



Hardrock Hundred Mile Endurance Run

July 8-10, 2005

by [Rodger Wrublik](#)

For a number of years now it has been a fantasy goal of mine to finish the Hardrock 100 and that's exactly what I had to remind myself of while climbing Wasatch mountain 30 hours into this years running of the event. My son Jimmy was pacing me and we had just left out of Telluride which is 73 miles into the run. I couldn't believe how bad I was feeling. My stomach had been bothering me earlier but now I just had absolutely no energy. I would take 3 or 4 steps up this steep section and would have to stop just to catch my breath. Up ahead was a huge snowfield that looked totally vertical and I just couldn't imagine how I was going to make it over it feeling the way that I did. Jimmy kept asking "Dad, are you okay?". I decided that if I could take a quick nap for just a couple of minutes, maybe things would be better. After finding a big boulder I could lay behind in order to get of the hot sun, I moved some rocks to make a comfortable place to rest. I told Jimmy to wake me in 10 minutes, no more. 9 minutes later I jumped up in a panic thinking I had been asleep for hours. To my surprise I woke to ants over my entire body but was so tired I hadn't even noticed. Jimmy thought it was funny as hell!

Getting ready for this run started off a little shaky to say the least. In March I entered the Old Pueblo 50 miler as a training run and ended up pulling a hamstring at about mile 30, while doing a downhill section right in front of Andrea Feucht (who is part of the Hardrock committee). The ironic part of this is that at about mile 30 at Hardrock this weekend, I again was in another downhill section with a tight hamstring and believe it or not Andrea was right in front of me. She asked if I wanted by and I said no because I thought if I passed her I would be going too fast, but was also feeling a little superstitious, and didn't want to push it. We ended up playing leap frog the entire run but I actually only really passed her by getting out of the aid stations quicker than she did.

After healing the hamstring earlier in the year I was fortunate enough to do a lot of training in Flagstaff Arizona with the Varners (Tim & Melody). They've been a part of the Hardrock family for years and are extremely familiar with the conditions and how to train for them. So, once a week we would head up to Flagstaff at around 3:00 in the morning; which is about a 2 1/2 hour drive from Phoenix, train for 12 to 16 hours, get a couple of hours of sleep at the Varners place and then head back home to Phoenix. Thanks again Tim and Melody! The nice thing about training in Flagstaff is that the snow conditions ended up being a lot like what we ended up having in Silverton. When we first started training in Flagstaff I wasn't even familiar with what the Varners meant by "postholing"....I sure do now! I also didn't know what a 'crampon' was but ended up getting really familiar with them as well. Aside from the weekly runs in Flagstaff the only other runs I had time for was the Zane Grey 50 miler in late April and a Zane Grey double that I did in early May, three weeks after the official race. Only one to two runs a week but really long ones seem to work best for me with the time that I have.

Just a couple of days before leaving for Silverton we got word that we needed to bring tools such as shovels, axes, and a chainsaw because course marking was going to be a little more difficult this year due to all the snow. I was really starting to worry and it was only going to get worse as the course marking began and the stories about how bad the course were starting getting around.

The first thing we noticed when arriving in Silverton a couple weeks before the race was how much snow was still in the mountains and how high and fast the creeks were. This was confirmed on the first day of course marking when we attempted to get a rope across Mineral Creek only to loose it to the current which delayed everything right from the start. And then to make matters even worse we find out the next day that a long time veteran and volunteer, Eric Hodges, was washed downstream at that same location and ended up having to be rescued, unable to get back across the creek. And this was while using the rope that was finally put across. Jimmy and I were more than just a little bit concerned.

In planning my splits that I was going to use for the run I looked at the race times from two years ago (which went in the same direction as we were going this year) and decided to use three sets of splits...the 48 hour average splits, Ulli Kamm's (who seems to always be so consistent) and John Dewalts as a best case scenario. Immediately at the start of the run I found John Dewalt and stuck to him like glue. At first John would ask if I wanted to go by, but I explained that my plan was to keep him in sight and not to pass him because if I did, I felt I would be going too fast. This worked well for the majority of the run with John getting out of sight only on a few occasions when I was having some low points. It's amazing how well John can still move...he's incredible!

It's truly amazing how good and bad one can feel during a long event. I know from experience that I usually feel bad at the beginning of a run and usually feel much better in the later parts.... the first part always seems to be such a grind. This is exactly what happened once again. After leaving Grouse Gulch (mile 42), it was about 10:30 and we just finished coming over Handies which is 14,000 ft. and I felt great and everything was going as smoothly as could be expected. My concern though was for how long could I expect to feel this good. At all of the other 100's I've done you're almost done after going strong through the first night into the next day. This run was going to be different because I knew I would be going through a second night. Sure enough, the next day, after feeling great and going strong all night, it was about 8:00 AM, I had just hiked up a 9 mile road out of Ouray and I still had another 2500' of climb up to Virginus and had no idea how I was going to do it. I was officially doing the "Hardrock Death March" also called the "Hardrock Shuffle" but I wasn't going fast enough for it to even be called a shuffle...a crawl would be a better term. I felt like crap and even though I was way ahead of my expected splits, I was wondering how I was going to even finish this thing. I went from having a blast to total despair in just a matter of a few hours. And then to make matters worse, going up Virginus was a lot worse than I had remembered from last year in course marking. There were three pitches of vertical snowfields that seemed to take forever to get to the top of. On the last pitch I was behind Tom Knutson whom I saw a lot of all during the run, and watched in disbelief as he lost his footing a third of the way up the final pitch and slid all the way down to have to start all over again. Thank goodness I wasn't so unlucky...there's no way I wanted to go back for seconds as he did!

