



Hardrock Hundred Mile Endurance Run

July 9-11, 1999

Training and acclimatization for Hardrock by [Matt Mahoney](#)

I was already planning a big summer next year: Hardrock, Leadman (off road Ironman), Nolan's 14, Leadville, a smaller trail race every weekend (Pikes Peak, Imogene Pass, etc). But my DNF at the Mosquito Marathon on Saturday after last week's Hardrock finish was just one more reminder of my own limitations. Two days earlier on Thursday, ignoring a cold that started at Hardrock and got progressively worse, a 25 mile bike ride over St. Kevin's mining district in Leadville left me physically wasted. This was supposed to be the easiest of the major climbs in the LT100 mountain bike race that would be part of Leadman. Biking in flat Florida in no way prepared me for the lung sucking climbs and steep rocky descents of Colorado's jeep roads. On Friday all I could do was lay around with a hacking cough which did not improve by race morning. It took me 4:40 to walk 13 miles to the top of 13,100 ft. Mosquito Pass, feeling like death, to announce my withdrawal. I then had to walk 8 miles back to Leadville. I did get credit for the 16 mile race, but at 7:40, I'm not sure I want it.

Hardrock had been the pinnacle of 6 months of training: two 50K's, three 50 milers, a 100 miler (Massanutten), and a 40-mile, 28 hour training run at Barkley with 20,000 ft. of climb. I left Florida a month early, the first 2 weeks at 4000-7500 ft. with occasional higher workouts including biking up Mt. Evans (7500-14,264 ft and back in 56 miles) and the 22-mile Arriba New Mexico run up 13,100 ft. Wheeler's Peak. The last 2 weeks were at 5-digit elevations. Camping in Leadville, I climbed Bierdstadt, Elbert, Massive, Sherman, La Plata, Belford, and Oxford, sometimes two 14'ers a day. The last week was at Silverton, where I began my taper while still hiking the most difficult sections of the course: Grouse to Handies, with steep snow traverses above 13,000 ft, Maggie Gulch to Silverton (second night section), and Grant-Swamp pass with its 100% grades (45 degree scree fields).

This was my third Hardrock attempt. My first ended in '97, lost and behind the cutoffs after the roped glissade down Virginus Pass in the dark. My second, with better training, resulted in a 51:38 unofficial finish after getting lost in the remote mountains of Putnam Basin during the second night just 8 miles from the finish.

This time I finished and improved my time by 9 hours, beyond my wildest expectations. Like last year I used no crew or drop bags, but I did have a pacer, but only for 3 miles. Don Thompson was going to pace me from Cunningham Gulch (mile 91) to the finish. As we climbed from 10,000 to 13,000 feet, the last of 11 major passes, including the 45-degree tundra fields to the snow traverse overhanging cliffs hundreds of feet high at Dives-Little Giant as darkness fell, my brain succumbed to "second night" phenomena. I knew I had to climb to the markers far above, but I forget why. I could move, but couldn't think. I stumbled over the rocks. I knew this would happen, which is why I needed a pacer. My legs would hold up, but sleep deprivation would take its toll.

But on reaching the downhill road, Don could not keep up. I hiked the last 3 miles of muddy trail with Albert Meyer to finish in 41:39. Nobody else from Florida has ever finished Hardrock, training without hills, snow, rocks, or altitude. I proved it could be done, but now I am wondering if I should go back next year. Finishing Hardrock was the ultimate high, but I know how much training is involved. Is it worth it? I normally disdain periodization as a form of planned overtraining, but for Hardrock it was necessary. Now comes the 6 month recovery cycle, during which I may run a couple of marathons and 50K's, but no more. I swore I would keep coming back to Hardrock until I finished it. Now that I have, and I am looking at next year's entry form, I am wondering why I should fill it out.

-- Matt Mahoney, matmahoney@yahoo.com, www.he.net/~mmahoney/ub/

Several people have asked about how I trained for Hardrock, especially living in Florida without hills, rocks, snow, or altitude. The big difference between my finish this year (42:39) and my two previous DNF's is a longer acclimation

period, about a month with most the last two weeks of training at 10,000 to 14,000 ft. I also did more running in the last 6 months, increasing my mileage from 15-20 mi/wk to 25 mi/wk, about 2/3 of which was racing at various distances from 100 meters to 100 miles. In addition I bicycled 70 miles/wk, walked 10 mi/wk (much of it barefoot on pavement or grass), and lifted weights twice a week in a split routine (upper/lower body). About 3/4 of my weight training sessions were heavy/low reps and about 1/4 were light/high reps. My long runs were:

Jan. 2, Harold Tucker 50K beach run in 5:12, 13 miles barefoot and the rest in aqua joggers.

