



NIGHT HAWK //////////



Peter Benson wades through flooded Mud Creek, which is usually a rocky, mostly dry stream bed.

[© Rick Mayo/Mile 90 Photography]



WADING THROUGH THE WOODS

BY MICHAEL MILEY

After being forced to exit early from last year's race because of a torrential storm, poor choice in footwear and debilitating cramps, I was more than ready for another crack at the Night Hawk 50K. Race directors Mary Ann Frevert and Shari Hicks have built something special and it continues to grow every year. The volunteer support was outstanding as

always, and many went above and beyond to find and map an alternative route, clear 27 downed trees, reroute again, and add safety ropes to this year's 10-mile loop course. An alternate course was created due to spring rains that had expanded Clinton Lake to the point where most of the trails were underwater.

As expected, the weather was hot and humid. I could add some capitalization and exclamation points for emphasis, but really – it's late June in Kansas and that's what you get. Some welcome relief was that the heat warning for Douglas County expired just as Shari counted down to start the race at 8 p.m.

With that, we were off. My race plan was to take it easy and "float" (my term for not thinking about pace) early on and see what I had left for loop three. If anything was left in the tank, I would push the pace and go hard for the finish. If the cramp monster made an appearance, I would just slow down and enjoy the race while trying not to trip and split open any body parts.

For loop one I took it pretty easy on the initial road section, gabbing with friends and losing myself in the joy of running trails again for the first time in a long time. Unfortunately, the bugs were insane during the final road section of loop one. It resembled a scene similar to headlights of a car driving through a snow storm at night. My pace was dictated by how fast I could run while breathing only through my nose. Every time I opened my mouth, I got a serving of winged protein. Loops two and three were just fine, as I presumed the runners had inhaled all of the bugs by that point.

The highlight of the race was at the Land's End aid station on loop three. I had possibly the best aid station food ever – I cannot explain how delicious the potato pancakes were. To wash them down, a volunteer had an ice cold beer waiting for me. I meant to have just a small cup, but with some help from the aid station captain, we drained the can down to a trail-safe level and I headed back into the woods carrying two water bottles and a half can of Kolsch. (Yes, I crumpled the empty can and stuck it in my pocket until the finish.)

If you can't tell by now, I really love this race. It's been so awesome to see Mary Ann and Shari come up with a great idea and not only pull it off, but also make it better every year. Saying thank you is not enough for everyone who put in countless hours, but just the same, thank you! 🏃

ABOVE: Female winner Arielle Tillou of Tulsa, Oklahoma, navigates the dark woods punctuated by rocky and rooty trails.

📸 Kristi Mayo/Mile 90 Photography

LEFT: Race Director Shari Hicks briefs runners on the overnight adventure that lies ahead.

📸 John Knepper/Mile 90 Photography





LEFT: Overall winner AJ Haney took an early lead and stayed there finishing about 15 minutes ahead of second place. [© Kristi Mayo/Mile 90 Photography]

BELOW: Author Michael Miley finishes his second of three loops through a curtain of flying insects. [© John Knepper/Mile 90 Photography]

Night Hawk

Lawrence, KS // June 29

2,3* // 50k

Elevation gain: 1,845 feet | This race is a three-loop course (each loop 10.3) with each loop consisting of mostly rugged trails through the beautiful trees.

1	AJ Haney, 21, KS	5:03:13
2	Jeremiah Nemecek, 32, MO	5:18:10
3	Mark Nygaard, 50, NE	5:28:41
4	Thaius Boyd, 23, KS	5:36:31
5	Morgan Mahn, 24, MO	5:44:17
6	Hosub Shim, 36, KS	5:57:57
7	Eric Davis, 33, MO	6:05:47
8	Jacob Kucza, 32, KS	6:18:58
9	Arielle Tiilou, 28, OK	6:26:10
10	Kira Everhart-Valentin, 36, KS	6:28:35
11	Suzie Stephensen, 35, KS	6:29:20
12	Eric Mcmillan, 41, TX	6:35:15
13	Bill Loats, 53, KS	6:36:56
14	Tony Brown, 58, KS	6:46:47
15	Peter Benson, 45, KS	6:46:52
16	Chris Hines, 39, MO	6:51:46
17	Digamber Rane, 38, KS	6:52:28
18	Mark French, 46, MO	6:52:37
19	Michele Weaver, 50, KS	6:55:50
20	Michael Miley, 55, KS	6:58:13
21	Barrett Kroll, 37, KS	6:58:39
22	Abigail Kroll, 36, KS	6:58:39
23	David Adair, 19, KS	6:59:46
24	Albert Mauro, 52, MO	7:01:08
25	Matthew De Ruyter, 26, MO	7:04:28
26	Nick Foster, 35, MO	7:04:29
27	Patrick Verratti, 33, NJ	7:07:12
28	Patrick Burkett, 32, MO	7:07:15
29	Justin Ensign, 34, MO	7:07:12
30	Jay Mooney, 43, KS	7:10:16
31	Tatum Wolfe, 26, NE	7:10:26
32	Scott Quigg, 47, MO	7:24:40
33	Stuart Johnson, 59, KS	7:25:42
34	Ross Chumbley, 23, KS	7:27:07
35	John Chumbley, 27, KS	7:27:08
36	Deb Johnson, 59, KS	7:30:45
37	Steve Monsanto, 35, MO	7:39:39
38	Melissa Bland, 31, MO	7:39:39
39	Leia Anderson, 35, MO	7:45:19
40	Danny Loental, 38, KS	7:47:22
41	Lindsey Heineken, 34, KS	7:49:22
42	Gary Henry, 63, KS	7:51:21
43	Libbie Corney, 36, MO	8:05:44
44	Jordan Shrack, 35, KS	8:14:53
45	Trudi Chavez, 42, KS	8:14:53
46	Jackie Amon, 40, KS	8:21:14
47	Wael Sammur, 56, MO	8:21:10
48	Torrey Wilson, 28, NE	8:23:22
49	Matthew Battiston, 52, KS	8:30:37
50	Chris Greer, 44, KS	8:40:10
51	Zach Nelson, 30, MO	8:41:14
52	Mark Kramer, 30, KS	8:44:17
53	Yvonne Watkins, 49, KS	8:48:48
54	Todd Chandler, 51, MO	8:48:48
55	Jason Silvers, 48, KS	8:51:12
56	Cole Reinhardt, 23, KS	9:10:05
57	Krystle Dalke, 37, KS	9:10:13
58	John Fritchey, 46, MO	9:29:47
59	Dennis Wilson, 61, NE	9:30:05
60	Steve Crutchfield, 52, KS	9:35:25
61	Wesley Baker, 43, KS	9:35:25
62	Melanie Linderer, 42, MO	9:56:55
63	Hansen Kirk, 45, NE	9:56:55
64	Eric Deeter, 61, KS	10:00:55

*See page 47 for key