My hope at this point was to get to Telluride, pick up Jimmy who would be pacing me the rest of the way and hopefully this would inspire and rejuvenate me. I usually go without pacers because I seem to do better by myself than I do running with others, but running with Jimmy is always a joy and he always seems to know just what to say and do. After leaving Telluride though things only got worse. We kept moving but I kept getting slower and slower and I felt really bad for Jimmy because I knew he had to be getting really bored by how slow we were going. He was great though and kept telling how good I was doing and that I would be fine. I didn't feel so confident. I finally told him that I just couldn't imagine how I was going to do the last three 13,000 ft. climbs but that I would keep going and just hope for the best. My only hope was that maybe I would feel better once nightfall came, so I kept eating and hydrating and hung on hoping for the best. This was the hardest thing I've ever had to do...it reminded me of my first marathon that I had done back when I was still in high school...the 20 mile, "hitting the wall" thing....MISERABLE! This is the part where it really makes you wonder why you're doing what you're doing and whether it's all worth it. At least that's how it felt at the time but seems much better now that it all worked out.

After my nap that I mentioned earlier, we pushed on and finally got over Wasatch Saddle and headed down Oscars which was rockier than Zane Grey and as slippery as HURT. These switchbacks seemed to go on forever...I slipped on my ass at least 3 times trying to keep up with Jimmy before finally getting to the bottom. Once getting to Chapman it sure was a nice site to see my wife and 4 year old son there waiting with chairs and food for us in the shade. Evidently, this was just what we needed...after feasting on what my wife had laid out we left out of Chapman feeling rejuvenated and even better yet, it was starting to cool off....things were once again looking good. The climbing got easier, our pace picked up and I was no longer wondering if we would finish but instead we started thinking about how fast we could get to the next aid station. I told Jimmy that if we could get to KT before 9:00 PM we would have 9 hours left to go the last 9 miles which made it all sound so much better. As good as I thought we were moving I was shocked at how fast Joe Prusaitis flew by us with his pacer after getting over Grant Swamp. Joe says that his climbing is slow that he has to make up for it on the descent and boy does he ever do that. Once we got to KT (at 8:50 PM) we found Aaron Ralston sitting in a chair a little tired and beat up and we told him what we had just talked about and he quickly corrected us and reminded us that it was actually 11 more miles to the finish rather than 9.... OOPS!...still real doable though, unless something really bad happened. We were moving so much better at this point that we weren't even taking the time to look at our splits anymore.

Immediately after leaving KT we passed Joe at the side of the trail who was having issues with what he just ate and was relieving his stomach. About a half mile from the KT aid station you have to cross South Mineral Creek which is a fairly narrow creek but an extremely fast flowing creek this year, especially late in the day when the current picks up quite a bit. Once we got to the creek we were amazed by the force of the current, enough so to wait for Joe and his pacer to cross the creek together with locked arms. Thank goodness we did because even with the four of us locked together, it was a bit dicey getting across.

From here to the finish is a really nasty section. Because it was now once again night and really cooling off the snow had turned to ice and where there wasn't ice there was plenty of ankle deep mud but it really didn't seem to matter anymore. Everything was coming together and we were now thinking we could maybe even break 44 hours, so the push was on and we were having a blast. We arrived at Mineral Creek which is 2 1/2 miles from the finish and all we had to do was get across and get to town with 35 minutes to do it in. We had planned for this creek crossing in advance and had even practiced how we were going to do it earlier in the week using our ice ax leashes and karabiners....problem was we were so excited about getting done we couldn't find one of the leashes. Jimmy tells me "Go ahead dad, I'll figure out a way across on my own". There was no way I was going to leave my 16 year old son (who just had a birthday a couple of days earlier) to fend for himself across this creek that a veteran had been swept down just a couple of weeks earlier. After what seemed forever we figured out a way to rig a flashlight strap as a safety harness to the rope and made it across the waist deep water just fine but we now only had less than 30 minutes to get to the finish in under 44 hours. We ran almost all the way back except for the last really steep hill by the shrine and missed beating 44 hours by one minute and two seconds.....not a big deal at all but a lot of fun to have at least tried (still two hours earlier than our hopeful finish).

We met so many great people and can't even begin to tell you how much the Hardrock committee puts into this event to make it happen. And for those of you who don't already know, Dale Garland (the RD) is now also the mayor of Durango but still takes the time to put up with us ultra folk.

Thanks you Hardrock family...you're the best!

Rodger Wrublik

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