

EPIC ULTRAS NEWS



Welcome From Epic Ultras Founder, Eric Steele



Another Epic Ultras Event, another SMASHING success! Immediately after every Epic Ultras Event, I ask myself - how will we EVER top this? Yet, we do! The answer lies, of course, in the people who participate. The successful execution of events of this magnitude is totally dependent upon the individuals participating...ALL of them, competitors, staff and crew (friends & family). Our competitors' desire, combined with Epic Ultras' total commitment to supporting and helping facilitate these desires, truly does result in the co-creation of EPIC ULTRARUNNING EXPERIENCES OF A LIFETIME...and that is exactly what it was in Ottawa, Kansas less than two weeks ago on the last weekend in March. Dr. David Horton, the "Dean of Ultrarunning" and our honorary guest speaker gave a spectacular presentation that contained numerous invaluable tips for

those taking on the course the following morning. David certainly gave Prairie Spirit Trail 100 & 50 Mile runners a VERY STRONG dose of inspiration to go out there and BE EPIC!!! Thanks for checking out our April 2014 Epic Ultras Newsletter. This is certainly a very busy season for us here at Epic Ultras, staging/directing three different ultrarunning events in eight short weeks! The Prairie Spirit Trail 100/50 Mile, the FlatRock 101K, and the Flint Hills Trail 40 Mile & Marathon - all of which take place between March 29th and May 31st! Also, don't forget our summer ultra-party, the Inaugural Honey Badger 100 Mile in mid July. This month's issue of EU News features an excellent article from Scott Demaree, focused on omega-3 fats, a Prairie Spirit Trail 100 Race Report by in-house blogger, Zach Adams, and a small glimpse into "ultra-chick badassery" with our April Featured Runner, Coleen Voeks. Enjoy! And, just a quick reminder, you still have some time to register for our next EU event, the 2nd Annual FlatRock 101K, to be held on April 26th...if you think you have the right stuff, that is!

Be Epic,

Eric

Apr. 2014...In This Issue

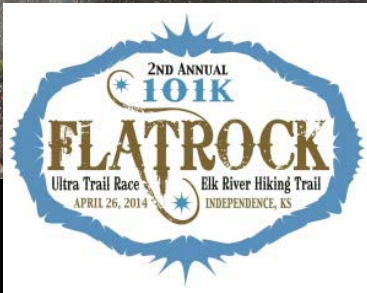
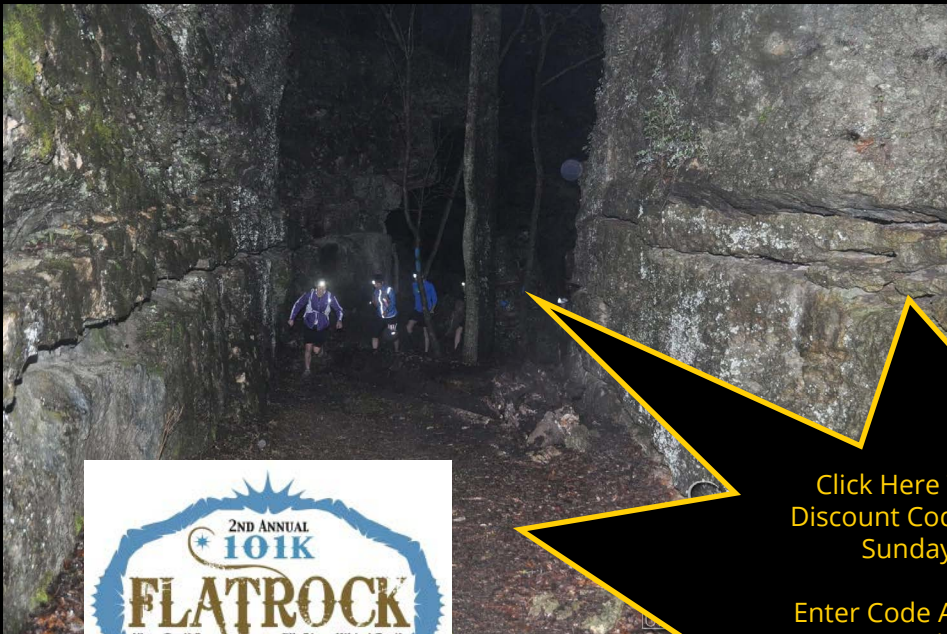
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Our Mission

The primary mission of EPIC ULTRAS is to organize, manage, facilitate and deliver the highest quality ultrarunning events in the world. Our vision is to create an environment that strongly encourages runners of all ability levels to discover, nurture and maintain their own personal greatness and "Be Epic."



UPCOMING EVENTS



2nd Annual FlatRock 101K
101K Trail Ultra Race
April 26, 2014 / Independence, KS

Click Here To Register Using The Discount Code Below Good Through Sunday, April 20th, 2014!

