

2008 Coyote Two Moons Ultra
By Mauricio Puerto

After completing H.U.R.T 100 2008, I had no plans whatsoever to run another 100 miles until early fall of this year. Well then my wife had to go to California in March for work and I decided to tag along with the kids. I started looking around for some races and found a couple: Rucky Chucky 50k and the Pirates Cove Trail Run organized by Coast Trail Run's. Then one day while ordering some gear from Zombie Runners, I noticed that they had an event calendar flipping through and there it was: the Coyote Two Moons Ultra 100mi. The more I read about it and the more I wanted to be in it! However, I was a bit disappointed when I found out that the race had already filled. Nevertheless, I was not going to give it up so easily so I send an e-mail to RD Chris Scott (AKA Chief Idiot). His response was "The race is full, try next year". That's when I found out that I am a 100 mile addict and that I was not giving up that easily! After a couple of more e-mails the race director let me in. He made it clear though that I should "Reconsider doing the event if I was doing it for its race potential", in fact he added "We'd prefer runners come for the challenge of the format". So it was January 28, only 8 days after HURT 100 and there I was signed up for another 100miler. I was still in the recovery phase and had no idea how to train for this new challenge. I knew the race was going to be tougher since there was over 28,000 feet of elevation gain and I was going to run through two nights. When I filled out my application I asked if I could start in the 35hr group considering the extra elevation and extra loss of sleep. Training for this race was not easy as I was still recovering from HURT 100. My longest run was 40mi (2 HURT loops) which meant I wasn't really well trained for this !

(March 21, 2008) Coyote Two Moons Ultra started at Rancho Grande in Rose Valley CA in the Los Padres National Forest. We gathered at the ranch on Friday morning to pick up our race packs which by the way included a nice Patagonia jacket! I drove back down the mountain to drop off my kids and one of my running buddies hooked me up with a ride back up the hill (thanks Tom) for the start. By the time I made it back to Rancho Grande the first group had already started. The 6 pm group was the biggest about 30 of us. I saw one familiar face Andy Kumeda from HURT 08. It was finally time to set off for C2MU and my adrenalin level was skyrocketing. I found myself speed walking the first parts of the climb about 2.5mi to reach the ridge. Once on the ridge I started to run the flats and downhill. The views were spectacular as you could see all the way to Catalina Island. I paused for a couple of minutes to take in the sunset and was feeling pretty good. By mile 6 my right foot was starting to hurt but didn't think much of it at first. However, by mile 7 I had to stop and checked if I had a rock in my shoe or if my orthotics were incorrectly placed in my shoes. By mile 9 I could no longer run and was barely walking. I sat down on a bolder with my shoes off and started to massage my arch, the pain was excruciating. For 30 + minutes I kept on massaging my right foot arch while thinking if that was the end of C2MU for me. No way! I threw my shoe back on and limped to the first aid station at about mile 10. Here I continued massaging my foot till I realized that my shoe lace was way too tight. It started to feel better and thought I could continue on to Sisar Canyon. The next section consisted of 8 miles of down hill, for those of you who know me down hill is were I excel in and I

was able to make up some of that time I had lost. This part was not really technical just wide open fire roads. The sun was gone and we were left with our Petzl lights. I arrived at the bottom of Sisar Canyon 17 mile in, filled up on fluids and food and I hit the trail after a 5 minutes rest.

The next section was supposed to be the hardest part of the race. One starts at 1600ft and ends up at nearly 6000ft in less than 8 mi. As usual I suffered going up hill but had an interesting conversation with Rod Dickson about all the runs he had completed and this was supposed to be an anniversary run for him. I ended climbing to the bottom of Topa Peak quite well passing 3 other runners. At the bottom of Topa Peak chief idiot greeted us at the 3rd aid station. He explained that at the top of Topa Peak I should find a deck of cards and that I needed to bring back one to prove I climbed the 30% grade switch backs to the top. At this point the moon was so bright I did not need the use of lights. About 500mt from top there was snow and I had to be really cautious! I arrived at the top and the moon lit up all of Ventura County. On my way down I passed up a couple of people and made it back down to the aid station to turn in my 7 of spades to Chris. He offered me a shot of Jack Daniel Ugh! I garishly declined, topped off the pack and bottles and headed of for the next stage.

Stage two was a first-rate technical section of single track. It started to get really cold as I made my way down the valley; I stopped to put on my gloves, hat, knee warmers and jacket. After a couple of stream crossings I arrived at Rose Valley camp ground. It was really COLD (later some one told me it was 29F). I got some hot soup and headed to higher elevation to get warmer. The uneventful climb back up to the aid station at the bottom of Topa Peak was tough due to the fact I was cold and my knees started to hurt. At this point I was 40 miles into C2MU and was felling pretty good considering the fact that only after 9 miles I was going to quit.

