

Jamie Woyton

The Inaugural Daytona 100 Ultramarathon

A Serial Volunteer Finds the Tables Turned

Introduction:

That Dave and Alex Krupski drew together so many experienced RD's, experienced hundred finishers, Susan Anger and others to volunteer for this inaugural race speaks all one needs to know about the amazing 1st year, high end event it was. Not only was the talent high, they all got their hands dirty. If Bob Becker is going to be the AS Captain at the half-way mark, run this race. Also if you live out of Florida and you read "FUR/FUR's", it's just an abbreviation for Florida Ultra Runners, or as I call us, "The Island of Misfit Toys."

I am just an ordinary average guy: que Joe Walsh. I'm only 47. But I read on a 48 year level. I'm more comfortable volunteering. When I grew up, every Thanksgiving my family would put the bird in the oven and we would go serve Thanksgiving to the homeless and eat later. My parents taught by example. My late grandfather (my hero) grew up in an orphanage and I never heard him say a cross word to anyone. Hence, he was loved. I felt happy that he called me "son". The point of this RR is that for the first time I can remember, I REALLY needed help from others. I was not trained how to ask for help.

That changed at Daytona 100. For the first time in forever I was broken and exclaimed: "I need help." This changed more than just my race.

Daytona 100 is Announced

Early this year Dave Krupski mentioned he would put on the Daytona 100, much right through my town! Instantly I offered to volunteer, he said "No, I want you to run it." I already had a local

50M I was about to enter about the same time. The race was 98% made of relay teams so if I didn't finish, who cared? Dave thinking I could do it made me question if he had any cheese on his cracker.

I already had joys no one could take from me by volunteering. Like at R40R, I got to see Thomas Grinovich hit a 100M PR as he jumped in the air. Later in that same race I got out of the car (Trevor and his buddy Luke were driving) to pace screwed runner, Daniel Jones who was in a rough patch. We talked a lot. Rough patch easing we started running. We came upon Wes Smith who clearly wasn't in "high cotton". I wasn't Dan's pacer, I just wanted to help George Maxwell's race so as we came up on Wes I didn't know what to do. With great relief Dan yelled out "Slow down, Jamie".

Dan and Wes started talking, Trevor and Luke got some Coke's, then we were running and they finished. In between the lines is the awesomeness I witnessed. Many have been there in those moments with runners. It's inspiring. Hence my profile picture is still me and Dan after his finish.

My "buckle" is volunteering. Take swag bags: every runner LOVES grabbing their swag bag. They never frown when they get it. I like to fill them! I mean, imagine an EMPTY swag bag? WTF!? THINK OF THE CHILDREN! :D

March 9, Dave opens the race for registration. Me thinks "No pressure, I haz months to think about it". Two hours later I see posts "Just registered", "Me, too!" Then damn it, Bob Weber registers! They tell ya, never shop for groceries hungry, well, I don't go to the liquor store thirsty either! I asked the boys "You in?" CLICK!



Registered Runner/Learning the Course/Improve Weaknesses

The training? I just put in the work. In my professional life, I assist people. I analyze and identify what is doing well and weak. Then model what can be increased the most with the least risk to capital. So not only did I put the miles in, I muscled down on power walking. I can do a 5K in only 29, so speed will not be my weapon. Noelani Taylor does sub 5min pace getting the mail. Over time I got the sustained walk pace down from 14:45" to 13:30". My plan was to enjoy running in the COOL, REFRESHING NOVEMBER RACE CONDITIONS OF THE INAUGURAL DAYTONA 100!!! My power walking would be my backup. Improve a weakness, right?

Also my boys are used to volunteering and I'm the QB. I was putting the whole thing on them now, and that could be a weakness. On one of Dave's training runs I became concerned about mile 12-28, the 1st beach section. The run was in July and I blew up on the beach. It was the first time I can recall being SCARED while running. With weak cell signal and out of crew view, I decided for the race not only to walk that section but load up as if it were a hike and just meet the boys at 28. The weakness

could not be eliminated, but it could be mitigated. The cost of capital 40-60 minutes more to get off the beach? Mitigate putting undue stress on my crew.

Summer “races”:

Wickham 1: Hilarious, pointless, blew up.

Lake Baldwin: Hilarious, hot as hell and utterly pointless! Woo-hoo!

Wickham 2: Sponsored by “Clems Airboats”. Pointless X

2. Woo-hoo! Blew up.

PTC: Brutal. First time I ever passed out running. Finished. Woo-hoo!