Enter Code At Checkout to receive a \$20 discount:
20EUNNEWSBUCKS
(All one word, no spaces)

FlatRock 101K

FlatRock. This course has been deceiving trail runners for almost 20 years. After all, it's KANSAS. KANSAS is flat. How bad can it be? Go ahead, underestimate this trail – then go home and cry yourself to sleep. Nineteen Septembers in a row, runners have come to the Elk City Hiking Trail to tackle the FlatRock 50k/25K trail ultra. This is the oldest trail ultra in the state, and it is pretty easy to make the argument that it is the BEST. It is as brutal as it is beautiful, as rugged as it is relaxing, as treacherous as it is tantalizing. A beautiful, highly technical trail full of short steep climbs, roots and rocks that seemingly TRY to trip you, and buzzards circling overhead - FlatRock is hard – and strangely addictive. The "Hall of Pain" consists of runners who have run it 10 or more times in a row. So, what would make more sense than running this 50k? Why not running it TWICE? Thus, the Flatrock 101K was born.

If you think you are some kind of trail ultrarunner badass, you need to bring all you got to the 2nd annual FlatRock 101K on April 26th 2014 and put your theory to the test. If you want to see what you are really made of and push yourself to your absolute physical ultrarunning limits, you need to be there. If you are ready to become a true Midwest ultra trail runner, sign up. FlatRock might just chew you up, spit you out, step on your face, and THEN send you home crying to your mama. IF you are too scared, that is understandable. I heard there are a few good half marathons that day... Maybe you should check into those.

April 26, 2014
FlatRock 101
101K

May 31, 2014
Flint Hills Trail
40M/Marathon

July 12, 2014
Honey Badger
100M

Sept 27, 2014
FlatRock
50K/25K
SOLD OUT

October 25, 2014
Prairie Spirit Trail
"Fall Classic"
50M/50K

January 3, 2015
WinterRock
25K/12K

March 28, 2015
Prairie Spirit Trail
100M/50M

All EPIC ULTRA events sponsored by:



Newsletter Bios

Epic Ultras Needs Your Help



Scott Demaree - Newsletter Contributor

With a diverse past as a computer programmer, graduate student researcher, personal trainer, shoe salesman, and physics teacher, one pursuit has dominated Scott Demaree's life like no other: high performance distance running/walking. To date, he has accumulated over 104,000 miles on foot, including nearly 10,000 miles in competitive races (113 ultras and 49 marathons). He won 26 ultras and 1 marathon. Two wins were National Championships: 1989 24- Hour run and 1986 100K racewalk. Some of his personal bests were not even wins, including 230.4 miles for 48-Hours, 143.4 miles for 24-Hours and 14:57:32 for 100 miles. Fascinated by the difficulties of these events, he went back to school to earn Masters degrees at Wichita State University and Texas A&M University, involving extensive study/research in nutrition and exercise science. He currently challenges Texas high school students to high achievement in physics and AP physics.



Zach Adams - Blogger Extraordinaire

Zach's been competing in ultras for about three years and is most certainly an EPIC ultrarunner. He loves running and has the sense of humor that Epic Ultras thrives upon! He's been our blog contributor since our inception and has a true passion for this sport. If you're easily offended, well, read his blog and get pissed, or don't! He "calls it like he sees it" and has no shame in doing so. Visit page six to "get a taste" of Zach's most Epic humor about our sport!



Coleen Voeks - Featured Runner

In her own words.

I grew up a true child of the mountains... Spent dawn until dusk outside or yearning to be outside exploring, playing and generally acting like a feral child. My father was an ultrarunner so I was exposed at a very early age to the insanity... I chose to deny my running destiny for many, many years. Seeing your father sobbing and shaking at mile 90 will do that to an impressionable 7 year old. When the bug finally bit.. It bit hard and my poor husband was bewildered by the sudden turn around in attitudes. I cannot imagine

my life without the long run. It has given me joy, calm, love, satisfaction, courage, strength, and friendship beyond measure.

Epic Ultras needs YOUR HELP! With the expansion of events on the EU race calendar and the increasing popularity and participation in our beloved sport of ultrarunning, we need to add to the Epic Ultras Brigade. Just because you may not be able to run every event you would like does not mean you can't be a part of Epic Ultra's mission to "co-create experiences of a lifetime". It takes amazing people to pull off the absolute BEST events you will find ANYWHERE. By working at an aid station and assisting in other race day duties, not only will you be a part of the Epic Ultras Brigade, you may even earn your way into an Epic Ultras event. To find out more go to:

www.epicultras.com/brigade.

Thank You!

