



Hardrock Hundred Mile Endurance Run

July 8-10, 2005

by **Martin Miller**

This was probably my best hundred, of the seven I've finished. I felt good nearly the whole way. It was also my slowest.

I kept moving pretty well through the first 45 beautiful but uneventful miles to the Grouse Gulch aid station just after dark, with a couple of light rain showers to chase me along. I miss-estimated my arrival time and arrived before my crew. When they did show, I was back on course quickly and picked up my pacer, John Hallsten.

John was there after being on the waiting list all spring. He had come down to Silverton hoping to get into the race at the last minute, as he had last year. In 2004, he arrived two days before the race (no acclimatization, no familiarity with the course), found out he was in the day before the race, and ran it in 34:58 (13th place). This year, he was not so lucky. Since he was available, I took the opportunity to use him as my pacer for the remaining 55 miles. He had already been a motivating factor in my training; after last year's performance, he certainly deserved to be in the running, while I might struggle just to finish!

We arrived in Ouray (57 miles) in pre-dawn darkness. Tom Rowe, from Livingston, was there, so we hooked up with him, headed up the dirt road and over Virginius Pass to Telluride. Telluride was HOT! On the descent into town and the climb out (starting at noon), I was rapidly getting cooked. It was definitely the toughest part of the race. We climbed up over 11,000 feet elevation before it cooled off and that seemed to take forever. >p> It was still hot at Chapman, but cooled on our climb up to Grant-Swamp Pass. With the snow melting rapidly over the week before the race, runners now had a choice of scree or snow. We took the snow. It was steep. The slope was in deep shadow since the sun had dropped behind the mountains. The snow was rapidly hardening into ice. There were steps -- foot holds -- cut into the snow.

I talked with Tom Hayes (from Bozeman). He said he was the first to climb the snow. At that point, he was running in the top 10. He arrived at the base of the slope around 9 AM. Using Yak Trax, he started up, kicking into the slope to make steps. He was running with Sue Johnston and Garrett Graubins and Garrett's pacer. The higher Tom went, the icier the snow. It had not yet warmed up enough to soften the snow (earlier runners would have been forced to the scree) and became very difficult to kick the steps into the slope. Tom was up the slope a ways when he wondered what the others were doing. He glanced down, between his knees, and saw they were all following single file, using the foot holds he was making. He realized that if he slipped off and started down, he would take them all with him. Eventually, he made it to the top, where 2 photographers were recording their climb.

So, by the time we got there, the day had warmed enough to soften the snow and enough runners had made the climb to establish good foot holds. There were even occasional finger holds to add to my (wavering) sense of security. In spite of the risks, the snow was much faster and more energy efficient than dealing with the scree.

I took off from the pass first. Tom Rowe is faster than I am on the downs hills, so while he was still coming up, I headed for KT. We regrouped there. The South Mineral Creek crossing above KT was another scary moment. It was dark so I couldn't tell how deep it was. I could see that it was fast moving. I made it across but let the others know it was sketchy. Tom was using ski poles and loaned one to John for the crossing.

On the final climb to the ridge before Putnam, John mentioned something about starting to get cold and picked up the pace a bit. Since I was relying on him more and more to find the next marker (all of which seemed to be straight up a steep slope from the previous one!), I was pushing as hard as I could to keep him in sight and lost track of Tom.

Once over the top, we pushed as hard as we could down the hill. There were some long, tough rocky stretches. The rocks were jumbled all over the trail, with corners and odd angles everywhere. It was down hill but I wasn't moving all that well. I thought Tom would catch up any minute. Instead, Margaret Heaphy passed me, looking really strong. Her husband, Mark, had passed me in American Basin, just before dark the first day. They're moving from Missoula to Polebridge, just across the North Fork of the Flathead River from Glacier National Park. My guess is the surrounding area has a larger population of grizzly bears than humans.

Not long after this, John and I caught up with Charlie Thorn. We then took turns using the rope at the South Mineral Creek crossing. RD Dale Garland mentioned at the awards ceremony that one runner had described the water depth as "It was this deep!" in his highest sing-song falsetto! I had dressed warm for the higher elevations and was warm enough at that point, but after the creek crossing I was chilled and did not warm up until well after finishing.

After the creek, Steve Pero was there to run Charlie in to the finish over the last 2.5 miles. John and I hung with them and I finished right behind Charlie, in 47:02:37. Tom came in a minute or two later.

It wasn't until I got back to the motel room and showered that I started to experience pulmonary edema. I felt like I was only using the top part of my lungs to breathe. It took a very long time to catch my breath enough to start to relax.

Hardrock is the best. Dale Garland, the staff and the volunteers (and the San Juan Mountains!) make Hardrock an incredible, must-do event. When the subject comes up with other runners, I often say that every other run I take, even the other ultras, are just training runs for Hardrock. The Rocket certainly has it nailed! Now that I have finished both directions, I'm not planning a return in the near future (but never say "Never!"). I'll leave my lottery spot open and encourage those of you who haven't tried it to step up to the plate and take a swing! I sure hope John gets in...

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