

//////// HEARTLAND 100

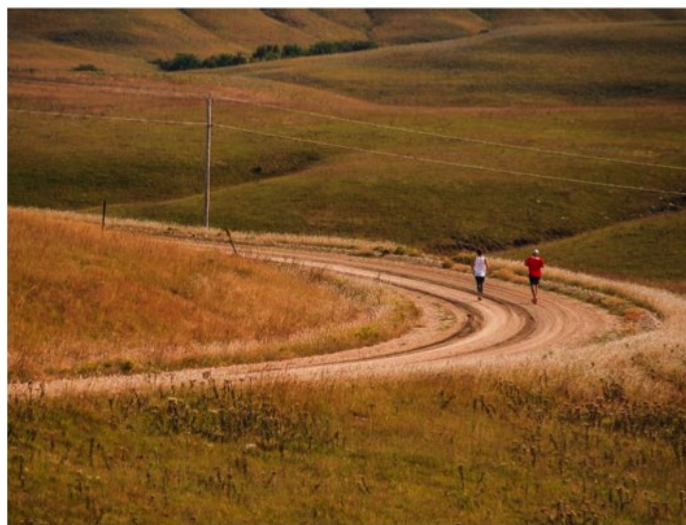


Surreality in the Heartland

BY KRISTI MAYO



Vincent Swendsen
interacts with a
friendly group of
spectators.
[📷 Rick Kent/
Mile 90 Photography]



LEFT: April Calaway hits the turnaround point in the lead. [Rick Kent/Mile 90 Photography]

ABOVE: A golden-green slice of the Flint Hills. [Rick Mayo/Mile 90 Photography]

Reflecting on her finish at the 15th Annual Heartland 100 in Cassoday, KS, April Calaway wrote: “This is surreal. It surpassed even my fantasy goals. My number-one goal was to finish... and then I wanted to go under 20 hours... and then, secretly, I wanted to get close to the women’s course record of 18:19... and, even more secretly, I fantasized about going under 18 hours and winning overall. And poof—it all happened.”

The backdrop for Calaway’s fantasy-come-true consisted of gravel and dirt back roads that crisscross the rolling short-grass prairie of the Flint Hills. There, the runner’s eye follows a meandering stretch of brown-gray road until the view is interrupted by the horizon. Scanning from left to right, the landscape tumbles away from the course in swells of golden and green hillsides dotted by black cattle and the occasional scrubby tree. The wind is a constant companion, but if it dies down at night, the runner might hear the monotonous clack-clack-clack of an oil pumpjack, the cackle of a Greater

Prairie-Chicken or the sounding of a train passing by the race headquarters in Cassoday—population 129.

About 60 runners started at 6 a.m. that October morning, to temperatures around 42 degrees, light winds and overcast skies. After the first eight miles of fairly flat terrain, the course breaks into long, steep, rolling hills. At that point the field also broke apart, with Calaway settling into second place behind Alan Poehlman. “I would run fast on the downhills, run about halfway up the uphill and then power hike the steep parts,” wrote Calaway.

The order of the front-runners remained the same until the section between the Teterville (mile 25) and Texaco Hill (mile 31) aid stations, the most rugged portion of the out-and-back course. Here, Calaway stopped several times to scrape “mud bricks” off her shoes, while Poehlman missed a turn and went about a quarter-mile off course. Calaway moved into the lead for the first time that day.

After hitting the midway point, Calaway picked up her first pacer at Matfield Green (mile 57)

and turned inward to face a battle with her own stomach. Nursing waves of nausea, she was overtaken by Kenn Moon somewhere around the Ridge Line aid station (mile 63).

Calaway sampled every stomach-settling elixir on the menu—from ginger chews to ramen to “a few spoonfuls of bean soup that a kindly older gentleman swore up and down would settle my stomach.” By mile 75, “a beautiful sunset was happening and my spirits lifted. My pacer Kodi Panzer told me we were gonna go get first place, but I didn’t believe her.” Utilizing appropriately deceitful pacing skills, Panzer kept Calaway to 20-minute run/30-second walk intervals (although the agreed upon plan was to do 10-minute run/1 minute walk intervals). “I was too brain-fried to realize it,” recalled Calaway.

By mile 90, under pitch-black prairie skies and surrounded by yipping coyotes, Calaway found new life in her legs. “We charged the hills. As we entered the final aid station, first place was leaving. I looked at my watch and knew that if I kept up the momentum, I could get the course record and go under 18 hours.”

At mile 93, she regained the lead. “The last three miles were intense. No walking—just running faster. A few times I had to say out loud, ‘I can do this,’

and force myself to concentrate,” she wrote.

After crossing the train tracks into Cassoday, Calaway crossed the finish line in 17:38:37 and became the first woman to win the Heartland 100 outright. “I had the best pacers ever and the aid stations were so outstanding there was no need for crew,” she stated. “I have a ton of people to thank.”

Heartland

Cassoday, KS // October 11

2,2* // 100 Miles

100 miles | Elevation gain: 6,000 feet | A 50-mile out-and-back course of rolling hills on backcountry gravel roads with less than one mile of paved surface. Much of the course meanders through open range with stunning views of the vast expanse of the Flint Hills tallgrass prairie.

1	April Calaway, 35, KS	17:38:37
2	Kenn Moon, 41, KS	17:53:51
3	Alan Poehlman, 28, MO	19:27:10
4	Gerardo Ramirez, 42, TX	20:30:08
5	Jason Smith, 42, TX	20:39:49
6	Nathan Marti, 38, MN	20:58:19
7	George Sefzik, 39, NM	21:06:26
8	Chris Perry, 38, KS	22:34:20
9	Adam Monaghan, 31, KS	22:58:05
10	Arnold Begay, 51, OK	24:23:57
11	David Westendorf, 39, WA	24:32:54
12	Dennis Wilson, 56, NE	24:44:37
13	Steve Baker, 44, KS	24:56:59
14	Donald Groom, 50, KS	25:16:08
15	Rene Villalobos, 55, TX	25:22:18
16	Russell Bennett, 42, OK	25:22:41
17	Markus Mueller, 50, CO	25:35:15
18	Rick Troeh, 49, MO	25:43:07
19	Howard Mayson, 62, CO	25:49:45
20	David Hirschfeld, 49, MT	26:05:19
21	Katie Oglesby, 42, CO	26:18:40
22	Todd Burgess, 45, CO	26:37:17
23	William Sprouse, 45, KS	26:52:18
24	Jennifer Clinchard, 46, NE	27:14:33
25	Vincent Swendsen, 52, NC	27:31:43
26	Marc Needelman, 54, IL	28:10:12
27	Kathleen Montgomery, 44, VA	28:44:08
28	Paul Endacott, 49, KS	28:55:24
29	Gary Born, 61, IA	28:58:10
30	Kevin Guest, 46, MO	28:59:37
31	Elden Galano, 56, KS	29:06:35
32	Peter Bennett, 39, TX	29:07:15
33	Yen Nguyen, 52, TX	29:07:15
34	Steve Lower, 63, KS	29:24:45
35	Jeff Russell, 54, CA	29:24:45
36	Trevor James, 38, MO	29:29:20
37	Joseph Galloway, 57, IA	29:45:15

*See page 38 for key