

Jason Center

First Race Report Ever

When the Daytona 100 was announced it really resonated with me. A nice flat course, beautiful ocean breezes, cool during the day, crisp at night, a great beginner 100 miler. Right? Heck, I might even have to wear an extra layer at night just to stay warm! Well, I got the flat part right. And I wouldn't have had it any other way!

I thought the pre-race meeting really set the tone for the weekend. Being surrounded by so many ultra runners was amazing. A runner that had run across the country, a runner that had just completed a 100 the weekend before and was going for a back to back, a nationally ranked runner, Badwater runners, a DOUBLE Badwater runner. So much respect for these people because the only way you accomplish these things is through hard work. Yes, they are talented and fast with amazing fitness levels, but at the end of the day they all still put in the work, a lot of it. And it just made me more determined to take that baby step and earn my first buckle, and to get a little bit better.

The next morning I am surrounded by 100+ runners, family and crew members cheering, someone blowing that funny sounding soccer horn (that sound freaks me out actually, makes me feel like a military coup is about to happen), the national anthem is played, and 3 2 1 we're off. And I'm in last place. Seriously.

See, when I signed-up I chose to run uncrewed. Didn't really think about it much at the time, just assumed everyone did it uncrewed. And then everyone started putting together a crew. I was screwed! But I really wanted to do this thing relying on aid stations and drop bags. The way I look at it is if I can learn to eat aid station food and carry 7 pounds of water between aid stations it will open more opportunities to run without having to bring along an entourage. And months ago I set my goal time as 28 hours, giving me an extra 2 hours in the case of any unforeseen events, you know, like the highly unlikely possibility of an unseasonable heat wave in Florida, that my

phone dies on a beach, or that I fall off a rock. You just never know, right?

So I'm in last place, or real close to it. Walking at first, warming up slowly, holding back. By the time I finished that first one-mile loop I high-fived Coach Krupski and I'm sure he was thinking WhyTF is this guy so slow! But I knew I had a long day in front of me and would need every ounce of energy for the upcoming temperature rise. The previous Spring I had run a few hot 50k's and found I had no clue how to run in hot weather. I always started too fast, tried to run with the faster runners, PASSED faster runners, and always ended up imploding at the halfway mark. A certain running friend with a last name that sounds like a popular 1980's Chrysler vehicle (it's a Chrysler LeBarron for those of you not yet born in the 80's) has a certain propensity to catch me halfway and remind me of how stupid my pacing strategy is. Well, that didn't happen this time, lesson learned, implosion averted.

The rest of my race was steady and purposeful. The sun came up, got hot (believe it or not there was an unseasonable heat wave in Florida that week), my phone overheated at mile 18 (not water damage, heat damage) so no GPS pacing strategy. And yes, I sat down on a big rock that assured me it was firmly embedded in the ground, yet wasn't, and unceremoniously deposited me and said rock down a fifteen-foot embankment. It clipped my knee and I kind of thought I killed my race. But I rubbed some dirt on it and off I went. Later it got to a point that it hurt more to walk than run, so I ran. Ran while counting to 200, stopped 5 seconds to keep the heart rate down, and ran to 200 again. Ran to one telephone pole, walked to the next, ran to the next. I just had no choice but to keep moving. I never had a low point, never doubted I would finish, although I worried about cut-off a time or two and it just made me push more.

I'll run this race again. Next time I'll drop more nutrition on the course. I carried a lot of Tailwind and it works for me, but it's just supplemental. I didn't realize how far the distance between aid stations was, especially in the mid and late portions of the race. Felt like it took forever between stops! I did stop at a gas station once and

bought chocolate milk and a honey bun. Dave's right, that air conditioning messes with the body, get out quick! One thing that bothered me on the course was a couple in a car, just after Dave's parent's home, that stopped me at Beach Street asking if I had seen a runner. They told me to take Beach Street instead of continuing down to the lighthouse because if I did "you were going too far, trust us". And in that situation a few things go through your mind. Are they #\$\$&@'ing with me and trying to get me lost, are they "undercover" race officials trying to entrap course-cutters, did a prankster take a sign and they are telling me the truth, or in their mind are they just being "helpful" and showing me how to shave a mile off the course. I don't know, but I ignored them and kept going down to the lighthouse. Minutes later I was very relieved to see the Daytona 100 signs and I knew I had been taking the right route and they were full of shit. To be frank, it wasn't the first instance of dubious unsolicited directional advice I had received on the course.

I may have been uncrewed but not unassisted. Thank you to the aid station volunteers for immediately filling my water bottles, the ready-made gourmet PB&J's, Coke & Ice, and quesadillas at AS 6 (the gentlemen prodded me to have one and I am so glad he did). And if I could suggest just one thing to the aid station captains, please keep the soup and broth warm at night. And last but not least, thanks to my wife who whisked me away from the finish line and forced me to take that ice bath. Gosh how I hate them.

See you next year, hope to be a little bit better.