Finished training, to the taper and final planning. Now let’s check the weather for race day:

Extended forecast for November 7th: “YOU WILL SUFFER FOR EVERY DAY YOU DIDN'T RECYCLE!!!” -Sauron

Friday/Package Pickup

The boys and I arrived at 9 and the U-Haul pulled up. Susan Anger jumps from the passenger seat saying “She thinks she’s Joey Chitwood the way she drives this thing.” Alex Krupski jumps from the driver seat remarking “This thing corners’ better than I thought.” The sounds of multiple fire engines could be heard in the distance. We had a moment of silence for the injured, then unloaded the U-Haul.

I packed the swag bags with the literature while Alex and the boys had the difficult task of laying all the men/women shirt sizes to match runner and bib #. Not knowing exactly who would get each bag I was packing, I sprinkled “happy dust” in each one and passed down the line. When they were locating a shirt size for a runner who we knew, we sprinkled an extra helping. Susan and Michele Graglia assembled the directional signs/ Rubik's Cubes.

3pm was packet pickup. One by one the runners came in. Many were greetings to new friends, many were embraces of old ones. THE THOMPSON FAMILY IN 'DA HOUSE! Everyone was smiling so the batch of happy dust we brought proved exceedingly minty fresh.

Helping out helped me as I didn't think about the race all day! Awesomesauce!!

Keys 100 Reunion:



Ready, Set, Go!

“Good morning, where ya from?” Laughs everywhere. It was a nice touch that Dave had the start circle back to the hotel to see and hear the well wishers again. Tony Himanshu Mehta and I caught sight of each other and we yelled as I passed by. What a great start. Nice touch, Dave!

Southward we go. Some were a bit frightened at seeing for the first time, a den of Ponte Vedre Cougars in the wild. Some out of towners started to panic, but I calmed them down.

“Don’ be skeered.” I said, “Dem Cougars be walkin’ OUT of the tennis shop. Dat means day a’ready been fed. If day was

walkin' in, dat means day hungry. We safe 'fer now boys, jus done be slo."

Quickly the color came back to their faces. They looked stronger, wiser.

I let the boys sleep in to meet me at mile 12, to the dreaded beach section. They loaded me up as planned they headed to mile 28 and help Caleb at AS 2. My real race plan was to try and say hi to everyone. I wanted it to be like Christmas at every AS. The surprise! The hug! Ya know, put smiles in the miles. I didn't want to think about the race but the friends I would see. I was not prepared for the overwhelming kindness.

Change of Tone/ 1st Beach Section/ Reality Check

**(Dave stressed about slowing down in the heat, maybe use gels other than solid foods in the race meeting. I never asked for clarification, I just adopted it and went "Hell's Gels". I did not run in the heat.)*

Brad Longston and I parted there. We had become friends over the training runs and PTC. I'm used to being passed so on the beach I just watched runners go. I was struck by what was happening after mile 15. People started sitting in the sand and they did not look good. Recalling the brutal training run and seeing folks far more fit struggle became difficult to watch.

Usually I'm the volunteer helping. It was very awkward checking on a hurt runner and a voice in my head was pushing me saying, "You have to go or you will not finish in 30 hours!!" Around mile 20, a little more carnage and a sick feeling made me wonder what, when, where would I be struck down? Fear.

Hooking up with a guy my age with many 100's we power walked it out. He would point out things like "See that guy ahead

there? He's pushing too hard, we'll come up on him in 20 minutes." Sure enough. Folks doing the run/ walk kept coming to us and soon enough were behind us. I felt bad for these runners. An uneasy selfishness sunk in. I had to get off that dang beach in one piece!

AS2/Mile 28/Caleb Wilson

Caleb Wilson, RD for FT Clinch 50/100 was the AS Captain. He is brief and to the point. Swapping shoes I mentioned "Wow, a black toenail? I never get black toenails!" Caleb: "Your shoes have too narrow a toe box for this course. Nothing you can do about that one now." He gave the boys a few instructions, shoe/sock change and off down A1A for 2 miles, then over Vilano Bridge. (Leaving the parking lot I nailed a PR of 7 high fives from total strangers!)

So many people were hurting at 1pm! I was passing people I wasn't even trying to catch. The fear of impending doom was upon me. I was just wondering when I would be struck. I was wound tighter than a cheap watch in a bucket of magnets.

