

100 Miles in a Day (Almost)! By Joe Galioto

July 21 – 22 2007

The Vermont 100 Mile Endurance Run is one of the original 100 miles runs in the US. Based in Woodstock, VT, it takes place on a beautiful course, consisting of approximately 25% groomed trails and 75% jeep (dirt) roads. It is a hilly course, both climbing and descending approximately 14,000 – 15,000 feet, passing by some of the smaller ski resorts in the Ascutney Mountain area of Vermont's Green Mountains. And ever since I was introduced to the sport of ultra running nearly six years ago, it is the race I really wanted to do, primarily because it is one of the oldest and part of the Grand Slam, but also because I love the state of Vermont and thought that the lush green pastures and quaint New England farms would offer a spectacular setting for this event.

I originally signed up for the race for the sheer joy and challenge of running 100 miles. Later on I thought I could turn my effort into a charity fundraising event. I contacted the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society, who approved my event as a third-party fundraiser. Now I had many more reasons to run. Many thought I was nuts, but I was undeterred. I had goals and purpose. I had joy and challenge. I had "memory's" and "honor's" to run for!

So where does one begin to describe the experience of running 100 miles? I think that a 100 mile ultra, or any ultra for that matter, is a lot about the events and planning leading up to it. Perhaps a little flavor of what occurred a few days before the gun sounded would be helpful in conveying the spirit of this event for me.

My wife, I, and the three boys arrived in Vermont late Thursday afternoon. It was very comforting to me that the boys had no problem settling in to the rented house. In no time, they were running all around, exploring every nook and cranny. But then I got a little concerned as their excitement was not toning down. It's 10:30 PM, well past their bedtime, and I'm thinking, "I need to sleep." Friday came, and so did the increased levels of excitement. We were out buying food, attending pre-race meetings, attempting to arrange meetings with pacers whom I've never met, and playing in the local playgrounds. I know that everyone says that you need to stay off your feet as much as possible the day before a long race and here I was doing just the opposite, but I was not worried. After all I thought to myself, most of my training was done amongst the same craziness so any change to "the typical day" may actually hurt more than help at this point. To be honest, I was so calm and not the least bit nervous, which was in stark contrast to what I felt before running my first marathon this past May (Run for the Red).

Come race morning, I am up at 2 AM and at the race start within the hour. The race starts at a huge field, where more than a 100 runners and their family and crews were camping. Minimal lighting is provided by floodlights and everyone is walking around with headlamps and flashlights. Overall, there is a tremendous sense of community, which is what makes these events so appealing. I recognized some faces from magazines and did a casual introduction and also met an Internet-buddy of Bruce's, whom I struck up a conversation with and his wife snapped some photos. Meanwhile, my friend Henry, who was part of my two-man crew and who drove me to the start, was doing his best to stay awake, make idle chatter with me, and get his questions answered about where he could park at the various aid stations and such. I was a little cold, a little in a fog, but I was also excited to be there. I kept thinking, "wow, am I relaxed; don't get ahead of yourself, 100 miles is a long way!"

My goal for the race was to finish. This being my first 100, I had no idea what to expect. Beforehand, I had calculated some splits based on what I thought were realistic and it put me somewhere between 27 and 28 hours. I was comfortable with the training miles I put in, and honestly, I never thought for one moment that I wasn't capable of completing the 100 miles. In

addition to the running training, I also worked out a strategy to ensure that I didn't stay too long in the aid stations where I was able to meet with my crew. While there are 30 aid stations, your crew can meet you at 9 of them. If I spent 5 minutes in each of these stations, that's 45 minutes not moving forward. So, I packed a giant duffle bag filled with clear bags that held a smaller bag of food that I would take with me each time. I also had bags of every clothing item I could need, depending on the weather and my desire to change. Being that the first time I could see my crew was at 21 miles, and then at approximately 10 mile intervals, this strategy worked out perfectly, never staying in an aid station for more than a few minutes, even when I changed shoes. As for the weather, I was looking at weather.com for ten days prior. Each day the weather forecast would change from 70's to 80's back to 70's. Sometimes it reported 30% chance of rain and sometimes 10% chance of rain. I didn't know what to expect so I packed everything! I even carried a plastic garbage bag with me the whole time, something I learned from Doug. As it turned out, the weather was perfect. It ranged from 50-75 and no rain.

