

## *HURT 100 We Would Not Want It To Be Easy!*



Over the past two years several members of my local running club and training partners have taken to running ultra marathons. Needless to say this trend struck me as a bit odd. You see, not all that long ago I firmly believed the reason man invented the wheel and its future applications was to prevent one from ever having to use running as a mode of transportation. Yes, I am slowly starting to consider myself a runner and have even run a few marathons. But why on earth would anyone want to run more than the standard 26.2 miles?

I believe we learn the most from those closest to us and this past January, my younger brother decided to help me understand this strange trend. Doug, being a relative newcomer to the running world, alerted my last summer that he registered for the HURT 100. The first clue to his impending psychosis, I informed him, lay in the name of name of the race. After a few discussions focusing on his motivation, the time quickly arrived

to support Doug anyway I could. Around October it was obvious Doug intended full well of jumping head first into the deep end when he requested my assistance in pacing him for a portion of the run. Well, now I was given the opportunity of a front row seat to learn about the world of ultra running from within. Thus, I floated the idea of a Hawaiian vacation to my wife.

Doug has been living in Hawaii for the past several years. During this time he started trail running with the Hawaiian Ultra Running Team or HURT. This group of serious ultra runners hosts a series of events throughout the year culminating each January with the HURT 100. This is not your typical, if there is such a thing, ultra event. The race encompasses five loops of 20 miles over some serious terrain. Serious terrain is defined by the race website as 24,935 feet of climbing and 24935 feet of descending. The link below connects to the elevation profile and course map.

<http://www.run100s.com/HURT/ht07rb2.pdf>

Located in the rain-forested mountains due west of Honolulu, the event ranks among the toughest ultras in the world. Aside from the terrain, the weather always plays a deciding factor. Unlike the sun baked road that defines the Ironman World Championships on Kona, sun rarely impacts participants due to the thick canopy. Aside from the elevation changes and duration of the event, participants experience every weather pattern known minus snow. The deciding factor at the HURT 100 many years is rain. Rain brings the other impacting factors of mud and cold.

The afternoon after I arrived, Doug and I attended the pre-race meeting. Given that the event is capped at 100 participants and nearly half of the participants live in Hawaii, there is a decidedly laid back atmosphere leading into the event. Unlike other events where most participants do not attend the pre race meeting, at HURT the meeting serves as a bit of a family reunion. Of particular note was the lack of bravado and posing that is prevalent prior to triathlons, road races, and cycling races of any distance. This group understands that all the bravado and mind games in the world are useless when the single opponent faced by all is the course itself.

Race morning dawned cool and clear. Given that there is a 36 hour limit on this event and the course record is 20:43, the current weather was only a passing thought. Similar to Ironman, racers deposit drop bags for use later in the event. Unlike Ironman, these bags contained dry clothes and shoes, headlamps, and food. Like the three aid stations there was real food being packed by all athletes. Most notable of the foodstuffs for my brother was peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, plural (as in many!), ensure, coke, and even a couple of iced coffees.

Once the racers climbed a set stairs, crossed a foot-bridge, and received a traditional Hawaiian blessing the race commenced with the sound of a conch shell. Unlike the start of any other road race or triathlon I have participated in, the HURT start draws a close resemblance to the call to tribal council on the TV show Survivor.



As the racers climbed towards the sky over rocks, roots, and other assorted obstacles the majority of spectators departed for a day filled with sightseeing interspersed with trips to one of the three check points to support their runner. My planned included heading back to Doug's house for a relaxing day reading and preparing for my 20 plus miles that would begin between 3:00 and 4:00 am.

As I finished my dinner and began heading to the bedroom for a nap, Trista's (Doug's wife) cell phone rang. Oh what impact a phone call can have on the best laid plans. From across the room I heard my brother's voice saying, "get Scott and meet me at the Paradise Station in two and a half hours." This was about seven hours ahead of schedule and surely a sign that all was not well. As it turned out, he was not dramatically ahead of schedule. Rather he was battling a newly developed ITB irritation. Towards the end of the second loop Doug developed tightness and discomfort along his right ITB. One look at the elevation profile (see link above) and you can understand the amount of descending on this course and the resulting impact to one's ITBs, among other things. After spending time with a Physical Therapist / ART provider, Doug returned to the course as the sun went down and the rain started.

Given his slowed pace, Doug was separated from the group of racers with which he had been working. Here is where the race started peeling away the layers exposing just what Doug is made of. He was on a trail alone in the dark dealing with the rain, his discomfort, slowed pace, and general fatigue. Fortunately, Doug trained on the course and had previously completed up to 50 miles in training. Thus, he knew all he had to do was to keep moving and at worst, he would be able to complete the 100K option of the race.

