



Scenic and Diverse

BY KRISTI MAYO

The mid-morning lull at race headquarters broke when race staff started getting texts and phone calls from out on the course: first place was closing in on the last aid station. “First place in the marathon?” someone asked—a natural assumption, given the timing. “No, first place in the 40-mile.”

About five miles away from the finish, 40-mile front runner Pete Kostelnick was cruising through one of those dreary mornings without a recognizable dawn: a slow brightening of the diffused white sky that moved imperceptibly from night to day. Intermittent drizzle and temperatures hovering in the 50s made for perfect running weather, and Kostelnick seized the opportunity to run at course-record pace.

Beginning and ending in Ottawa, KS, the Flint Hills Trail 40 Mile follows an out-and-back route along the Flint Hills Nature Trail on what used to be the Council Grove, Osage City & Ottawa Railway. The route features the crushed gravel, even footing and gentle grade typical

of a rail-trail. In many sections, trees and shrubs heavy with late-spring foliage hug the corridor and stretch overhead to form a shady canopy. Other sections pass through crops and pastures, just as one would expect to find in central Kansas.

“The course was more scenic and diverse than I thought it would be,” said Kostelnick. “There were sections early on where you felt like you were in a jungle—especially with the light rain—and others sections out in the true Heartland prairie.”

The cool, flatland setting might not seem to translate well to the race Kostelnick was training for: the Badwater 135. But Kostelnick, who already has one Badwater finish under his belt, said the Flint Hills Trail 40 Mile fit right into his schedule.

“I have been putting in a lot of 30- to 60-mile long runs getting ready for Badwater, but didn’t have any as races on the calendar after a 45-mile race in April. This gave me an opportunity to push the pace above my comfort zone without needing much recovery,”



he said. “It’s also a flat and fast course, so I was able to zone in on my splits like a road race.”

Kostelnick was just the first person that day to come in at

course-record time. Four other men beat the top time from the inaugural race in 2014 (a year that was sunny and considerably warmer). And five women, led by Jenna Mutz, posted times faster than the 2014 women’s course record.

Only in its second year, the Flint Hills Trail 40 Mile has already provided runners with weather extremes: hot, dry and sunny in 2014, and cool, wet and cloudy in 2015. But the quality has remained consistently stellar throughout. “The aid station volunteers, race director and other runners were all so upbeat!” said Kostelnick. “One of my favorite parts about ultrarunning is meeting new people and seeing familiar faces.”



ABOVE: Pete Kostelnick finishes in front. [Kristi Mayo/Mile 90 Photography]

LEFT: Thirteen-year-old Cameron Plate on his way to a 16th place overall finish. [Rick Mayo/Mile 90 Photography]



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The Flint Hills Trail 40 Mile & Marathon

Ottawa, KS // May 30

1,2* // 40 Miles

Elevation gain/loss: Relatively flat | This is an out-and-back course from Ottawa to the western edge of Osawatimie, Kansas, on a crushed limestone trail.

1	Pete Kostelnick, 27, NE	4:34:25	24	Dave Greer, 54, OK	7:31:11
2	Christopher Warner, 34, GB	5:18:13	25	Dennis Cannell, 56, MO	7:45:56
3	Nathan Sicher, 34, MO	5:19:04	26	William Riley, 33, GB	7:46:31
4	Jenna Mutz, 34, MO	5:30:49	27	Jason Oertli, 37, HI	7:47:29
5	Jason Yuhasz, 37, KS	5:47:15	28	Dave Rogers, 29, KS	7:52:13
6	Travis Dillard, 23, MO	5:57:02	29	Windy Shull, 43, MO	7:57:44
7	Kenn Moon, 41, KS	6:02:47	30	Randy Hampton, 60, CA	7:58:41
8	Candi Paulin, 34, KS	6:11:18	31	William Sprouse, 46, KS	8:18:38
9	Mandy Hall, 37, OK	6:17:00	32	Duane Grigg, 64, MO	8:27:15
10	Christine Ngai, 33, IL	6:17:01	33	Cynthia Stapp, 56, KS	8:54:03
11	Jim Roche, 46, NH	6:21:24	34	Jerry Young, 57, IL	8:55:49
12	Michael Pfannenstiel, 49, KS	6:22:54	35	Debra Kerwin, 50, IN	9:00:56
13	Steve Kleiboeker, 51, MO	6:27:50	36	Deborah Melendez, 50, IN	9:00:57
14	Dave Meeth, 52, KS	6:28:00	37	Brooke Martin, 35, OK	9:10:14
15	Zack Haines, 34, GB	6:31:58	38	Peggy Kindinger, 56, OH	9:40:16
16	Cameron Plate, 13, OK	6:38:43	39	Bob Dewar, 69, MO	9:54:31
17	Eileen Bjornstrom, 42, MO	6:43:31	40	Jim Myers, 67, KS	10:09:36
18	John Skretta, 46, NE	6:43:32	41	Kimberly Myers, 39, KS	10:09:37
19	Justin Hoffman, 35, KS	6:48:43			
20	David Diprince, 39, CO	6:56:35			
21	Joshua Watson, 36, KS	7:04:35			
22	Laura Range, 49, MO	7:09:34			
23	Peggy Ward, 51, KS	7:24:40			

*See page 34 for key

Windy Shull of Columbia, MO, splashes through remnants of recent heavy rains.

Rick Mayo/Mile 90 Photography]

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