At 4 AM, 200 runners lined up for the start. It's a very uneventful start that consisted of the race director counting down the seconds: 3, 2, 1...GO and we were off running into the darkness, and it was absolutely beautiful. The early miles were on jeep roads so footing wasn't an issue, and while you soon transitioned to trails, the footing was secure and the paths were wide. The sun came up around 5 AM and the roosters chimed in around 5:30. How do they know it is 5:30 and time to cockle?

Around 2 ½ hours into the race, you could hear the horses coming. Did I forget to mention the horses? The true reason the VT100 exists at all is due to a crazy 27 year old named Gordy and his horse back in 1974. To read the full story, which is quite interesting, [click here](#). The Vermont 100 is the only race left where riders and runners share a course and run at the same time. They start one hour after the runners and while they do not run the exact same course we cross paths several times and it is a site to see and hear; nothing like the sound of 20 horses running up behind you. Thankfully, they left few "presents" on the trails ahead so footing was still safe.

Through about 15 miles I was pretty much running by myself, though whenever the chance came up, I conversed with anyone who was willing to listen to me. At this point in the race everything was working perfectly. I had been eating and drinking properly and keeping up with my electrolytes. Everything was going well. As I ran along, I met up with Bob. Bob had attempted Vermont three times but had yet to finish. He was concerned that he might be moving too fast, but was feeling okay so he said he wasn't going to change anything. We chose to run together for a while and as we climbed some steep sections of trail we came out into a mountain top meadow. As I ran across the top, I remember gazing out at the view. The wind blew lightly and we could see for what seemed like forever - the mountains of New Hampshire and Vermont, the valleys and towns below. How could I be so lucky to witness and marvel at this? A serious appreciation for life came over me and I took a deep breath as we both ran off the meadow and down towards our First Handler station.

At Pretty House (the name of the aid station at 21 miles) my crew (which consisted of my brother-in-law Chris and my friend Henry) was taking photos of me. As I ran down the stretch of other crews and spectators, I really enjoyed the cheers and bells ringing. So many times in ultras you get to aid stations where it's quiet and all business. I felt like this race was a big party and I was so happy to be apart of it. I grabbed some boiled potatoes at the aid table and got to my crew. They refilled my bottle and I took a baggie of food from them and also chugged a bottle of Ensure. I told them I felt great and off I went. As I ran down the hill, I could hear them calling me. When I turned around, Chris was hanging out the car window trying to snap off a photo of me. I was so happy at this point because they seemed really into helping me and enjoying the experience themselves. It gave me a sense of comfort since they would be out there as long as I was.

Right after leaving the Stage Rd Aid Station, which was at mile 30 and the second place where my crew could meet me, the course goes UP a hill - and UP and UP some more. And all I kept thinking at this point is why am I passing so many people? Kind of makes you nervous but I felt strong and continued at my pace. I later learned that I averaged 15 mpm for this section compared to approximately 13 mpm for the previous section. (Note: at the end of this summary is a chart that shows, amongst other things, my average pace per mile between each aid station, with the average pace inclusive of the time I spent at each station.)

At mile 39, you run through a covered wooden bridge just before reaching an aid station. It was at that point that I met Lois. She joked that I was her proverbial carrot. Lois is 55 years old and was running her first 100. However, her husband Gary was no stranger to 100's having run Vermont several times before, as well as other 100's. He, along with other members of her running club, was very helpful with advice and consistently meeting us at various points along the course. Lois and my pace was the same at that point, so we continued on together. Believe it or not, we ended up staying together for nearly 50 miles! This was awesome because her family and friends would help me out in aid stations, complementing what my own crew was doing, as well as cheering me out on the roads. We did a good job of pushing one another.