Around 9:00 pm Carol (my wife), Trista, and I arrived at the Paradise Station as requested. I quickly made my preparations to spend a night on the trail. After a cup of coffee I was ready to see just how I would function given that I had now been awake since 3:00 am. Yes, I know that Doug had been on the trail all day and all I had done was

stay awake. In my mind I knew I had to be more alert and on top of things than Doug and I thought this might be a challenge.



After about 15 minutes at Paradise I heard some commotion about racer number 48 entering the station and I found Doug. It looked as if he was entering a minivan. Upon quick investigation I learned Doug was not ending his day but rather checking on his training partner and mentor Steve. As it turned out Steve, although an experienced HURT veteran with a 100 k and three 100 mile finishes to his credit, miscalculated the setting sun and developed significant hypothermia as the rain hit. Steve had spent the last hour or so in the van raising his core temperature. Doug paused an extra moment or two as Steve readied himself to rejoin the race. Ed, another annual HURT participant, who upon learning of Steve's condition had sacrificed his shot at another 100 mile finish to attend to his fellow racers as well as to attend to his own developing hypothermia. In quick fashion these guys were showing me a new level of dedication and honor.

These guys were incredible! Set aside the fact that their condition would end the day for the majority of folks, they realized that once warm, the 100K race was still attainable. Mind you this required the completion of 15 more miles! Ed's selfless actions showed true character and went well beyond the internal selfish focus so often witnessed not only in the world of sport but also in the world at large. In short fashion, the four of us hit the trail.

Nearly two third of the way to the next aid station, it was apparent that Doug was slowing and the 100 mile race was not in the cards today. Additionally, Steve was now experiencing significant GI distress on top of worsening hypothermia. At this point we altered our strategy. Steve and Ed forged on at a faster pace ensuring Steve made it to the next station for some warmth sooner vice later. Doug and I continued on at the fastest possible pace. Upon arriving at the next station, Ed was already on his way back out onto the trail. Steve was in the hands of his pacer, Andy. We found Steve under a pile of shivering blankets on a cot in a large tent. As Andy was working on getting some warm fluids into Steve and Doug was getting into some dry clothes, Trista and I pulled her SUV closer to the station. After folding down the seats and cranking the heater we built an impromptu sauna for Steve. Once Steve was safely inside the sauna, Doug and I set out on the next eight-mile leg of our journey. The picture below shows Doug receiving a last minute equipment check from Steve's pacer as an independent film maker captures the evolving spectacle.



Realizing we were working on the 100K goal, we progressed at a more comfortable pace and tried to take some pictures along the way.



Here Doug is straddling the side of a cliff. Although you cannot see it here, the cliff actually drops quite dramatically away to Honolulu some 800-1000 feet below!

As we arrived at the final aid station, the race director discussed Doug's options. Although not mathematically impossible to finish the 100 mile race, given Doug's condition, a 100 mile completion was highly improbable and he was steered towards completing the 100 K race. At this time we came across Ed and the three of us headed out for our final 2.5 miles of HURT 2008.



Above is a picture of Doug completing the race. It is custom at HURT to touch the sign to show you are complete.



And here are the two of us after the race. How is it that Doug looks so much better than I do given he completed 47 more miles on the day?

In the end Doug finished 20<sup>th</sup> among the 51 finishers of the HURT 100K. Additionally, 21 participants completed the 100 mile race, including one of Doug and Steve's training partners, Tommy. Tommy finished the race with a mere 35 minutes to spare thanks to his ability to turn in a blistering final leg in his first 100 mile ultra. The final stats for HURT 100 2008 are as follows: 100 entrants, 89 started, 21 100 mile finishers, 51 100 K finishers, and 17 DNFs.

Unlike any other race I have been a part of, HURT 100 had a true post race party. The race ended Sunday evening but on Monday night we attended a huge five star buffet highlighted by the best roasting of athletes I have ever witnessed. Oh, one more point to make. Not one of the 21 100-mile finisher shirts was visible at the post race party!

So in the end I took away several lessons from the world of ultra running:

- You can race any day but how often can you save a life?
- Limits are self-imposed – if you can dream it, you can do it!
- Past performance is no guarantee of future success; sometimes the breaks don't go your way...
  - 3 and 4 time 100mile HURT finishers adjusted for 100K finishes or in once case a DNF related to a torn hamstring and hypotension
- Never an ounce of ego was displayed and always a kind word was given
- All the plastic fluff of today's world is stripped away by what it takes to reach your true potential

For more information on the HURT 100 go to:

HURT Home page: <http://hurthawaii.blogs.com/>

Local media coverage: <http://www.khnl.com/Global/story.asp?S=7749032>

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