

Simon Brooks

Daytona 100 report - long write up, from the DFL (Dead F'ing Last) file:

Pre-race I had a decent set of runs, nothing like I had ahead of Iron horse in February, but should've been enough time on my feet to make 100 miles feasible. With my outside work I get a bit of heat acclimation, however between family & personal trips, as well as the cool spell we had for a good portion of the month before, I probably lost my summer heat-proofing, which wasn't the best thing ahead of record heat/humidity this past weekend (not my problem alone, it kicked many people out).

Race day I planned to stay conservative through the day & hope to A) beat 22 hours, B) beat my 22:50 PR, C) sub-24, D) finish, with a bigger push on the second half through the night, although I never thought I'd need to consider cutoffs or running for an extended period of the second morning, & so didn't drop bag pack accordingly - lesson learnt! I'd done a lot of my running on hard surfaces, including up to 42 miles around the paved trails looping Orlando & 31 around Cranes Roost, but my feet were not having any of it. After a few hours of steadily clicking off miles, staying well hydrated/fed, on top of my electrolytes, & taking it even easier than my planned overall pace on the first beach section, which was at least as hot & humid as the training run we'd done along the same stretch in September when I had to drop 4 miles into the beach (16 total). Taking it slow, letting my body absorb all it can - turns out this was the curse to many (about 49% dropped) getting sick from the heat. I'd been able to run better with ice down the arms of my compression LS top & some in my cap, but think a neckerchief might be the way to go on the next hot race! That pacing/conservation plan seemed to go well, but around 40 miles in my feet were really starting to ache from the continuous asphalt/concrete pounding. I had a change of shoes waiting at 52 miles, new socks & more foot powder to keep the blisters at bay - I ended up with only 2 small ones (where my sock got trapped between the big & index toes).

Finally got into the Marineland AS (52 miles) after 6, should've had a light just in case, but I didn't think it would take me more than 11 hours to get there. I'd already walked a bit with foot pain by this time. Given I was walking at a modest pace I took the opportunity to grab a couple of humongous slices of cheese pizza, which gave me some real satiation, rather than the snacks I was generally able to get down.

Into the night, it was still warm (may have dropped into 70's), but due to my foot pain I just couldn't run, & my walking pace slowed from a modest 15 min/mi down to almost 40 min pace wincing & cursing the concrete with every step by the time I hit AS-8 (81 miles) at about 5am. Practically every step from 40 miles onwards was like someone hitting the balls of my feet with a hammer. I tried to change my gait, foot strike/push off - I'd have been quicker on crutches! I'd given serious consideration to dropping at that AS, but also knew I had 7 hours to complete the remaining 19 miles & with new shoes - ultra cushioned Altras. Between over an inch of sole & the rocker it was like my feet were in heaven. The reason I didn't pack to use them earlier longer is that the zero-drop really messed me up before, but I kept them for walking or hard surface pounding. That relief lasted for about 5/6 miles of decent pace walking, then I could feel the swelling & pain again on my feet. I was back to cursing every step of hard surface. However, I'd gotten this far & knew I'd finish, the question was, would I be within the 30-hour cutoff? A situation I hadn't even considered or planned for. Had I mentioned my feet were killing me every step? It was a story of that for more than half the race. My Garmin had given me a low battery warning around 65 miles, knowing it wouldn't make the rest of the race, I put it back to watch mode for time keeping purposes & used my cue card & street numbers to track my time/mileage/pace, cursing myself as it took forever to move down each block, & whoever numbered the Daytona area as there were apparently long strings of hotels/condos with consecutive numbers that didn't seem to tick over to the next block (2501, 2505, 2515, etc up to 2,625 - which was probably 2-3 miles from 2501). This didn't help my mood, but reinforced my resolve to finish.

Around 88 miles we re-entered the beach, & at mile 90 I passed the hotel where Christa was staying with the kids. I got to hang with them for a few minutes, take in some breakfast, but knew I had to move on quickly, I only had 3 hours to do the last 10 miles.

With the softer sand, food & coffee in my belly, & thoughts of meeting them again at the finish I walked quickly & then began to shuffle "jog" almost all 3 miles to the beach exit. I watched the morning joggers doing their thing, happy that they could run, but certain they didn't know how many miles I'd done so far that made my run look so pitiful. Up off the beach, we were back to concrete & asphalt, as well as the heat of the day as we rolled closer to 10am. I left that AS at 9:50 with 6.6 miles to go, knowing I'd do my best to shuffle the last 2 miles of beach & finish even tho it might be after 12. If I could get around the lighthouse & back on the beach by 11:15 I had 45 mins to make the last 2.1 miles.

The concrete/asphalt & heat was unrelenting, Tony broke off from the AS duties, as they closed down once I'd left, to pace those last few miles with me in jeans & a cotton shirt - felt bad, but knew we weren't going to be going too quickly to chaff him up. I tried to advise Tony of my plan, but he also kept pushing me to go quicker on the roads & sidewalks ahead of the beach stretch. I couldn't shuffle tho, still way too painful on the hard surface. As I hadn't packed any contingency supplies for AS-9 I was without sun cream or any head protection from the sunrise at 7 right through. Christa gave me some cream on the beach, but the beating on my head was not pleasant as there was no shade. Again Tony to the rescue with a ball cap. I was also still trying to capture the moments on my phone & keep Christa updated on my ETA, much to Tony chastising! A great pacer, one day maybe someone will be as tough on him when he gets around to a triple digit run!!!

We rounded the lighthouse minutes after 11, an hour to go, about 2.5 miles. Tony kept asking any passer by to cheer me on, most were willing & in awe, a nice touch.

For the majority of the time from seeing them at 90 miles, I was

envisioning running up to/in with the kids at the finish - I'm not sure they could comprehend being awake, no less moving for 30 straight hours - then again many adults couldn't either... The half-mile to the beach wouldn't end, but finally we got back on. I put in a few shuffle & walk intervals, trying to spot the finish for that mental push. Robert also came out for the last half-mile to help me run in. Once I saw the line I managed to up the pace to a tepid 12 min pace, that felt like a tempo effort. I finally saw the kids, who also ran out but couldn't keep up, even when I slowed for them to take my hands, but they weren't up for. So on I pushed to finish with gusto/a flourish.

Long story short, I started this journey to lose some weight & be a healthy role-model for the kids. Over time that's involved pushing further, with more resolve, the buckle is great, but they are still the core reason I do these things, to show them unimaginable things are possible.

Thanks to many people for supporting & aiding in achieving another 100 finish.