The next part would take me from 5500ft to 1500ft in 10 mi. I was pretty much solo on this section and had lots of time to soak in the last of the moon light and watch the early morning sun rise. I did not suffer from sleep deprivation but was glad to see the eastern horizon starting to light up. About 1 mi from Thatcher aid station I ran into Andy who told me that the aide station personnel were not there and our drop bags would not be there. As I reached the aid station I realized that they were just starting to set up. I rummaged through the boxes looking for food, gels and water; the drop bags were missing so I did not have my usual Enervit liquid gels and Cliff blocks. I grabbed what I could from the boxes and headed back up Thatcher, besides not having my usual energy stuff that was in my drop bag, I missed my visor. This was one item I would have like to have for this record temperature day. The first runner was estimated to arrive at 8:00 and it was 7:50 I was the 6th to arrive, can you say sandbaggers?

As I climbed out the sun started to beat down on us and cook us good. I made it back up on Ojai Ridge and was heading back to Rose Valley camp ground. The road back down to Rose Valley was steep; my guesstimate was about 35% grade. After a 2mi down hill I arrive at the camp ground grabbed some shade, took off my shoes changed my Injinji, found my other visor (thanks God I put one in every bag). At this point I

was 62 miles in to C2MU I was still feeling good and ready for the next stage. The climb out was HOT. It was about noon and felt like I was in a dryer on permanent press cycle. I reached the top and a nice cool breeze started to blow across Ojai Ridge. The next 2.5 miles took us west across Ojai Ridge to Gridley Top aid station. This was the start of 6 mile downhill with some semi technical single track down to Gridley aid station. At the aid station I topped off with fluids and started to hike out. Our second night was approaching as the sun started to set. Now I was starting to feel the lack of sleep.....

I reached Gridley Top aid station and was greeted by RD Chris Scott he was dressed up as an Easter Bunny – that’s a way of helping you stay awake! Took in a couple of laughs with the EB, ate some real food for the first time (4 QUESADILLAS) and off for the last section. It was mile 78 and I was hurting; from Gridley Top aid station you had a 1 mile hike to the top of Nordhoff Peak and once on top the fire road winded down for .5 mile followed by 6 miles of downhill single track called Pratt/Cozy Dell trails. About ½ ways through I got confused and did not know which trail to take.. After a phone call to my buddy Tom (he has been running in the area since 1999) I still could not clearly make a decision. I remained high, hoped for the best and about 30 minutes later I ran into Andy again. I felt better that I was on the right track. I wished him good luck and a strong finish and we were off in positions directions. By this time I thought I was ¾ of way down. That’s what I thought! Let me tell you: Cozy Dell trail NEVER ENDS ! Just when you think you are at the bottom more switch backs. It was dark again for the second night and Nick Ham (from the UK) had caught to me on the final switch backs. Finally after what it felt like an eternity, we both reached the bottom of Cozy Dell trail.

At the aid station I fueled up talked with Nick a bit drank some warm soup and off again. I was pretty much spent at this point and extremely disliked the idea that I had to hike back to Nordhoff Peak 4500ft from 400 ft so it would be at least 3 to 3.5 hr before I reached Nordhoff Peak then another 45 min to Gridley Top aid station. I found it really hard to keep up with Nick but every time I would start to fall back I would remind myself that if I was alone I would not as go as fast. About 2.5 mi in to the climb we saw a light moving fast down the switch backs as it got closer I saw a hat with a wind mill on top, we exchanged our usual “ looking good” comments and noticed it was Karl Meltzer. Remember Nick and I started C2MU at 6:00 pm on Friday 21 March. Karl started on 22 March at 6:00am the man was flying!!! Anyway I struggled all the way to Nordhoff Peak with Nick leading the whole way (Thanks Nick you kept me going on Cozy Dell). We reached the top and turned on our lights to navigate the short 1mi down hill to Gridley Top aid station.

It was mile 95 at Gridley Top aid station. Nick wanted to stop but I continued on the last 5 mi. I told him you should catch me on the last 1 mi up hill section. I reached the top without him and felt kind of guilty since he helped me out on that last climb. So I waited a couple of minutes for him before the last decent down to the finish line. I was descending down on the last miles of C2MU and felt really tired but the sense of accomplishment despite the lack of training took all of my pains away. When we reached the last .5 mi we noticed a light coming down the switch backs, moving really fast. As

we moved over to let him pass he screamed out "Finish Strong". It was Karl a sub 19:30 100mi. crazy fast!!! Yes we tried but he was too fast my legs were finished. Nick and I crossed the finish line together on Sunday morning at 1:32 am for a total time of 31:32 hr 15 and 16 on the GC.

Coyote Two Moons Ultra was my first mainland 100mi and I have to say it was tough but very entertaining. The lack of sleep for two nights, extra hills and not knowing the trails took a toll on the body and mind. I will definitely run it again next year just because it not a race but a 5 day party with some really interesting people. As for my next adventure I will be running the Tahoe Rim Trail 50mi in July, and I have been accepted to run in the PLAIN 100mi this September. I hope to train properly this time with out broken limbs and injuries. See you all on the trail!!!

Mauricio