

Moose and the Misfits Reach the Beach

The Reach the Beach (RTB) relay - <http://www.rtbrelay.com/index.shtml> - is a 210-mile adventure race in New Hampshire that runs from Bretton Woods in the White Mountains and ends up at Hampton Beach at the ocean. Yes; we now have proof that New Hampshire does indeed have an ocean shoreline! 300 teams of 12 members (usually) run 36 legs that vary from 3.1 to 8.9 miles each in length. Typically, teams with the full complement of 12 members divide themselves up into 2 vehicles – van 1 & van 2 – and do 6-leg segments before the 2nd team vehicle takes over. That is to allow time for eating and theoretically a chance to catch a little bit of sleep (ha!). Once the first 12 legs are completed, the runner order must stay the same for the balance of the race. That means that runner #1 does legs 1, 13, & 25. Runner #2 does legs 2, 14, & 26, etc.

Moose and the Misfits is a TEAM made up primarily of people who know each other through on-line running forums, and was formed for the 2006 event with only 1 person having previous RTB experience. Normally, that is a recipe for disaster, but not with this group and their esteemed leader. They came from cities and states all over the country – Chicago, St. Louis, Dallas, Austin, Philadelphia, Virginia, and New Jersey – most not having met each other before. But they sure know each other well now!

The team:

Runner # – Forum name

1 – Alisonvet

2 – Glomo2000

3 – The Beast (that's me; wonder what was the inspiration for that forum name?)

4 – Indie

5 – Pallasgypsy

6 – Slowstarter

7 – High Hopes

8 – Snoopy runs (Captain)

9 – HoosierBabyGorilla

10 – City Moose

11 – Jennifer

12 – Twink1

Loyd - (Pallasgypsy's fiancé) – driver & photographer extraordinaire

To stagger the start, all runners had submitted their half-marathon mile paces, and a sophisticated spreadsheet is used to predict leg times, paces, and is a crucial tool to ensure that the on-deck runner is ready and waiting at the next transition area when a runner finishes his/her leg. The model takes into account degree of difficulty for each leg and builds in a deterioration factor as the ultra marathon race evolves. Our only problem was that the entire team surpassed itself and routinely ran faster than they theoretically were capable of. But that is what often happens in a relay, where somehow when you're not just running for yourself, you find a way to dig deep and give >100%.

Here are the stats:

Based on submitted half-marathon mile paces for each of us, the team was predicted to finish in 34:02. The actual time was 31:45:02, or 2:15 ahead of schedule! That meant extra beer time.

Overall, we beat almost 70 other teams, finishing 231/296, and 91/130 in the mixed open category. Even though the hills were unrelenting for the first 185 miles, our average pace for the entire 210 miles was 9:04.