EPIC ULTRAS



The Alpha and the Omega of Fats

by Scott Demaree

If omega 3 fats could be patented and sold as a pharmaceutical, it would be hyped around the world as a miracle drug. Let's be glad they are not, otherwise they would be available only by prescription and cost 1000 times as much. These fatty acids have the power to help or cure many of the degenerative diseases that curse humanity. From arthritis to cancer to heart disease, studies have shown benefits from omega 3 intake.

The way it works is probably not what you might expect. Without getting too technical here, all the membranes (boundaries) of all your cells are made primarily of fat, and many of the signals that tell your cells how to react to the outside world start in the membranes. The most important fact is this: different kinds of fats have completely different effects in these membranes. You also need to know that the fats in these membranes come mainly from the food we eat. We are also quite good at making our own fat from carbohydrates, but more on that later.

Different fats affect the way cells react to the hormone insulin. Studies in food animals show excessive amounts of saturated fat (from cheese or meat), monounsaturated fat (from olive or canola oil), or omega 6 polyunsaturated fat (from corn or sunflower oil) all markedly cut the ability of muscle cells to respond to insulin. In this condition known as insulin resistance, the muscle's normal ability to remove sugar from the blood is blocked. If muscle cells can get the sugar from the blood, they can either burn it, or store it as glycogen. Not only do all omega 3 fats promote this insulin sensitivity, but if long chain omega 3s (from fish oils) are added to a diet already rich in the above fats, insulin sensitivity can be restored to normal. Short chain omega 3s from plant oils can't do this. By the way, if the insulin resistance is extreme and prolonged, this condition is known as Type II (adult onset) diabetes.

Incidentally, you can pack more saturated fat into your cells by taking in more calories than you burn in the form of carbohydrates. Yes, those high carbohydrate diets we have been told to follow for years are a great way to achieve this negative result because our livers can do nothing with the extra carbohydrate but turn it into saturated fat.

Let's get back to the subject. Because all dietary polyunsaturated fats compete for absorption and processing, it is the relative amounts of omega 6 and omega 3 fats that determine what gets into our cell membranes. In other words, it is because there is so much omega 6 rich vegetable oil in the food we eat that we have too much omega 6 and not enough omega 3 fats in our cells. I'll go out on a limb here and say: it is this imbalance more than any other single factor that is the cause of the modern epidemic of degenerative diseases!

Research has determined that it is the long chain omega 3 fats, nick named EPA and DHA, that have the greatest impact on cell membrane signaling. Our bodies can lengthen plant-based omega 3s to make EPA and DHA, but not very well. So the final verdict must be that fish oils are the best source for omega 3 fat. If you want some of the benefits of this "wonder drug", but you just can't tolerate fish oil, be sure to eat flax or chia seeds or take supplements. No matter what kind of omega-3s you take, you would benefit by trying to cut your intake of omega 6 fat. Use olive, peanut or canola oils for cooking instead of products with corn, soybean, sunflower, safflower and cottonseed oils.

The next time someone tells you that all fats are alike and bad for you, tell them to go fish!

Featured Runner - Coleen Voeks

The Basics

Date of Birth: 6-1-73
Place of Birth: Colorado Springs, CO
Currently Residing: Kansas City, KS
Marital Status: Married
Job(s): Running coach, personal trainer
Children: Happily childfree
Height: 4' 11
Weight: 110
Shoe Size: 6
Best Physical Feature: Smile
Worst Physical Feature: My brain is my own worst enemy some days.
Religion: Nature
Political Affiliation: Dirty hippy liberal
Educational Background: Way too many years of racing bikes and drinking beer at Colorado State.. Might have gone to some classes in there, might have gotten a diploma too. It's all a bit hazy.
Personal Strength(s): Bullheaded determination
Personal Weakness(es): Laziness.. Yes laziness.
Make Of Car You Drive: Honda Element & Aprilia Mojito scooter
Make Of Car You Would Like To Drive: I really love what I have!
Pets: 4 hellspawn.. I mean, cats. Just lost my 12 year old Great Dane Otis. Best dog ever.

Ultra Stuff

Years Running Ultras: 7 **# Ultras Finished:** 50+
Best Ultra Performance(s): Big Horn 100 - it was a magical race where everything fell into place.. Not my best time, but the best managed and run.
Most Memorable Ultra: Western States 100
Typical Training Week(s) Before A Major Race: I make sure I train as specific as I can. Very technical race course? Train on technical trails. Lots of uphill? Train hills. I try and make sure i spend at least a few weeks in the 70-90 miles per week range before a 100 miler. Lots of strength training too.. Makes you strong and staves off injuries
Injuries: torn calf, occasional IT band flareups
Ultrarunning Idol: Ann Trason
Why Do You Run Ultras: I love the time spent in the woods, with others, by myself, moving and pushing and overcoming. It's primal and makes me feel completely alive.
Advice For Other Ultrarunners: Don't rush it... There is no reason to jump into huge distances too fast. Take your time, build a nice solid base of fitness and enjoy the journey... We have all the time in the world. Too many people jump up their distances too fast and burn themselves out.