At Camp 10 Bear (mile 47), you are required to weigh-in as soon as you enter the aid station. This weight is then compared to your weight as recorded during the pre-race check-in medical evaluation. If you have a weight loss of 6%, it means that you must stop for a more thorough evaluation and rehydration; if you have a weight loss of 7%, it means you are eliminated! My weight was exactly the same so I proceeded to the area where my crew had my stuff laid out. At this point, I wanted to change my running shoes because they were causing me some discomfort and I thought that the feel of a different pair would provide some relief, which they did for the next 30 miles before I would change again. When I left Camp 10 Bear, I saw a runner coming towards me and I said to him, "you're going the wrong way." He smiled and continued on. I thought that he forgot something and was going back to the aid station. Lois then advised me that he was actually 23 miles ahead of us – he was coming into Camp 10 Bear for the second time, at mile 70! Wow, talk about humbling.

With eleven hours elapsed, we thought that if we could reach 50 miles in under 12 hours, then we wouldn't have any trouble because we could walk the remaining 50 miles in under 18 hours for an official finish. I remember when we shared that thought with Gary. He was like, "Are you crazy? You have to keep moving fast now. When nighttime comes, you're really going to slow up. Keep running!"

We reached the next aid station, Pinky's, at 12:01 and I remember we were a little disappointed because we didn't break 12 hours but then we realized that we covered 51 miles so we were psyched again.

The next time I would see my crew was at mile 57, Tracer Brook. The last mile or two leading up to this aid station I was starting to get stomach cramps, and I had a faint idea of what was happening. At the Aid Station I quickly grabbed my food from my crew and ran off to resolve my problem. Feeling much better, I continued running up the hill, thinking that Lois had gone ahead but it turns out, she was behind me. I heard her daughter call me so I started walking backwards so they could catch up. They supplied me with some Coca Cola and orange slices, and off we would go.

The next time I would see my crew was at the Margaritaville Aid Station at mile 62. I was really looking forward to this because Chris told me that Sue and the boys were going to be there. I've been raving about my sons to everyone I was running with, and now they were all asking, "where are those cute ones?" Not only that, I was in search of that extra energy that your family always brings to you. About a mile outside of Margaritaville, I started slipping back and I could hear Lois asking if I was okay. The first two times I said yes, but then I couldn't respond

anymore as those pesky stomach cramps were back again. I quickly addressed the issue and feeling cured I caught up to Lois, and some others who we were running with, at the Aid Station. As I looked around, I didn't see my crew or my family. Uh oh, what happened? Since they were so good in being at every aid station, I immediately thought something was wrong. Did they get lost? Is everyone okay? Lois and team were saying to get going, but in my head I am thinking, "It is now approximately 7 PM and the sun is going down. The next aid station I am allowed to take anything from my crew is at 70 miles, which I will reach in about two hours. It's going to be dark by then, and possibly cold. What to do?" Only one thing to do I thought and that's to get going. Everyone I was running with had jackets and flashlights. I didn't think that I would be cold, and if I was able to stay with them, I would have light. There was no sense worrying about it and off we all went.

Having just to use flashlights for the remaining half mile prior to the aid station, we made it safely to 70 miles, Camp 10 Bear again. I felt wonderful and was in really good spirits. Once again, I had to get weighed in, and as I made my way to the scale, I saw my wife and sons, and a huge smile came upon my face. Weigh-in revealed I was up two pounds. A brief exchange ensued about my eating and excreting the last 23 miles, and subsequently approved to move on. I made my way to a chair where everyone gathered around me. I wanted to hold each of my sons and I wanted to change my shoes and I wanted food, warm clothes and flashlight and I wanted to get out of there pretty quickly. With everyone helping me out, filling bottles, packing my fanny pack, and giving me clothes, I was able to do it all, and even pose for a family photo (thanks Henry!). Gary had come over during the photos and asked how much longer I would be. I told him to tell Lois to go on without me and I would try to catch up to her. Mile 70 is where most people took on a pacer, and Lois would be running with her daughter from this point on. I opted to take on a pacer at mile 77.

