

Running in the Heartland

by Randy Albrecht, R.D.

Early in the week prior to the race I received an e-mail from Dale Perry. At the end of his message he told me the forecast for the race weekend. At the time I did not know he was a meteorologist; I responded by stating that this was Kansas and race day could bring anything, and that the only thing I could predict from the first four years of the race was that on Sunday, after the race was over, the weather would be absolutely perfect. I should have known that with two meteorologists in the race, and six new tents purchased for the aid stations, we were almost guaranteed perfect weather. Race day temperatures were in the low 70s, with an overnight low of 60. Just as the last two runners were finishing, it started to rain and continued for the rest of the day. I guess I should leave the weather predictions to the experts. The warmer than normal conditions may have contributed to a 72-percent finisher's rate, the lowest in race history. Historically, Heartland has averaged a 79-percent finisher's rate in the 100-mile and 95-percent in the 50-mile.

On the Tuesday before the race, Mark Henderson was in a serious car wreck, so it looked like his streak at Heartland might end. In the previous four years he had finished either first or second each year. For anyone who knows Mark, it was not a surprise that he showed up at the pre-race meal, even though he could not shake hands due to badly damaged ribs. Mark not only started the race, but by 50 miles had a 24-minute lead on Steven Funk. Over the last 50 miles Mark expanded his lead and cruised to victory in an excellent time of 20:19:05, even after spending nearly 45 minutes in each of the last two aid stations. Steven finished second, holding off a fast-finishing Scott Demaree. Tia Bodington led the women's field from the start, finishing in 23:13:48 and became the third woman to go under 24 hours. Louise Mason joined Mark as the only two runners to have finished all five Heartland 100-mile races. In the 50-mile, Keith Grimes won in 7:56:05. Verna Troutman—at 61 years old—won the women's race in 12:52:49.

A special thank you goes out to all of the volunteers. Many pass up the chance to run the race themselves to help runners from across the nation experience the



Louise Mason, on her way to a 100-mile finish.

tallgrass prairie. We have had the same core group of volunteers working the same aid stations each year and I am sure they have been responsible for the high finishing rate at Heartland.

David Hughes summarized his experience neatly: "I'm not sure what motivated me more to keep moving: the fact that good food was just up ahead, the fact that I hadn't finished any hundreds this year, or the coyotes whining in the tallgrass. As I passed the remains of a jackrabbit along the road I thought that could be me in a few hours. Fortunately, I was unaware of anyone becoming a coyote's late-night snack. I kept praying, 'Lord, please give me the grace to make it to the next aid station and the courage to leave it.' The prairie was astounding in the late afternoon, as were the sunrises and sunset. The cows kindly moved out of the way after trying to stare us down, but out of spite, I suppose, left obstacles on the road. If people are holding back from running this race, they're missing a well run event and a chance to become—in their imagination—an early pioneer transversing the Great Plains to the Rockies."

Tia Bodington adds:

As Eric Clifton so ably demonstrated in 2002, the Heartland 100 Mile can be

a fast course, with not too many difficult challenges for the experienced 100-mile runner. It's also an excellent course for anyone seeking to test themselves at the 100-mile distance for the first time, as well as a great training run in which one can try out what works and what doesn't, without all those pesky mountains and the altitude at Leadville or the intense humidity of Vermont.

Despite predictions of rain for the entire weekend, the 2004 Heartland 100 was blissfully dry until just before the awards ceremony began. The course is run almost entirely on dirt roads—a soft, runnable surface with a few miles of more technical gravel and ruts. There are plenty of rolling hills to keep a variety of muscles occupied, and 30 cattle guards to tiptoe across, excellent for working on balance and agility! Notwithstanding rumors to the contrary, this part of Kansas ain't flat, Toto.

Heartland has a total of six (three on the way out and three on the way back) unmanned aid stations, and at this race they worked very well. Plastic jugs of water (with a spout) were easy to use, even when tired in the latter stages of the race. Food was stashed in lidded bins, which each runner was careful to keep neat for the next participant. The other 13 aid stations were fully stocked and

maintained by experienced volunteers who'll give you the shirt off their back, or in my case, the headlamp off their head, if that's what you need to get to the next aid station.