Favorites

Favorite Book: Alice in Wonderland
Non-running Magazine: Outside Magazine
Favorite Movie: Rarely watch movies..
Favorite TV Show: Game of Thrones (for right now anyway)
Favorite Music: all kinds.. I used to own a record store so my taste is all over the place
Favorite Musical Performer: Guided by Voices
Spectator Sport: Hockey
Favorite Subject in School: Theatre
Favorite Game: Trivial pursuit.. My brain is stuffed with all sorts of inanities
Favorite Vacation Destination: Australia
Favorite Time Of Day: Early morning
Favorite Item Of Clothing: Anything with spandex!
Non-Running Leisure Activity: Hiking with my husband
Running Shoe: Discontinued: La Sportiva Fireblade (still bitter) current: Pearl Izumi e:motion N2
Food/Drink During An Ultra: Watermelon!
Food/Drink Before An Ultra: Coffee
Food/Drink After An Ultra: EVERYTHING!
Favorite Crew Person(s): No crew thanks... Aid station volunteers are enough. Bless every one of them
Favorite Pacer: Deb Johnson
Favorite Place To Run: Anyplace rugged and uphill
Favorite Type Of Running Surface: Rooty, rocky and technical! Bring it on.
Favorite Famous Quote: The Mountains are calling and I must go - John Muir

Dislikes / Fears

Least Liked Subject: Math
Least Liked Household Chore: Cleaning. I dream someday of being rich enough for a full time maid
Pet Peeve: Whining
Greatest Fear: Not being able to move freely

Spare Time

Book Currently Reading: Game of Thrones book 1
Hobbies: Ultrarunners don't have time for hobbies!
Collections: Belt buckles

2014 Prairie Spirit 100 Race Report – “The Walking Dead” or “A Tale of Two Fifties”

By Epic Ultras Blogger Zach Adams

So this weekend marked the 2nd Annual Prairie Spirit Trail 50 and 100 Mile Ultra Races in Ottawa Kansas. It marked my 4th time toeing the line at a 100 mile footrace. My record stood as 1 total rookie failure, 1 cut short by a freak blizzard, and an 1 insanely perfect race resulting in a first finish PR breaking the 22 hour mark. As a 1 for 3 100 mile racer, I was hoping to even my record at 50% -while secretly harboring ambitions to break the 21, and even 20 hour mark. After all, this was an “easy” hundred course, right? We all know that a 100 mile race starts months before the actual start of the race, so that’s where I’ll start.

I finished the Pumpkin Holler 100 in late October 2013, getting that first buckle “under my belt” (pun intended) and amazed myself finishing more than 2 hours faster than my low-end goal of 24 hours. You can read all about it here. About a month after Pumpkin Holler, I ran the 12 hour KUS race in Wichita, logging 53ish miles and learned I wasn’t completely recovered. I took basically the month of December to rest and recover, planning on hitting it hard once January hit. I ran and worked out some, but not like I had been through the summer and fall. I ran WinterRock 25K – and had a blast as expected – but rolled my ankle pretty good in the process. That is always a possibility on that trail, but it is a little scary when you have a 100 mile race on your calendar no more than 3 months away. I ran a LOT in January and February, totally more than 450 miles. Most of these were good quality, high effort runs and not just long slow grinders. I was feeling really solid other than the occasional twinge in my “WinterRock ankle”. My beautiful, wonderfully talented runner girlfriend Candi Paulin and I have a tendency to name our injuries on the races where we acquired them. She had been working through her FlatRock and Heartland knees while I whined about my Pumpkin Holler hip and WinterRock ankle. You get the idea... Aside from a few nagging aches and pains, things were going well. Rolling into what was going to be my peak mileage week I got a NASTY chest cold and was basically done training until the race. This turned my planned 2 and a half week taper into nearly 4 mileage free weeks. I will say, I noticed how worn out I was from training only once I slowed down and took some time off. My body was actually really ready for, and needing, a break.

I got to Ottawa early enough to get to help with early packet pickup. I love getting a chance to meet and talk to runners before the event actually starts. I really think runners miss out when they skip pre-race activities and just show up at the starting line. Lots of my now close friends became so as a direct result of hanging out before and after actual races themselves. I love it. To steal words from a buddy Mark Berry, “Pre-race dinner feels more like a family reunion” – and I might add – one filled with a family that is not as totally dysfunctional as most are. The dinner that Warren cooked up was way better than the caterer Epic Ultras had gotten the previous year, and it was awesome getting to catch up with my ultrarunning buddies. Next up was keynote speaker David Horton, old-school ultrarunner and one of the founding fathers of ultrarunning. Not only did I get to watch his totally badass and inspiring presentation, I had the opportunity to talk to him quite a bit on the side. I was very impressed with his willingness to share his stories with me and how he sincerely wanted to hear MY story. He was a very inspiring guy who has done some CRAZY ASS SHIT including winning Hardrock a couple times and finishing the Barkley Marathons 100. Oh yeah, and he ran across the USA, the Pacific Crest Trail and the Appalachian Trail. Total ultrarunning rockstar. I am thrilled I got the opportunity to meet David. He gave a few pieces of wisdom in his presentation that will become a theme later in this blog. 1 – This too shall pass. 2- It never always gets worse. 3 – Walk with a purpose. All three of these nuggets of wisdom played an important role in my race.

