

Tara Kilcullen

WARNING LONG RACE REPORT POST: By now, most of you know my back story (pun intended). I shouldn't be able to be at any start line let alone a 100 miler, but I refuse to let my accident take anything else away from me, so I continue to challenge myself in new ways. This time last year, if you would've asked me if I'd ever run even want to run a 100 miler, the answer would've been a resounding no. I've never had a desire to go past 100k. Fast forward a year later and there I was standing at the start line of the inaugural Daytona 100. My ultra resume to this point has been a whole lot of 50Ks & one, yes one, 50 miler. My good friend [Matt](#) is the reason I was there & I'm grateful he talked me into it.

Living in FL you never know what November will bring. It's a crapshoot. For this day, the weather report said record temps & heat. They weren't kidding. The race started off humid, but I had been doing most of my long runs in late morning and early afternoon for this reason, so I wasn't overly concerned with the heat. I was more concerned about adjusting my race plan to accommodate the high temps. Spirits were high, laughter was everywhere & smiles all along. My crew, [Ginny](#) & [Kristen](#), were just the best. Reminding me to eat, drink, and most importantly SMILE! These 2 had me smiling and my heart full each time I saw them. THANK YOU!

Now as I'm trying to figure the plan out on the run (I know: bad idea), I happen upon a threesome who are going about the pace I was hoping to go. These folks, [Julie](#), [Omer](#), & [Carla](#), were just the best, most friendly & welcoming bunch. They made the miles go by quickly. We encouraged each other & kept on each other to eat & drink. Great buddy system. The first 12.5 miles were great. Brought back good memories of the Donna marathon. We also laughed and smiled a lot. Smiling's my favorite! (So is laughing!)

The second part was 14.5 miles on the beach. This was where the heat got serious. So far, I was on track for my modified plan (modified again from my previously modified plan when my injuries flared up a few months back) & my nutrition seemed to be going as planned as

well. Still laughing & smiling! Off the beach at mile 27.5 and onward towards AS3 at mile 40. This is where my stomach really started to play tricks on me. Not too oddly, I was still smiling as you can see from my pics. My musculoskeletal system and mind were feeling GREAT but my stomach stopped wanting me to put anything into it. About 5 miles later, I just couldn't keep going. Ana from Omer's team was pacing us and she ran back to their car to get me some ginger ale. This helped immensely and I hope she knows how grateful I was for that. I took 5 with my crew while I was letting things settle but I was also starting to get the chills. A big uh oh sometimes but I shrugged it off & pushed on.

As I headed toward AS5 around mile 52, I was slowing and still not able to take in anything but ginger ale & pickles. After getting there, I was determined to make it to the 100k mark no matter what. Still smiling but slower yet I trudged on towards AS 6. This was almost the 100k mark. I took an extended break & waited for [Brad](#) to come. Once he was there, we talked it out and I decided I was going to make it to AS7, mile 70.

Brad paced me and helped keep my mind off the fact that I was seriously dizzy and having the worst stomach cramps I can recall. At this point, we're talking 30 miles of running with fuel being primarily ginger ale & pickles. Not enough to sustain another 30. At one point, I had to stop and hold myself up with a light pole while I waited for some serious dizziness to pass. Once it did, I chuckled a little & walked it into AS7. Brad kept me laughing even though I was in a lot of pain & couldn't stand up straight. THANK YOU!

I trotted in at 1:00am. I check-in & tell the guy this might be the end of the road. I don't know what his name was but he was the most positive even in the face of defeat. He was the exact person I needed to hear in that moment. We talked it out about fueling, pace, etc & based on his vast ultra experience, I determined I wouldn't make the next cutoffs. Props to that man and ALL AS volunteers. You're the absolute best! So. Reluctantly, I DNF'd myself. First time ever! I thought I'd be way more disappointed than I was & am. When I think about where I started & all the obstacles I had to overcome just in the

last few months let alone last few years, I'm super excited that I made it to 70 miles. Don't get me wrong. A person like me who's super competitive with themselves is disappointed & will tackle this again. I know my buckle is waiting for me. It just wasn't my race.

[#RespectTheDistance](#)

Thank you to Ginny & Kristen for coming along on this adventure and for keeping me smiling & my spirits high even when I pulled myself out. I love you both!!! Thank you Brad for pushing me to go the extra 9 miles & helping me through. You're fabulous! Thank you Julie, Omer, Carla, Ana, [Eric](#) & the rest of their crews for taking me on as a stepchild runner periodically. You're all amazing! Thank you to all my family & friends for your support. And a big thank you to [Dave](#), [Susan](#), & the rest of the [#Daytona100](#) volunteers for making it a fantastic race. I truly enjoyed myself every step of the way even in the difficult ones. That says a lot about this race & the people who were involved. I also need to thank a few others for helping me get to the start line: [Jay](#) for always putting me back together, and I mean always; [Doug](#) for putting up with my crazy schedule and still making me stronger; Dr T my chiropractor for realigning me; and [Julie](#) for doing so many runs with me. You are all fabulous lifesavers!

I now know what I did wrong with my fueling & win the 2015 DumbAssery Award. I accidentally cut my liquid nutrition mix in 1/2. On a cooler day, that would've been ok, but on a hot day like Saturday, that was a HUGE mistake. I'll take a look at my nutrition and regroup for the next race. I WILL be back next year and I WILL be tackling this distance again, perhaps even sooner that you think. A little birdie I like to call Brad told me that I'll probably get hooked on this distance. I think he might be right.

Keep pushing forward. Keep challenging yourself mentally & physically. Unlock those doors. Stay positive. Stay smiling. Anything is possible.