The low number of entrants this year enabled runners to be alone in the Prairie if they so desired, and I found that at night I had an almost overwhelming desire to lie on my back in the road and enjoy the silence (save for the oil rigs gently pumping in the background) and the abundance of stars. With almost no ambient light you can see thousands more stars than in the more urban areas where many of us live. Brush up on your constellations before you go next year so you can astound your running companions with your night sky knowledge.

There are other reasons why I recommend the Heartland 100 Mile. Here are some of them: Low rolling hills, placid cows, snakes, butterflies, birds, friendly cows, pretty streams and ponds alongside the road, beating sun and moderate humidity (especially if you're from Colorado where there is no humidity!), beautiful views, large cows, excellent aid stations with beer at the turnaround, one flattened bobcat (don't ask), howling coyotes, even more cows, incredible night sky, great pre- and post-race buffets. And of course, the sound of that cowbell clanged at the finish, announcing each runner crossing the line. (It was very moo-ving.) So plan a trip to Kansas, have some fun, and pay homage to the Prairie.



Heartland 100 Mile and 50 Mile
Cassoday, Kansas
October 9
Trails

100 Miles

1. Mark Henderson, 44, TX	20:19:05
2. Steven Funke, 43, CA	22:24:09
3. Scott Demaree, 53, TX	22:42:24
4. Andrew Pollock, 33, MD	22:47:32
5. Dale Perry, 47, CO	23:03:47
6. Tia Bodington, 48, CO	23:13:48
7. Jack Menard, 55, CO	23:24:54
8. Tony Bierman, 48, IL	23:27:01
9. Willie Lambert, 42	25:32:01

10. Peter Hazarian, 50, CA	26:18:47
Phil Wright, 60, CA	26:18:47
12. Ernesto Grane, 38, CO	26:23:06
Mike Haviland, 62, CA	26:23:06
Neal Taylor, 41, CO	26:23:06
15. Gary Henry, 48	26:32:26
16. Dorsh Sanders, 61, CA	26:49:06
17. Janice O'Grady, 55, CA	27:01:10
18. Jim Perry, 55, OK	28:02:30
19. Peter Bennett, 29, TX	28:15:51
20. Yen Nguyen, 42, TX	28:21:08
21. Louise Mason, 51, IL	28:32:46
22. Stan Carrier, 46, OK	28:36:49
Bill Myers, 43, OK	28:36:49
24. David Hughes, 58, IL	29:24:40
25. Bruce Hilton, 66, CAN	N/T
26. Joseph Galloway, 47, IA	N/T

35 Starters

50 Miles

1. Keith Grimes, 45, CO	7:56:05
2. Steve Plumb, 34, MO	9:20:09
3. Nattu Natraj, 41, CO	10:23:58
4. Ross Brennan, 44, DC	10:51:20
5. Dan Threlkeld, 45, OK	11:05:14
6. Wes Monteith, 53, TX	11:13:20
7. Bill Gomboc, 54, OK	11:29:42
8. Edward Stillie, 46	11:48:27
Stephen Tucker, 37	11:48:27
10. John Rainey, 55, CO	12:03:10
11. Marshall King, 35, TX	12:34:37
12. Verna Troutman, 61, MO	12:52:49
13. Sherman Hodges, 69, IL	12:54:08
14. Sam Ferrel, 70, CA	13:13:23

16 Starters



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- * Accurately measured distances

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Dec. 4	Woodside
Dec. 18	Muir Beach
Jan. 1	Angel Island
Feb. 5	Purisima Creek Redwoods
Feb. 26	Redwood
Mar. 26	Pirates Cove
Apr. 16	Diablo Marathon & 50 Mile
May 14	Carmel Valley
Jun. 4	Mount Diablo Summer
Jun. 11	Skyline Ridge
Jul. 2	Angel Island
Jul. 16	Santa Cruz Mountains
Jul. 30	Tahoe City
Aug. 13	Skyline to the Sea
Aug. 21	Salt Point
Sept. 17	Pacifica
Sept. 24	Mount Diablo Fall
Oct. 8	Seacliff Beach
Oct. 22	Montana de Oro
Nov. 12	Stinson Beach

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