Leaving the aid station, I heard all of my sons screaming as my wife and my sister-in-law Helen, put them back into the van. There is low tone to the whole aid station and all you can hear are my sons screaming – I thought this was awesome. After leaving the aid station, you run about a ½ mile on the road and then go into the woods. Without a flashlight, you cannot even see your hand held out in front of your face. But that wouldn't be a problem as I now had my headlamp and flashlight (as well as a small back-up flashlight and batteries – never can be too prepared). The woods had a few really muddy sections which made moving at anything but a fast walk difficult for me. After about 10 minutes, I saw flashlights ahead and called out to see who it was. It was my racing buddy, Lois and daughter/pacer Bonnie. We continued on together trying to keep a good pace. It was at this point I saw the largest moth I ever saw. It had a 4 inch wingspan, and it just landed on Lois' back.

Reaching mile 77 – West Winds - I was 19.5 hours into the race. As you enter the station, there are people dressed up in clown suits and lots of noise and such. I told my crew I had a shoe insert problem and asked for help in changing it. Not sure why, especially since it was the one that came with the shoe, but it was slipping around. I changed it for the over-the-counter model I was using in another pair. Bingo, this did the trick. I met my pacer for the first time, and off the two of us went. My pacer John was 60 years old and a first time pacer. He was from VT, and in awesome shape, though not an ultrarunner. We hit it off just fine on the telephone, and on the trail things went smoothly – for now. We were running a good pace and actually flip-flopped a few times with Lois but ended up separating from her around mile 81 when I found a good burst of energy.

When I came into the Bill's Aid Station at mile 88.6, I felt terrific, which was a good sign since the hills between here and the previous station were absolutely brutal. I went to weigh-in and found that my weight had returned to its original amount. My legs had lots of life in them and my spirits were high. I grabbed some food, told my crew I'd see them in 7 miles, and off we went.

After about a mile we met Barb, who was running off course when we saw her and helped right her. After that, she asked to stay with us. We all continued on together, but I started to fall asleep on my feet. Every once in a while, I realized my eyes were closed but I was still moving forward. Prior to the race, some friends had told me to take No-Doze or drink Red Bull to stay awake but I'm not comfortable with that. In addition to the dozing, I started to get cold. And my pace started to lag to about 20 mpm. John was doing great; he was off running about 15 feet in front of me - with headphones on!

I came into Polly's Aid Station at 95.5 miles, the last place I would see my crew before the finish. Chris later told me that this was the only place on the whole course where I looked tired. I wish he would have told me that then; it might have been inspiring. I took a wool cap from my bag, grabbed some hot soup, and left the aid station. I told John to get what he needed and to meet me up the road. I figured he would catch up, which he did after a few hundred yards.

The next 2 miles were more of the same in that I was still sleeping on my feet even though the sun had started to come up by then. And yes, the roosters were cockling. As the sun warmed up, I started moving a little faster. I then saw Gary walking along the trail and he told me I had about a mile to go. I looked at my watch and realized that I had a chance to break 27 hours, and I took off. Of course, "took off" is relative. Whereas I was running 25 mpm, I was now running 16 or better. I looked around for John but no sign of him. I was enjoying this last stretch and when I saw the illuminated milk jugs, I knew I was there. I ran across the finish line and high-fived my crew. **I DID IT!** I completed the Vermont 100 Endurance Run in 26 hours and 57 minutes, a 16:10 average pace per mile.



To view the Aid Stations and Splits, see Chart below.