Somewhere close to Bridge of Lions (Mile 32'ish) ignore the smile, I was scared:



AS4/Mile 40/Scott Johnson

**Check out Scott's' "Ultra Finishers" podcasts as his guests share stories from the average person perspective. For an unusual and interesting story Chris Gkikas talking the Barkley Fall Classic is awesome. Desiree Sant's Keys 100 is one I listened to many times as D100 is also a mostly road point to point.*

Scott welcomed me with an ice towel!! I had imagined Santa to look different! He helped me get a good stretch out and away to Marineland. Scott had just done his first 100K and right away comes back to work an AS. I love these people!

About Mile 50, in the pain cave. I can finally find a trash can for this gel I was carrying for miles (forgot I had pockets):



AS5/ Mile 50/Mom & Dad/First Time Pacer

The Palm Coast Posse (my crew) arrived ahead of me and got to introduce my parents to Bob Becker. Seleam, one of Nigel's classmates who volunteered Keys with us was also volunteering that AS. I finally met Run Alex Run, and everyone's best friend, Robert Rounsavall! My pacer was a local guy who enjoys 5k's and such. I talked him into pacing me because I wanted him to meet "the people".

He was quite impressed with the warm and caring environment. I blew some kisses to the volunteers and took my pacer through “our neck of the woods”. At around mile 53 I stopped and told him that “I had now ran further than I ever had, and every step is into the unknown and I am fearful of what may happen.” I didn’t have to wait long.

Moments later, something happened in my left shoe. My stomach sank. Fatigue came upon me quickly. Panic. My pacer would be picked up by his wife at AS6 and I didn’t want my boys pacing me yet for their safety. I would be alone until AS7. Things went downhill. It was stunning how fast things turned south over no more than 15 minutes. Doubt. “How on Earth can I do this? I’m not strong enough.” Soon I would realize I was right. I wasn’t strong enough on my own. I was in the cave. Despair. And then....

AS6/Mile 60/Nothing Will Ever Be The Same

“Welcome Jamie!!” yelled Daniel Jones AND Thomas Grinovich!!!! I lit up like a Christmas tree. The suffering was on and Dan said, *“We knew this is part of the course was where you live and that’s why we chose this spot. To help you!!”* Then it hit me. **They were there to help, me.**

It was like a lightning bolt realizing I had become the runner and not the volunteer. They saw my problems and knew how to solve them. The weight of fear was removed. I could feel it.

They sat me down and Thomas hands me a quesadilla “Eat this Jamie, it’s our biggest seller! Oh, and here is the soup.” Thomas kept cracking me up while Dan was popping blisters, goo flying everywhere.

“Jamie, do you have an old pair of shoes?” “Why yes I

do” “Get me those shoes, STAT!” Nigel comes back with my old Saucony’s with 600-700 miles in them. Pointing to the toe box, Dan asked “Do you mind?” He ripped the toe box off with his teeth! WITH HIS TEETH I TELL YOU!! Then to the other, SHRED! He lubed up the feet, socks, slipped on the new “ Dan Jones Go Run Mod 6’s”!!! (I had shoes and could still see my piggies!) I jumped up and they gave me the “go-gettem hugs” and I turned around and there was my pacer and his wife, lower jaws on the ground. “Like I told you, it’s THE people! I’d like to chat more but I gotta run!”

I cannot express enough the emotions as I headed off alone. There were people wanting and waiting to help me. ME!? Was it possible that in the past I had also helped a runner that much? All fear left me as the tables turned to view myself as the runner and THESE PEOPLE were going to care for me. Now I looked forward to it.

Fact: Two Unicorns were born at AS6 that night and one of them pooped Skittles!

AS7/Mile 70/Happy

Full of joy I walk in. Jim Schroeder! Kathy Berne-Hartman! I was giddy and when they asked what I wanted I said “I wanna ride the pony!” Everyone was laughing and I was breathing in all the smiles and laughter. Kathy gave me a cup of her potato soup. OMG! OMG! OMG! It had bacon, BACON I TELL YOU!! I think I left teeth marks on the cup, and perhaps her hand. NomNomNomNom! Pigs are amazing, you feed them and they give you bacon! I was happier than James Brown in a sports car and other puns!

