

Rockin K: Running in the Kansas "Mountains"

By Phil and Stacy Sheridan, co-R.Ds

The Rockin K Trail Runs are held at the Kanopolis State Park in the heart of the Smoky Hills, in central Kansas. Hills, you say? Kansas is flat, isn't it? Well, not all of Kansas, since the Rockin K is run on a series of interconnected loop trails, mostly horse and mountain bike trails, all single-track, following the canyons and watersheds, then heading out across the prairie to the bluffs of the Smoky Hill River. The race starts with the Horsethief Canyon trail, wanders across the prairie to the tops of box canyons, where legend has it the Native Indians stashed the horses they stole, across several water crossings fed by underground springs, and across beaver dams over the creeks feeding the lake. The Prairie trails take you past the Red Rock Canyon, of red sandstone across the prairie on cattle trails, through cattle gates to the Alum Creek trail.

The Alum Creek loop is primitive, as no hikers make it that far and most of the horse riders don't use it, since it is closed six months of the year for hunting season. It follows game trails and cattle paths to the aid station at cattle gate six. From gate six the runners go out on the Big Bluff loop, an unimproved game trail bushwhacked in the week before the race, crossing barbed wire fences with blankets laid on top, to the bluffs above the Smoky Hill River. The trail is rough and rocky, going from the top of the bluff down to the bottom and back several times on the way back to gate six aid station. After finishing the Big Bluff loop the runners head back in on the southern part of the Prairie trail, past the Eagle Hack tower (built for eagles to nest), and onto the southern part of the Horsethief trail. The race finishes at the Corral Shelter house, on top of a hill, at the Rockin K campgrounds.

The marathon consists of one loop of the course, with an unmanned water station at about 7.5 miles and a fully-stocked manned aid station at gate six, which the runners pass twice at about 13 and 18 miles. The 50-mile includes a second loop of the same course, except for a shortcut section on the Alum creek trail, passing all the same aid stations. Since this was the first year we have had access to an all trail course, we GPS'd the course a couple of times to check the distances in the weeks before the race. The marathon loop came out a little longer than the standard marathon and the 50-mile course about three quarters of a mile over.

The temperatures the week before the race were very warm so we hoping for a

break in the weather. Then the five-day forecast looked great, with overcast skies and highs in the mid-50s. Then again, this was Kansas in the spring, so two days out we were back to a forecast of mid-60s and breezy. Breezy in Kansas means *wind*, which I have heard some runners describe as "Kansas' mountains." Thankfully, in the end we had beautiful weather: sunny, little wind and mild temperatures.

Paul Schoenlaub led the 50-mile coming in to the turnaround at Corral Shelter at 3:59:20, spent just over a minute in the aid station, then went on to win in a course record of 8:36:08. Art Long took second in 10:17:55, putting more than 23 minutes in the last 13 miles on the third place tie of Kyle Amos and Stuart Johnson, who finished in 10:19:42. The first three women, Tammy Stone, Cheryl Miller Balster and Theresa Wheeler, ran within 20 minutes of each other until the turnaround. Cheryl made up 12 minutes on Tammy going into the Big Bluff loop and cut the lead to just eight minutes leaving gate six. Cheryl passed Tammy during the last eight miles to take the win and women's course record in 10:56:09. Tammy held onto second place with a time of 11:03:19 and Theresa finished her first 50-mile race in 11:07:47 for third place. Dann Fisher led the marathon, claiming the win and course record in 4:04:43. Leslee Hampel won the women's marathon by 24 minutes, good for the course record and overall women's win in a time of 5:23:45.

All finishers at the Rockin K receive a horseshoe award and the overall winners in each race receive a T-shirt with the winning time, and free entry into the next year's race. The 50-mile turnaround point is also the marathon finish, which was a little too tempting for some, what with the dinner and beer awaiting. Ten 50-milers decide to call it a day there and take the marathon finish.

Rockin' K 50 Mile and Marathon

Kanopolis State Lake, Kansas

April 3

Trails

50 Miles

1. Paul Schoenlaub, 44, MO	8:36:08!
2. Art Long, 34, CO	10:17:55
3. Kyle Amos, 28	10:19:42
4. Stuart Johnson, 44	10:19:42
5. Rick Hoopes, 49, NE	10:24:28
6. Bob Woods, 53	10:54:56
7. Cheryl Miller-Balster, 37	10:56:09!

8. Tammy Stone, 42, CO	11:03:19
9. Theresa Wheeler, 37	11:07:47
10. Wayne Wallace, 46, NE	11:21:01
11. Alexander Kovalev, 32, MO	11:40:19
12. Marc Friesen, 29	11:50:40
13. L. Allen Smelser, 51	12:02:11
14. Barb Schupp, 47	12:02:30
15. Mike Schupp, 52	12:02:30
16. Chris Jarvis, 45, NE	12:07:16

Marathon

1. Dann Fisher, 40	4:04:43!
2. Christopher Ernst, 42, CO	4:30:07
3. Mark Lisak, 47, CO	4:42:50
4. Ed Fehrman, 44, CO	4:55:54
5. Fred Hampel, 39, CO	4:56:58
6. Mark Ellis, 37, NE	5:00:19
7. Marlin Howe, 49, MI	5:01:06
8. Harvey Bauer, 46	5:08:55
9. Greg Martens, 45	5:18:32
10. Leslee Hampel, 37, CO	5:23:45!
11. Willie Lambert, 41	5:30:28
12. John Peppiatt, 44	5:34:31
13. Mark Crisman, 40	5:42:51
14. Kristen Harms, 38	5:47:12
15. Deborah Webster, 44	5:47:12
16. Kay Mathias, 44	5:49:04
17. Cat Brant, 46	5:52:28
18. Paula Rinaldi-House, 50	5:52:28
19. Chris Wolf, 37, MO	5:58:47
20. John Kedzuf, 53	6:00:51
21. Howard Ward, 47, MO	6:02:25
22. Andy Ford, 32, MO	6:07:45
23. Chris King, 39	6:16:41
24. Vytas Salna, 54, WI	6:20:29
25. Frank Dayton, 40	6:34:17
26. Joan Morris, 36	6:34:17
27. Scott Bishop, 32	6:40:07
28. Stewart Buck, 50, LA	6:40:50
29. Darrell Dorsey, 47	6:42:01
30. Craig Wanner, 52, OH	6:42:57
31. Daiva Cooper, 32, CO	6:43:17
32. C.E. Goudeau, 50, LA	6:43:48
33. Steve Bishop, 55	6:52:28
34. Jim Myers, 56	6:59:25
35. Rich Golden, 57, OK	7:46:20
36. Gene Bruckert, 68, IL	7:51:55
37. Trudy Merritt, 44, NE	7:51:55
38. Terry Fowler, 54, NE	7:58:57
39. Jud Broom, 59, OH	8:02:55
40. Holly Smith, 56, MO	9:33:28

Marathon (dropped down from 50-mile)

Randy Albrecht, 48	4:32:07
Raul Flores, 48	4:45:07
Keith Grimes, 44, CO	4:54:27
Bill Smith, 56, MO	5:42:44
Ben Holmes, 47	5:55:17
Jim Davis, 62	6:09:23
Nancy Davis, 52	6:09:23
David Swenson, 49, IA	6:16:41
Bill Shirk, 58	7:16:37
Ed Payne, 55	7:55:28