After dinner I went back to Celebration Hall and hung out and helped for the duration of late packet pickup. I had worked out a deal with Eric that if I helped with packet pickup and helped film David’s presentation, I could sleep inside of Celebration Hall instead of pitching a tent outside. I don’t really like camping in the cold that much, so this seemed like a great deal to me, since I was planning on getting there early Friday anyway. About 10:00 pm I decided it was time to get ready for bed and decided to set up my tent (yes inside) and get to bed. Got a bunch of teasing and shit talking from a few buddies who belong to the Epic Bridage that were still working to get ready for the race. They found it quite comical that I would be setting up a tent inside – including the rain cover. I saw it was like this; it would knock down some of the noise and light and maybe help me sleep – and maybe even give me a

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Ultrarunning Table Talk Tuesdays

@ Connie’s Mexico Cafe

For runners living in the Greater Wichita Area, the next Table Talk will be held March 18th, and recur every 3rd Tuesday of each month thereafter, Eric Steele will be facilitating a “low key” type of round table discussion each month, from 5:30-7:30 p.m., exploring specific disciplines within our sport where anyone present is welcome to jump in and discuss what has worked for them and what hasn’t. After Eric’s successful Ultrarunning 101 presentation at Connie’s back in January, and feedback from several attendees, proprietor and ultrarunner Adele Jordan, has graciously agreed to make their back room available to meet monthly, eat some great Mexican food, drink a couple of beers and TALK ultrarunning with other runners! Adele is also extending a 10% discount on all food and beverages.

Next Meeting

5:30 - 7:30 p.m.

Tuesday, April 15th

Location

Connie’s Mexico Cafe
2227 N. Broadway
Wichita, KS

RSVP

Click [here](#) to RSVP.

2014 Prairie Spirit 100 Race Report – “The Walking Dead” or “A Tale of Two Fifties”

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little protection from Micah LaPoint who was promising to climb into my sleeping bag to cuddle once I feel asleep. Yeah... I love these crazy assholes. Anyway, I got to go to bed on my air mattress in my inside tent (box fan and all) about midnight with George Myers guarding my door from his sleeping bag right outside my door where he was camped out. Turns out I am pretty wimpy compared to these dudes who sleep on the concrete with nothing but a blanket like the damn terminator. I slept like I usually do the night before a race... not much. Four in the morning arrived and I was relieved to finally get up and get going. The Epic Ultras Brigade were already hard at work. My tent was torn down and stowed away within minutes and before you can say “GO!” I had a hot shower and coffee in hand as other runners started showing up.

Just before 6 am we got our final pep-talk and a simple “Go” along with a powerful air horn blast, from Mr. Epic himself, Race Director – and my brother from another mother – Eric Steele. I took off at a nice easy pace that was probably too fast for a 100 miler. I figured a fast mile or two wouldn’t hurt me and would likely burn off the remaining nervous energy. I started our running with my friend Farhad Zarif, a great runner from the Kansas City area with an infectious spirit and a quest for to earn his first 100 mile buckle. As we headed north to complete the short out and back, I fell in with Steve Baker. Steve is a pretty experienced ultrarunning, and has done several 100’s in his time. He is also one of the happiest and friendliest guys I have ever run with. We chatted for a while and eventually got out of town and were truly on the Prairie Spirit Trail. Steve and I fell in with Earl Blewett – a long time veteran ultrarunner. He was telling us of times long ago where ultras were few and far between and a guy had to travel hundreds of miles to find out that he was running with the same 50 lunatics he had at every race that year. He was also one of a handful of runners who had run the INAUGURAL FlatRock 50k – the oldest trail ultra in the state of Kansas. It was interesting and enjoyable. I ran with several other folks in route to Garnett and saw David Horton on the trail as well. I ran with a guy who played division 1 football at Tulsa (Chris I think) who had decided to run a marathon pretty much as soon as his playing days were over. He was a big guy and had shed a LOT of weight to get to the point of running 100 miles. His buddies were treating the job of crewing as a 30 hour tailgate. I chatted with another younger dude for a while who had decided to find a job and move out to Colorado – from Indiana I think – so he could pursue his dream of training and finishing the HardRock 100. I love ultrarunners. They are seriously badass... and not just because they can run for a long time. About this time we got to the first aid station at Princeton. I grabbed a Nutella burrito and rolled out. I was carrying Hammer Gels and Protein bars. I would fuel mostly from these since the real food on the course was 7-10 miles apart. I felt like I had been doing well trying to take in at least 250-300 calories per hour.

