

HEARTLAND 100

SPIRIT OF THE PRAIRIE

by Sophia Wharton

It was a dark and stormy night. I was one of around 50 runners lined up to start the Heartland 50-mile companion race to the 100. For the first time at Heartland, this event began at 6:00 p.m. instead of 6:00 a.m. The concept—the brainchild of race directors Tony Clark and Kyle Amos—was that the extra runners on the course on the back half would energize the weary 100-milers at the end of their journey. In the end, that plan proved two-fold.

Because of the 6:00 p.m. start, I spent the better part of the day at the Trail Nerd aid station at mile 42 and 58, Matfield Green. And it was hoppin'. One runner showed up and with a southern drawl said, "I kicked a rawk—I need someone to check and see if it's broke or if I can just go on." I hollered to Ben Holmes who taped him right up and sent him on his way. Other Trail Nerds grabbed water bottles and filled them at the speed of light, dished out food and gave the runners a shove out with a serving of hope and encouragement.

"Put your hands together for Chris Perry from Augusta, Georgia!" I was taking a turn on the check-in list and felt the courageous runners needed individual attention. Tony was right there behind me—laughing—but probably also making sure I was managing THE LIST. I'd warned the volunteers about the list and the importance of checking each runner in.

"Tony Clark, aka Sergeant Clark, returned from his tour in Afghanistan with the group intact. He's not about to lose a runner on the back roads of Kansas."

Spending time as a volunteer at this aid station also meant I helped the 100-mile competitors

**This, THIS is the spirit of the Prairie.
This is what our sport is about – the
incredible humanity
of runners encouraging each other and
finding that strength within themselves
to help others
makes each individual's race better.**

before later running with them. Pretty cool. Ultimately first place female, Karyn Weber was strong all day, in and out of Matfield Green, solid and in control of her mind and what she needed from her crew. Even weary at mile 81, when we crossed paths as runners she was running steady.

The top three men came by. All strong. A win by Scott Hill from Wichita made fellow Kansans proud. The race ended up being for second place with AD Marshall from Baton Rouge trailing in third all day, then ultimately securing second place after the final aid station.

"I predict we are going to have a low finisher rate," opined Tony Clark around 3:00 p.m. Rain was on the way, and the humidity was lingering like a sultry but elusive lover. Still, as the hours dragged on, the conditions improved, with an occasional cool breeze, and the friendship that runners in both distances encountered.

...I was at mile 43 and the "who cares?" point. Walk breaks felt stiff. Every mile running was a journey in itself—but running actually felt better. I thought I was in first place for the 50-miler, but with the humidity pounding on my tender

body, it didn't really matter. All I wanted was comfort. I wanted rhythm. I wanted hope and the miles seemed endless.

Ahead of me was a light—a woman running. Perhaps I wasn't in first place? Who cares? I just wanted someone to run with.

As I approached, her head was bobbing.

"How are you? Are you running the 100?"

"Yes...the 100—I don't know, I feel weird."

"Are you falling asleep?"

A profound and solid, "YES."

I have been there. My first and only 100 (so far)—Rocky Raccoon, where I was saved by two strangers as I was falling asleep. Now, all that the race was about came to fruition. Until this moment, running in the dark and the rain had been a drag. Often I was annoyed. Often I told myself I'd never do it again and cursed the race directors for that 6:00 p.m. start. Now, I was so happy. I chatted with her, and saw her perk up. When I told her I'd worked Matfield Green she remembered my delicious well-salted potatoes, "Those were the BEST potatoes all day!"

Her incredible poise at such a late point in a 100-miler invigorated me and I finished strong, cheering her in only minutes behind. Afterwards, race director Kyle asked a 100-miler how it was having the 50-milers on the course at the end. I quote an email from fellow Trail Nerd Mark Inbody, "Not having a pacer, I also liked having the 50-milers out on the course for later in the night. Just having their energy out there was a big help."

The latin word *spiritus* means breath, soul, courage and vigor. Yes—now more than ever, the Heartland 100 and 50 embraces The Spirit of the Prairie. ■



KRISTI MAYO



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Tony Beal approaching mile 25

Rick Mayo (L) and John King near mile 15



left – Brian Ortell at a high point in the Kansas Flint Hills, on his way to a third-place finish; right - Karyn Weber braces against the wind, leading the way to the top women's finish and seventh overall