Leg	Length	Rating	Runner	Predicted Time	Actual Time	Diff	Predicted Pace	Actual Pace
1	3.1	Extr hard	Alisonvet	31:00:00	30:44:00	0:16:00	10:00:00	9:54:50
2	3.1	Easy	Glomo2000	34:21:00	35:56:00	1:35:00	11:05:00	11:35:29
3	3.7	Moderate	The Beast	30:32:00	27:06:00	3:26:00	8:15:00	7:19:28
4	5.4	Moderate	Indie	52:39:00	44:50:00	7:49:00	9:45:00	8:18:09
5	8.6	Hard	Pallasgypsy	1:18:07	1:13:15	0:04:52	9:05:00	08:31.0
6	7.21	Hard	slowstarter	1:07:18	1:01:44	0:05:34	9:20:00	08:33.7
7	6.6	Easy/mod	High Hopes	1:05:27	0:50:36	0:14:51	9:55:00	0:07:40
8	8.84	Extr hard	Snoopy runs	1:30:37	1:22:55	0:07:42	10:15:00	0:09:23
9	4.65	Very hard	HoosierBabyGorilla	44:57:00	47:00:00	2:03:00	9:40:00	10:06:27
10	4.9	Moderate	City Moose	44:06:00	42:52:00	1:14:00	9:00:00	8:44:54
11	5.5	Moderate	Jennifer	50:53:00	52:27:00	1:34:00	9:15:00	9:32:11
12	4.03	Easy	Twink1	37:37:00	35:17:00	2:20:00	9:20:00	45:18.6
13	3.8	Easy	Alisonvet	35:33:00	31:22:00	4:11:00	9:21:00	8:15:16
14	7.7	Mod/hard	Glomo2000	1:32:14	1:31:57	0:00:17	11:59:00	11:56.5
15	8.2	Hard	The Beast	1:13:46	1:05:44	0:08:02	9:00:00	08:01.0
16	6.4	Hard	Indie	1:07:39	1:00:56	0:06:43	10:34:00	09:31.2
17	7.4	Mod/hard	Pallasgypsy	1:09:13	1:05:31	0:03:42	9:21:00	08:51.2
18	4.9	Easy/mod	slowstarter	46:43:00	43:30:00	3:13:00	9:32:00	8:52:39
19	7.2	Very hard	High Hopes	1:18:36	1:02:30	0:16:06	10:55:00	0:08:41
20	4.51	Moderate	Snoopy runs	42:37:00	40:30:00	2:07:00	9:27:00	8:58:48
21	7.1	Mod/Hard	HoosierBabyGorilla	1:10:09	1:11:29	0:01:20	9:53:00	0:10:04
22	5.4	Easy/mod	City Moose	50:35:00	46:38:00	3:57:00	9:22:00	8:38:09
23	6.2	Easy	Jennifer	59:11:00	54:17:00	4:54:00	9:33:00	8:45:19
24	6.9	Easy/mod	Twink1	1:08:15	1:05:00	0:03:15	9:54:00	0:09:25
25	8.9	Hard	Alisonvet	1:24:44	1:22:48	0:01:56	9:31:00	09:18.2
26	4.5	Moderate	Glomo2000	53:09:00	50:15:00	2:54:00	11:49:00	11:10:00
27	8.6	Very hard	The Beast	1:18:05	1:08:31	0:09:34	9:05:00	07:58.0
28	4.8	Moderate	Indie	49:08:00	42:39:00	6:29:00	10:14:00	8:53:07
29	4.7	Moderate	Pallasgypsy	43:11:00	39:13:00	3:58:00	9:11:00	8:20:38
30	5.4	Easy	slowstarter	49:09:00	45:45:00	3:24:00	9:06:00	8:28:20
31	7.4	Moderate	High Hopes	1:16:13	0:57:23	0:18:50	10:18	0:07:45
32	4.23	Easy	Snoopy runs	38:30:00	40:57:00	2:27:00	9:06	9:40:51
33	4.1	Easy	HoosierBabyGorilla	38:23:00	40:45:00	2:22:00	9:22	9:56:20
34	4.9	Easy	City Moose	44:36:00	42:26:00	2:10:00	9:06	8:39:36
35	6.5	Easy	Jennifer	1:00:51	1:01:13	0:00:22	9:22	0:09:25
36	4.6	Easy	Twink1	44:15:00	49:01:00	4:46:00	9:37	10:39:21

RTB06 The Beast

As anyone who has done them knows, adventure relays are the most fun you can have running. Doesn't mean you take it easy as compared to a standard road race, because in reality, most of

us push ourselves even harder than we thought possible, so as not to let down the team. People (no; close friends) are counting on you. I have done a number of shorter relays – from 23 miles to 60K to 92 miles - but had never taken on the challenge of an overnighter. When I was asked earlier in the year if I'd be interested in joining a forum team called Moose and the Misfits at RTB, I jumped at the chance.

It was everything that I possibly imagined and more. Make no mistake about it, driving 10 ½ hours the day before you start a 210-mile relay in the hills of New Hampshire takes a lot out of you. And being in a cramped van – I always imagined that a 15-passenger van would be huge and more than big enough - but not necessarily so when it's your home with 6 other people for a full day, overnight, and another full day. You lose all inhibitions, but after all, you're among family.

And that's what these things are all about – the people. It is an overworked cliché, but the one word that best describes long relays is camaraderie. In a matter of a few days, you get to know the people on your team better than if you had been casual acquaintances for years. There's a reason people keep going back to these things once they've done it once. And it's not the course or the challenge to improve your time.

I thought about writing a little something about each and every one of my fellow team members, but that would make this too long and I'd undoubtedly get too emotional. A few I had met before and already counted as friends. Suffice to say that if you knew some of the characters on Moose & the Misfits and wondered if in person whether they really are that wacky, or that caring, or that fast – well; I can only say that they are. What an unbelievable group of people to get to know and consider as friends. And I would be remiss if I didn't acknowledge other friends of mine who were at RTB 06 on other teams; e.g., Fellowship of the Bubblewrap, Sabrina's Dream, Road Islanders, and Truck on Cheese, just to name a few.