Eventually myself and the other runners got spread out so I put some music in my ears. I focused simply on eating, drinking, and running. Every so often I would lean against something and shake the tiny rocks out of my shoes. I was really running at a quicker pace than I had planned, but I felt good, so I kept it up. I got to Garnett and was in and out. My Garmin died right at 28 miles at just a hair under 5 hours. So yeah, I was going to fast for a 100 miler. I intentionally slowed my pace realizing that it was probably unsustainable to run at this speed. It had also warmed up quite a bit and I could tell I had gotten behind on water. The next section was about 9 miles to get to Welda. About 2 miles before getting to the aid station I got really thirsty but had already finished my bottle – which I had drained and filled at the unmanned water stop. I stripped a shirt and tied my jacket around my waist. The sun was surprisingly intense and I was wilting pretty good, but still moving well. Just before Welda, my right knee was getting a really sharp pain and my quads and calves both started cramping. I was slightly worried, but not terribly, since I was rolling into the Trail Nerds oasis. I filled and emptied my bottle here and picked up about 6 e-tabs. I had been using Fizz tabs for electrolytes but decided to ramp it up. I ate some real food and popped 2 S-Caps and took off. I wasn’t stopped long at all, but upon beginning to walk, my knee pain was even sharper. I was concerned that it was hurting so early on, but I also know how aches and pains come and go. I made like a choo choo and chugged off down the tracks.

When I got to Colony I was still cramping, but maybe not as bad. The 7.75 miles to get there took me a long time. The warm temps and cramps had really slowed me down, to the point that I had to stop and stretch every few minutes just to loosen them up enough to keep a slow and steady shuffle. Although I had taken in as much water as my belly would hold and multiple E-Tabs, I just couldn’t kick the cramps

Featured Runner

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Achievements / Goals / Memories

Personal Hero:

Too many to list... I meet people every day who have overcome some crazy hard things to become wonderful, positive members of society.

Personal Philosophy:

Suck it up Buttercup

Short-Term Goal:

Finish my 10th 100 miler this year

Long-Term Goal:

Keep running and remaining healthy for another 40 years

Most Prized Possession:

My health

Most Proud Achievement:

Trying to live every day as a kind, encouraging, honest person. I want to always be sending positive energy out into the world and making a positive impact in peoples lives. Some days it’s a real struggle but I’m proud that most days I feel I’ve achieved it

Happiest Memory:

My wedding day

Secret Ambition/Fantasy:

Fantasy? Everyone in the world goes vegan.. No more animal suffering or mistreatment.

Greatest Adventure:

Chosing not to live a traditional life!

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in my legs. I was greeted by Kodi Panzer who cheered me up with her great laugh and a couple jokes about only working the aid station so she could find a boyfriend. She is a riot. It was a good pick-me-up at a low point for me. Only 41 miles into the race and I was struggling pretty hardcore. But I did what hundred mile runners do; buried my doubts, got up, and ran.

Ten miles. I have run this distance so many times I can no longer count. I have run it in heat, in cold, in ice, in snow, in wind. I have never run in such misery as I did during this race. The cramps worsened and I continued to overheat. I got into a bad spot mentally and daydreamed of getting to lola ONLY so I could quit and be done. It was not fun. It was not Epic. It was torture. I felt sick, tired, lonely, bored, pissed off... you name it. I was in as low of a spot mentally as I have ever been in a race. At one point I saw Eric driving by on the highway – he is easy to spot with the Badwater sticker and “Be Epic” plates – and almost called him to turn around and pick me up. I didn’t, mostly because I figured he would tell me to suck it up and quit acting like a little bitch. I imagined how I would tell Daniel and Candi at lola that I was finished, it wasn’t my day, and every other excuse I could think of for quitting. I daydreamed of going back to Topeka with Candi and sitting in the hot tub with a beer at the hotel and going to the state wrestling tournament instead of running all night. You get the picture. Bad times. FINALLY I came limp-shuffling into lola. My co-worker and crew chief Daniel Droessler was standing near the aid station with a camera. He slowly lowered it and I could tell by the look on his face that he KNEW I was done. He just started running himself a couple months ago and was planning on pacing me a section. It was obvious to him that he was now off the hook. Something about this look kept me from telling anyone I was done. Maybe there was a little spark of life left...