VERMONT 100 AID STATIONS & SPLITS - 2007										
STATION NUMBER	STATION NAME	MILEAGE	OPEN	CLOSE	TYPE	NEXT STATION	BODY WEIGHT	SPLIT (LEAVING AID STATION)**	OVERALL ELAPSED TIME	AVG PACE PER MILE
1	Densmore Hill	7	4:00 AM	6:00 AM	U	4.5		1:35	1:35	13:34
2	Dunham Hill	11.5	4:30 AM	7:20 AM	UP	3.8		57:43:00	2:33	12:50
3	Taftsville Bridge	15.3	5:10 AM	8:30 AM	A	2.2		46:25:00	3:20	12:13
4	So. Pomfret	17.5	5:20 AM	9:15 AM	U	3.6		27:46:00	3:47	12:37
5	Pretty House	21.1	5:30 AM	10:20 AM	AHP	4		52:40:00	4:40	14:38
6	U-Turn	25.1	6:15 AM	11:00 AM	U	5		53:17:00	5:33	13:19
7	Stage Rd	30.1	6:45 AM	1:00 PM	A(M)HP	3.8		1:15	6:49	15:00
8	Route 12	33.9	7:15 AM	2:10 PM	A	1.9		46:58:00	7:36	12:22
9	Vondell Reservoir	35.8	7:45 AM	2:45 PM	U	3.4		31:34:00	8:08	16:37
10	Lincoln Covered Bridge	39.2	8:00 AM	3:45 PM	A	2.2		38:07:00	8:46	11:13
11	Barr House	41.4	8:15 AM	4:45 PM	U	2.1		37:27:00	9:23	17:01
12	Lillians	43.5	8:30 AM	5:00 PM	AP	2.1		31:54:00	9:55	15:11
13	Jenny Farm	45.6	9:00 AM	5:45 PM	U	1.6		38:30:00	10:34	18:20
14	Camp 10 Bear	47.2	9:15 AM	6:10 PM	AMHP	3.8	152 lbs	27:20:00	11:01	17:05
15	Pinky's	51	10:00 AM	7:20 PM	A	3.1		59:49:00	12:01	15:44
16	Birmingham	54.1	10:15 AM	8:15 PM	A	2.9		56:40:00	12:58	18:17
17	Tracer Brook	57	10:30 AM	9:00 PM	AH	3.2		43:21:00	13:41	14:57
18	Prospect Hill	60.2	11:00 AM	10:00 PM	U	1.9		58:48:00	14:40	18:22
19	Margaritaville	62.1	11:30 AM	10:45 PM	AHP	3		31:18:00	15:11	16:28
20	Brown School House	65.1	12:00 N	11:45 PM	A	5		43:47:00	15:55	14:36
21	Camp 10 Bear	70.1	1:00 PM	1:00 AM	AMHP	4.6	154 lbs	1:26	17:22	17:12
22	Seabrook	74.7	1:20 PM	2:30 AM	A	2.3		1:26	18:48	18:42
23	West Winds	77	2:00 PM	3:00 AM	AHP	4		48:33:00	19:37	21:06
24	Goodman's	81	2:30 PM	4:30 AM	U	2.6		1:05	20:43	16:15
25	Cow Shed	83.6	3:00 PM	5:15 AM	A	5		48:17:00	21:31	18:34
26	Bill's	88.6	3:45 PM	6:45 AM	AMHP	3.4	152 lbs	1:26	22:58	17:12
27	Keating's	92	4:00 PM	7:45 AM	A	3.5		1:08	24:07:00	20:00
28	Polly's	95.5	4:30 PM	8:40 AM	AHP	2.2		1:17	25:24:00	22:00
29	Sargent's	97.7	5:00 PM	9:40 AM	U	2.3		55:13:00	26:19:00	25:06:00
30	FINISH LINE	100	5:20 PM	10:00 AM	AMHP			38:15:00	26:57:00	16:38

U = Unmanned A = Manned H = Handler Access M = Medical Check P = Porta Potty
 DROP BAGS MAY BE LEFT AT REGISTRATION FOR STATIONS 5, 7, 14, 17, 19, 21, 23, 26 & 28
 * Aid station #7 is an optional medical check
 ** Split taken at time I left Aid Station, so includes time spent in aid station.