up and headed out with my pacer Gerry just as it was getting dark. On the way out of

Ouray on the trail along the water line we came across a curious site. In the middle of the fairly wide trail was a dead doe. There were no visible marks except for maybe a little blood around the mouth and possibly on the neck on the side that was on the ground. The doe had not been there long and it occurred to us that it may be a fresh mountain lion kill. With the thought of a 150 lb. cat eying us from the dark we decided to move on. The rest of the climb up through Bear Creek Canyon and to Engineer Pass was a long hard slog. 5300' up a steep trail and into the night.

The flashing light on Engineer was a beautiful site and not as far off as it seemed. From the top the string of lights was beautiful. As we headed down to Grouse we turned off our headlights and enjoyed the moonlight for almost the entire way down. Again I walked most of this and was glad that I did so.

Grouse was not as scary as I had been led to believe but after receiving food and drink from Dana we got out of there pretty quickly just in case. The climb up Grouse was one I had done before and I enjoyed it. My pacer and I had hoped to hit Handies peak by sunrise and we hurried to meet that deadline. As we made our way up to the shoulder of Handies we realized we wouldn't make it for sunrise, oh well. We got to the top around 6:25 am and it was beautiful. Along with about 15 spectators were our buddies Joe and Ed who had hiked up the night before and camped on the North shoulder. After a few pics we headed down the steep marbly trail into Grizzly gulch. In Grizzly we found a good rhythm and ran most of the trail to Burrows park where we continued on down the cinnamon pass road to Sherman. By this time it was getting warm again and we were glad to get to Sherman.

In Sherman my crew again did a wonderful job getting me everything I needed and it was good to see Annette Anthony and David (Some of you may remember David from the finish line at the San Juan Solstice where he gave every finisher a hearty congratulations and a bear hug). After using the facilities (the nicest on the course) I headed out with my new pacer Roland for the last 30 miles. Roland is mainly a biker but I think he did get a 6 miler in the week before he paced. I was still feeling pretty good but the sleep deprivation was slowing me down and I had a few aches and pains that worried me.

We climbed the beautiful trail out of Sherman, probably the best scenery below treeline on the course and eventually made our way over the pass and headed for Pole Creek aid station. The weather had turned a little bit and a really nice mist was falling though thunder rumbled not too far away and there was the promise of heavier rain in the air. About a 1/2 mile from the aid station the skies opened and the rains came. We got to the aid station and decided to just keep moving through the rain as it was colder just standing around under the tarp. The climb up to Maggie-Pole pass wasn't too bad and before we knew it we were parting a herd of sheep on our way down to the Maggie Aid station.

In Maggie I made an effort to eat and drink in an effort to fuel up for the final 20 miles or so. I'm glad I did as this section was harder than I had anticipated. It stays very high and the combination of extended time above treeline and sleep deprivation was taking its toll. For the first time since early in the race I began to get frustrated. It was tough but luckily the sleep deprivation can also make it easier to have that "screw it" attitude, it is what it is and I just put my head down and didn't let it bother me too much. I should also point out that Buffalo Boy Ridge was one of my favorite parts of the course.

By the time we were heading down into Cunningham I was again on familiar ground and pretty excited to be so close. At this point in time I had plenty of time to finish and I knew that I had no injuries or other physical problems that could keep me from kissing the Rock! Though my sleep deprivation continued to hamper me a bit (My vision became a little blurry out of my left eye) the weather seemed to be clearing and if we hustled up and out of Cunningham we could still get a good view of the sunset.

Before entering Cunningham I told Roland that I wanted to get in and out asap, I was ready to be done! My crew was once again great and had all our night gear ready to go. I grabbed a burrito to go and we hit the last climb.

Though only 2700' the last climb is a doozy. It is steep and unrelenting however I was feeling stubborn and we did the entire climb in one push, about 1'40". We were rewarded at the saddle as we caught the last beautifully fading deep orange glow of Saturday's sun. On the descent I was once again on virgin territory and it was as tough as the uphill or worse IMO! Steep loose scree on a trail blasted out of the side of the basin. We made our way a mile or two down to a jeep road which was only slightly better. We continued on as this road descended forever! Just near the turnoff for the last 3 miles into town we heard the sound of semi-automatic gunfire shock the night. It sounded as if it was around

the bend maybe 200-300 yards away and it unnerved us quite a bit. We were happy to see the turnoff and hustled down the hill and across the creek for the final stretch.

I had run this stretch a few days earlier but it seemed much longer and by this time I was also done running. Mercifully Roland and I made our way down the trail to the ski area and into town. This was by far the longest 9 miles of my life! Upon turning on to Reese street I managed a decent jog the 2 blocks to the school and the Rock! Though it may not have showed I was overjoyed to once again see my crew as well as Rob and RD Dale as well as others cheering me to the finish. I planted one on the Hardrock in a time of 42 hours and 27 minutes!

My thoughts on the course and how I felt;

I was surprised that my feet and quads both felt blown within the first 20-30 miles. However neither ever seemed to get much worse and after the race, though tired my legs were never really sore. The bottoms of my feet never really worsened and I had zero blisters. I attributed this to liberally applying vaseline to any part of my foot that even remotely felt as if it was going to blister. Also while the course was mostly dry the recent rains had kept most of the dust down. From this standpoint the conditions were really good. I owe lots of fast walking to the good condition of my quads. In all I probably only ran 25%-30% of the course. Otherwise aside from a little lower back and shoulder pain (from my hydration pack) my body held up very well. 3 days later my feet are still a little swollen but should be normal by tomorrow.

Ahhh the course. Living nearby I was able to see parts of the course and train on similar terrain as the course. In addition I studied the course description a lot. Overall I felt comfortably with what I was in for, in awe of it but not scared. Having said that doing the course as a whole is nothing at all like doing parts individually, it is much much tougher as a whole. All the climbs and descents are much steeper on race day and the footing is much more taxing and difficult. I was also shocked by the actual pace of the race. I was middle of the pack throughout the race and felt as if I was moving in slow motion up the climbs and I felt like I climbed a little better than those around me. I did not however take breaks on the climbs but rather went with the RFM mode (relentless forward motion). As stated a few times above I believe that walking a good portion of the smooth downhills at a good pace really helped me later in the race. The weather, though hot on the first day seemed pretty ideal the rest of the time with just the right amount of rain on Saturday afternoon to cool things off.

Before the race I was unsure that I wanted as much support as I was going to get from my crew and pacers. I feel pretty comfortable on my own and did not want to overly complicate things. However I was very glad to have each one of them there at every point!

It is easy to take them for granted but the aid stations and volunteers were wonderful!

Finally; will I be back next year? The biggest obstacle is the time spent training but I have a feeling it will be hard to stay away!

-Will Vaughan

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