I immediately went to see Warren at the aid station table and he asked me how he could fix me. I asked for food and he gave me some bbq pulled pork. Then I asked if maybe they had any pickle juice. I had decided that since it was only 4:50pm – almost 11 hours since the start of the race – I had plenty of time to get “fixed”. I took Jurek’s advice and took stock. I was hungry and behind on calories. I was cramping and dehydrated. I had a shit attitude and was pissed off that the last 15 miles sucked so bad. I was in bad shape, but it was all fixable – so I got to work. Unfortunately they didn’t have pickle juice, but they had plenty of water and e-tabs. I had run a short time with Brian Smith, a runner from near my hometown, and after he went ahead of me and gotten to lola he had given his crew instructions to help me out if they could. Nathan Sicher, a blazin’ fast runner who also lives close to me gave me a Gatorade. To my amazement, Justin, one of the Epic Brigade shows up with a jar of pickles and says, “Will this work?” HELL YES. I drank 2 foam cups of pickle juice and chased it with Gatorade. Thanks guys. About this time, Candi shows up well ahead of schedule AND has a hot, salty order of Culver’s french fries!! I wasn’t planning on seeing her until Welda or Garnett inbound. What a sight for sore eyes! It raised my mental state back to where it needed to be if I had any chance of finishing this thing. Once she got there, I knew there would be no quitting, at least not at here, not now. Another runner had heard me asking about pickle juice and brought me a “Pickle Shot”. I finished eating, drinking, and doctoring my feet (no blisters so far) and stood up to see how I was feeling. Amazingly, the cramps were gone. My legs felt new life. Someone suggested a change of shoes and I agreed. Dan asked if I wanted him to pace me the 10 miles back to Colony, I said, “Hell yeah!”, and I strapped my Hokas on. After spending half an hour recovering at lola, I decided that I didn’t need to worry about making it to the finish, I just needed to focusing on how to make it to Colony. Off we went.

Like I mentioned, Dan had only been running about 6 weeks, with his longest ever being 6 miles. I warned him that if he couldn’t keep up, I would run off and leave him. He was excited as this was going to be his distance PR and his first participation in an organized running event. I was excited because the sun was going down, it was cooling off, and I was feeling SO much better. We spent most of the miles doing 4/2 intervals. Four minutes jogging, 2 minutes powerwalking “with a purpose” just like Horton had prescribed. Most of the rest of the time I spent talking to him about running really long distance and giving him tips of the trade. Time passed quickly and I continued to feel great. Daniel did awesome, and we got into Colony in 1:54 minutes. The same stretch outbound had taken me nearly 3:15. Candi was there grinning ear to ear, happy that I was still feeling good and ready to pace me in the last 39 miles. I ate a good portion of solid food here, not wanting to repeat my earlier mistakes of rushing through the aid stations without getting enough food in me. I thanked Daniel for pacing me and crewing for us. We set out toward Welda. 61 miles down.

This stretch was pretty solid running with walk breaks here and there when needed. We didn’t really watch the clock much – just enjoyed each others company and talked. We have run a lot of our winter long training runs together and she is the perfect running partner for me. She makes it seem effortless, ignores any griping, and gives me a little push JUST when I need it. We got to Welda and we were both feeling awesome. Daniel had brought his kids out and they were looking around with huge eyes like they thought the whole thing was pretty awesome. To be honest Dan was pretty jacked himself and would have probably paced me if I needed him to! Right as we pulled into Welda, a woman grabbed me yelling, “Zach!! You look awesome!” I replied with something like, “Thanks, you should have seen me earlier... I’m back from the dead!” It was Reina Probert. Reina is another ultrarunning friend of Candi and I who was pacing the final 32 miles for a complete stranger – in the middle of the night. Yeah... ultrarunners ARE that awesome. I ate, Candi ate, we said bye to our friends and off we went. 69 miles down.

The next stretch takes you back into the old train depot at Garnett where Polly and Lauren Choate – Epic aid station veterans – were running the show. I think Candi and I got here about 11:15pm. Getting to Garnett was a long almost 9 mile stretch. I did some stretching along

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the way and was still running quite a bit, feeling mostly really good. My legs were tired, but never to the point where I was feeling exhausted or out of gas. When we got to Garnett, we found Daniel and Polly both excited to see us. Dan took off pretty quickly and was headed to get the kids to bed – his night was done. I could tell he had enjoyed every minute of it, and thanked him one final time. Polly was making tacos and another gentleman was making MAPLE BACON. OMFG... It smelled like greasy heaven. He was just pulling off strips so I sat on the bench and started eating sandwiches. Someone brought me over some bacon and I took it to poundtown. It was hit the spot and was as much mental fuel as it was physical. The reality suddenly hit me that although I had roughly 77.5 miles done, I still had almost 23 miles to go. Candi gave a the look that said let's go, so we went.