Jan 30, Penultimate Blue Moon 50 mile in 9:57, flat trails, 13 miles in Nikes, 13 miles in sandals, 13 miles in racing flats, 10 miles barefoot.

Feb 28, Knight Trail 50K in 4:30, flat trails, 26 miles in sandals and 5 miles barefoot. Afterwards walked 10 miles, biked 90 the next day.

Mar 27, Croom Trail 50 miler in 9:53, almost flat trails, 20 miles in Montrails with socks, 15 without socks, 15 in sandals.

Apr 3, Barkley DNF, 40 miles in 28:07, 20,000 ft. climb, Montrails.

May 8, Massanutten Mt 100 in 35:32, 20,000 ft. climb, Montrails without socks. No crew, drop bags, or pacer.

May 30, Wickham Park 50 mile in 11:11, flat trails, sandals. Ran a 5K XC race the day before and after, both barefoot.

Except for these races, my longest runs were about 12 miles, usually with one interval workout and one race (5K, etc) per week and no other running. Interval workouts (1-2 min. hard, 1-2 min. easy) simulate uphill effort and downhill speed at the same time. Most runs were flat and off-road (except road races), but I would occasionally run several all-out sprint repeats on a 20 ft. high grassy overpass embankment at 50% grade.

Two years ago I acclimated 11 days for Hardrock, reached Virginius Pass at 9:30 PM and got lost afterwards, but it was pretty clear I was behind a 48 hour pace and would have eventually been pulled anyway. My longest training runs were 20 miles at Barkley in 10:45 in Apr. and a 50K in Feb.

Last year I finished unofficially in 51:38 after getting lost at 92 miles. I was on about a 48 hour pace. I ran Western States 2 weeks before and felt recovered, but my first 2 weeks of acclimation before WS were mostly at 6000 ft, with only about 10 days before Hardrock above 9000 ft.

This year I finished in 42:39 with 30 days of acclimation and most of the last 2 weeks above 10,000 ft. Most of my workouts were in the same clothes, shoes (Montrails), and pack that I would be wearing for the race. A typical workout consisted of climbing from 10,000 to 14,000 ft and run/walking back down, 5-10 miles in 4-8 hours. For the first week, my rate of climb was typically 1500 ft/hr at 9000-12000 ft and 1000 ft/hr at 12000-14000 ft. Toward the end of my acclimation period, I was climbing at 2000 ft/hr up to 14,000 ft.

June 10-13, El Paso TX, 4600-7500 ft, runs of 9, 7, 5, 16 miles.

June 14-15, Rock City NM, 5000, no running, just climbing.

June 16, Whitewater Baldy, 9000-10770 ft, hike 13 in 5 hr.

June 18-20, sleep at 7500 ft (Taos NM)

6/18, Wheelers Peak, 9400-13100, hike 16, bike 26

6/19, bike 36.

6/20, Arriba New Mexico, 9400-13100, 22 mile trail race in 6:18.

June 21-27, sleep at 6000 ft (Golden CO)

6/22, bike up Mt. Evans, 7500-14264, 28 mi. up in 4:55, return

6/25, climb Bierdstadt, Evans, 9 hrs at 13000-14264.

6/26, skiing at 12000

June 28-July 3, camped at 10000 ft (Leadville)

6/28, climb Mt. Massive, 10300-14421, 16 mi. in 4:30

6/29, bike 27

6/30, climb Sherman, 13000-14060 in 2.5 hr

climb Elbert, 10300-14432 in 5 hr

7/1, climb La Plata, 10100-14336, 7 mi, 3:16 up, 2:08 down

7/2, climb Belford and Oxford, 10-14K, 7 hr

July 3-11, Silverton, camped at 9600 ft.

7/3, hiked Grouse to Handies, 11000-14048 ft, 5 hr

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7/4, ran Silverton 10K in 51:01 (top 10%)
7/5, hiked Maggie Gulch to Silverton 10000-13000, 15 mi. in 6.5 hr
7/6, easy day
7/7, hiked Ice Lake trail to Grant-Swamp Pass, 10000-13000, 6 mi
7/8, easy day
7/9, Hardrock 100 in 42:39

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