HEARTLAND | CASSODAY, KANSAS | OCTOBER 8 | ▲ 2,2

100 MILES

1. Scott Hill, 32	17:53:36	27. Rick Mayo, 36, MO	23:34:20	54. Aaron Avery, 22	28:11:59	Kirby Grider, 32, MO	10:22:10
2. AD Marshall, 37, LA	18:18:31	28. Mike Samuelson, 46, TN	23:39:30	55. Kevin Guest, 43, MO	28:12:45	11. Lisa Simonetta, 52, IA	10:24:40
3. Brian Ortell, 44, IA	18:24:30	29. Tamara Johnson, 46, CA	23:49:27	56. Gary Born, 58, IA	28:16:00	12. Steven Curry, 25	10:28:59
4. Charles Dodd, 44	18:47:12	30. Wally Hesselstine, 68, CA	23:54:22	57. Juli Aistars, 52, IL	28:26:20	13. Jeff Jump, 34, MO	10:31:10
5. Jess McNeely, 42	19:26:54	31. Vincent Swendsen, 49, NC	24:12:42	58. Hannah Macbeth, 30	28:37:44	Brian Brooks, 38	10:31:10
6. Andy Mathews, 50, FL	19:56:41	32. Matthew Watts, 55, CO	24:17:04	59. Robert Sullivan, 42, MO	28:47:00	15. Marie Hanscom, 32, MD	10:36:25
7. Karyn Weber, 45, IL	20:23:30	33. Les Ellsworth, 57, TX	24:29:15	60. Frank Dayton, 48	28:54:00	16. Steven Grossman, 51, NM	10:40:48
8. David Messman, 51, CA	21:03:54	34. Mark Newman, 59, MO	25:09:45	Rosemary Evans, 58, KY	28:54:00	17. Alex Beecher, 23	10:53:07
9. Joanna Boyd, 33, NV	21:33:12	Michelle Bautista, 51, MO	25:09:45	62. Steve Desantis, 50, MD	29:02:15	18. Marshall King, 42, TX	10:53:37
10. John King, 38, MO	21:51:52	36. Dave Yeakel, Jr, 47, VA	25:14:52	63. Steve Holman, 54, CA	29:06:25	19. Brian Belisle, 26, OK	11:05:25
11. Ian Alaimo, 34, MO	22:10:12	37. Darrin Johnson, 43	26:06:40	64. Diane Vlach, 45, CA	29:16:20	20. Bryce Barnett, 36, NE	11:19:02
12. Dave Krishock, 52	22:19:05	38. Margaret Curcio, 45, GA	26:22:38	65. Dean Dyatt, 49, UT	29:24:40	Bryan Tlamka, 36, NE	11:19:02
13. Derek Strain, 45, IL	22:30:10	39. Scott Finnell, 55, TX	26:24:35	66. Jennifer Clinchard, 43, NE	29:29:58	22. Gordon Purser, 55, OK	11:26:05
14. Eric Massanari, 43	22:36:50	40. Gregory Bachinsky, 50, NY	26:35:55	67. John Hargrove, 67, OK	29:31:35	23. Chris Benjamin, 36, MO	11:39:30
15. Steve Baker, 41	22:52:02	41. Arnold Begay, 48, OK	26:38:24	68. Joseph Galloway, 54, IA	29:34:30	24. Joe Roerkohl, 27, CO	11:51:00
Adam Monaghan, 28	22:52:02	42. Anita Fromm, 40, CO	26:48:10	69. Jeff Venable, 56, TX	29:45:20	25. Chris Thomas, 39	12:38:02
17. Ben Dicke, 32, CO	22:54:00	43. Robert Cervero, 60, CA	26:49:03			26. Robert Skold Jr., 56, CO	12:39:37
18. Mark Inbody, 45	23:00:39	44. Michael Matteson, 53, IL	27:11:55			27. Tammie Kruszcak, 44, NE	13:23:53
19. Scott McCreight, 47	23:03:32	45. Elden Galano, 53	27:13:42			28. Anne Watts, 56, CO	13:32:07
20. Chris Perry, 35	23:07:28	46. Tony Bierman, 55, IL	27:20:10			29. Dale Perry, 54, CO	13:40:51
21. Rob Ulm, 35, IL	23:11:15	Steve Durbin, 56, KY	27:20:10			30. Pali Richardson, 28	13:57:17
22. Sulaiman Seriki, 39, TN	23:16:00	48. Donald Groom, 47	27:28:00			31. Jordan Benson, 26	14:33:41
23. Michele Delman, 41, CO	23:22:22	49. Dennis Wilson, 53, NE	27:30:10			32. Brian Kendall, 47, IA	15:20:45
24. Susan Lance, 51, GA	23:24:26	50. Joseph Nance, 33, TN	27:36:26			33. Daniel Kukula, 67, CA	15:30:55
25. Paul Grimm, 42, CO	23:28:33	51. Tony Beal, 22, IA	27:40:20			34. Dave Black, 60, CO	15:39:15
26. Steve Wheeler, 52, FL	23:31:15	52. Amber Gates, 30	28:01:10			35. Larry Rode, 51, MN	15:42:15
		53. Eunsup Kim, 58, TX	28:05:59			36. Lynn Moore, 59	15:49:25

50 MILES

1. Ben Sigle, 31	7:14:44	28. Anne Watts, 56, CO	13:32:07
2. Joshua Eggar, 34	7:32:50	29. Dale Perry, 54, CO	13:40:51
3. Brandon Purdeu, 24, OK	7:56:41	30. Pali Richardson, 28	13:57:17
4. Barry Luck, 44	8:53:07	31. Jordan Benson, 26	14:33:41
5. Julia Sophia Wharton, 41	9:32:27	32. Brian Kendall, 47, IA	15:20:45
6. Christian Stewart, 34, FL	9:53:01	33. Daniel Kukula, 67, CA	15:30:55
7. Charles Gonzalez, 46, MO	9:53:10	34. Dave Black, 60, CO	15:39:15
8. Andy Bowman, 49	9:58:57	35. Larry Rode, 51, MN	15:42:15
9. Jon Callahan, 54, NE	10:22:10	36. Lynn Moore, 59	15:49:25

Wind blows by
Low light
Sidetracked, low light