This is where it started to get a little gnarly for me. Once we got out of Garnett and back on the dark trail, I got sleepy. Not your garden variety “yawn a few times” sleepy... I got to the point where I was barely doing more than shuffling with my eyes closed. I actually almost wandered off the trail a couple times, until Candi had me hold her hand when I would rest my eyes. As the miles dragged on, so did my eyelids. I was feeling ok, I just couldn't fight the urge to sleep. Toiling along just at the edge of consciousness, I look up and see a wonderful sight. A big concrete... thing. Maybe it was a storm drain cover, maybe it was.... I don't know what the hell it was – but to me it was a bed. I told Candi without even thinking, “Wake me up in 3 minutes. I'm taking a nap.” While she gave me a strange look, she didn't argue. Candi is as sweet as they come, but she is just as tough. I knew 3 minutes was all I would get, and it was all I got. A simple, “Let's go.” is all I got. As we got up to a run again, I noticed something. It helped. It REALLY helped! I was soon wide awake and running better than I had for a while. My amazing pacer was glad as she wasn't sure what she could do to keep me from passing out. A few more times the rest of race I would find a bench or just a clear spot on the gravel and lay down, but the rule was always ONLY 3 minutes. Once we figured out this method to keep me awake, Candi kept pressing me on to run as much as I could. I was pretty happy when we rolled into Richmond. 86.5 miles down, roughly a half marathon to go.

I am pretty sure I talked to my buddy Sean Hamlin at this stop and he had a really warm tent – that as much as I wanted to curl up in the corner and sleep, I tried to avoid lingering. I think Paul Rejda was also here, although I am not exactly sure. Honestly the specific details at this point are pretty fuzzy. We cruised out of Richmond after only a couple minutes and realized we had about 4 hours to get in under 24 hours. That gave us 2 hours to get to Princeton and 2 hours to get to the finish – stretches of 6.5 and 7 miles. Aside from a very fast stop in Princeton to eat, refill, and say hi to George Myers, it was a seemingly never-ending cycle of shuffle, run, walk, eat, drink, and repeat. Candi kept me talking and moving, ensuring me that, “We are almost there!” the entire time. She was wonderful. I leapfrogged with Elden Galano and others. It was surprising how a pretty good size group of us was still close at this point. The only other noteworthy story at this point in the race was the horses fitted with headlights. After one of my short naps, I noticed headlights that seemed to be getting closer. Immediately, I asked Candi if we were going the wrong way! When they got closer, I asked Candi why there were horses with headlights on the trail... She laughed at me and said it was runners – probably 50 milers according to their larger bib numbers. I thought, there is now way any of the 50 milers that haven't made it TO GARNETT in 20 hours!!! WTF! Anyway, we scratched our heads and ran on.

The last 3 miles was hard. I was tired, sore, and bored. I wanted to be done. Candi probably heard me say that at least 1000 times. I just want to be finished. I was in need of a short nap and found a wooden bridge to lay down on. As I did a big German Shepherd walks out of the woods, smelling of skunk, and starts licking my face. I passingly wondered if I was hallucinating about a foul smelling police dog licking my eyeball – I really didn't care. That question was answered when he proceeded to tag along with us to the finish line, even helping himself to some snacks from the table. A couple miles out Candi called our friend Justin Chockley, who had been assisting Epic Ultras as course gopher, to tell him we were getting close. He told us it was a mile from the finish once we hit the highway. At one point, with the visible highway in the distance, we caught up to a runner and his pacer who cordially let us know that it was a bunch of “goddamn bullshit” and that the race finish better damn well be close, cause his Garmin already read 99.3 miles. He wanted to know, “How the hell do you measure an out-and-back course wrong?” We eventually got back into town, and unless I broke something or just passed out, it was looking like Candi was going to get me in under 24 hours. Repeatedly, when she was telling me to pick it up, I told her I didn't care about sub-24. It didn't matter. Knowing me too well, she just kept assuring me that I would. We saw Dennis Haig standing and cheering at the final turn. He pointed us left and we trotted to the finish line holding hands. This finish, while almost 2 hours slower than my last, was harder and even more meaningful. I had bounced back from almost quitting at the halfway point and still managed to finish under 24 hours. Eric rushed to the finish line and congratulated me with a big hug along with awarding me my buckle and a badass Prairie Spirit Trail 100 Mile decal for my vehicle. I hugged Candi and thanked her for getting me to the finish, and for being so wonderful while doing it. My official time was 23:39:12.

I hung around all morning, dozing, eating, resting, eating, and cheering runners in. Candi rested and snuggled with me for about 30 minutes before heading BACK to Topeka to watch her son's first wrestling match. Yes, I told you, she is a total badass. I got to see so many happy people cross that finish line and earn their first 100 Mile buckle. The final finisher crossed the line with about 30 minutes to spare and were ecstatic to finish. The energy at a 100 mile finish line is only equaled by the exhaustion. Thanks to everyone who made my 100 mile dreams come true for a second time. It truly is a group effort, and you will never find a better group than you will around an Epic Ultras Event like this.