Here's how I did on my legs:

Leg #3

Distance – 3.7 miles

Difficulty rating – Moderate

Predicted time – 30:32

Predicted pace – 8:15

Actual time – 27:06

Actual pace – 7:19

Roadkill (how many teams I caught) – 3

What a spectacular run! The scenery was absolutely phenomenal. I never look around while I'm racing. One couldn't help but look at the gorgeous scenery, the mountains, the rivers, the waterfalls, and the panoramic vista that unfolded in front of me. I got the hand-off from Glo and took off like "I stole something". After a half-mile, the route started to climb and then became very steep for approximately a mile. The view from the top made me speechless. Or perhaps it was the elevation or the effort. The downhill was so steep that I found myself braking and my quads protested big-time. Once the downhill became moderate, I was in full throttle and absolutely hammered the last 2 miles. At that point I remembered a quote from Steve Prefontaine – "The only good race pace is suicide pace, and today looks like a good day to die". I'm guessing I probably ran about a 9:15 mile going up and down the steepest part, but had to have been running well under sub 7:00's for the final 2 miles. I guess so, if I averaged 7:19 for 3.7. I misjudged the finish line and barely made it to the transition zone where Indie was waiting. I passed the puke test. Hey; Mario Andretti put it best – "If things seem under control, you're just not going fast enough".

Leg #15

Distance – 8.2 miles

Difficulty rating – Hard

Predicted time – 1:13:46

Predicted pace – 9:00

Actual time – 1:05:44

Actual pace – 8:01

Roadkill – 11 ☺

I never run at night and/or in the dark. I had purchased a new headlamp, a reflective vest, a small flashlight, and various blinking lights. I had one 3-mile trial run before RTB. I was apprehensive, and afraid that I wouldn't be able to follow the course. No moon to speak of, and there are no streetlights in moose and bear country. The leg runs right beside Squam Lake where they filmed On Golden Pond. I couldn't see more than 20 feet in front of me, and never saw the lake to my right. "The race continued as I hammered up the road, passing rocks and trees as if they were standing still". The one thing that kept me focused on this leg was trying to follow and overtake other runners. Roadkill became my mantra, and it helped me a lot. For the first 2 miles, I was following a very attractive (at least I think she was) runner who was going just about my pace. I was afraid to go ahead, because I worried that I would lead the two of us into the ditch. But then I realized that we both had to share the work, and went by her saying "my turn". Unfortunately, she dropped back and I never "saw" her again. For the next 6 miles, I tried to make up ground on anyone in front of me, more because I needed the light and the company. I would only realize that I was going uphill when my legs started to protest. At any rate, finished the leg in one piece and was elated with Roadkill count.

Leg #27

Distance – 8.6 miles

Difficulty rating – Very hard

Predicted time – 1:18:05

Predicted pace – 9:05

Actual time – 1:08:31

Actual pace – 7:58

Roadkill – 14

I had volunteered for this long hard leg right in the beginning because I figured that if my forte is recovery, then maybe I had as good a chance as anyone on the team to survive this difficult section. The leg profile on the website was scary, and I refused to study it in advance. It was now morning of the second day (Saturday I guess) – with no sleep at all since Thursday, and no proper sleep since Wednesday. It was hot and it was very humid. I couldn't even wear my shades for most of the leg despite ELSO due to them fogging up. I carried my trusty water bottle, and the team was there every 2 miles with much-appreciated Gatorade. At about 4 miles, someone asked if I needed any more, and trying to be tough, I said "no; I'm OK". I immediately regretted it and said to myself "you liar; why did you say that"? By now, my teammates had gotten to know me well enough, and sure enough a minute later, they asked again. Told them one more drink at 6 miles. What a team. This was tough. My legs felt like they had run a marathon and the up and down hills never stopped. Although it seemed like mostly uphill! ☺ I did remember a real nasty mountain of a hill somewhere close to the end, and it was a bltch. But once I got to the top, I let it all out. There was no reason to save myself for anything, as my running duties for RTB 2006 were just about finished. I think I passed 4-5 more teams in the final half-mile. There had been one

young guy who had passed me half-way through the leg and commented something like “looking good, SIR” as he blew by me. Now that was his first and last mistake. “Sir”, my a\$\$\$. It was at that point that I let it all hang out and went after the young whippersnapper. I got him. No; I *destroyed* him. He probably hasn’t been doing 85-100 mile weeks over the past month like some people you know. As one of my heroes Emil Zatopek said – “Men; today we die a little”.

How do you put closure on an event like this? You run the whole gamut of emotions from exhilaration to sheer exhaustion. You are uncomfortable; you’re not eating right; you’re not sleeping; your whole routine is shot to hell. And you can’t wait to do it again. Pain is temporary; memories last forever.

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