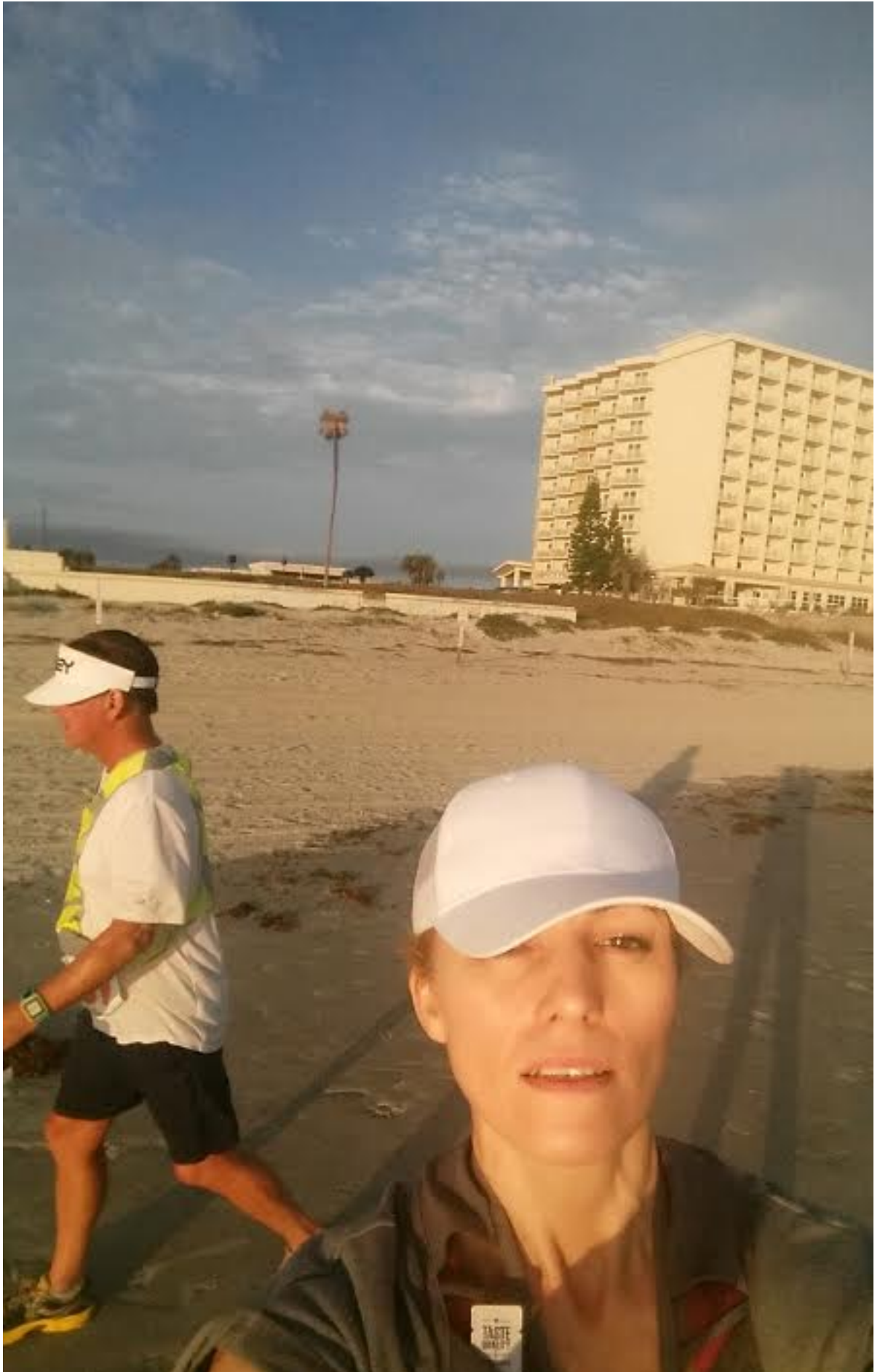
AS8/Mile 80/Team Slayton

I had sunk both feet in a puddle on the way, so I stopped running for fear of blisters. I planned on doing a sock change at AS8 but

forgot. More on that later. I came in with Chris Goodreau and Trevor was pacing with us. CLAP! CLAP! “Yeah Jamie!” It was Dan and Tracy Slayton! Dan (who had just nailed his first 50M on his bike) gave me a huge hug. Susan Anger and I had a small role in seeing Tracy get her first 50K at Whispering Pines. I just let them take care of me. Other than a little groggy due to no sleep, they just made me laugh. Heading out they cheered and it seemed that a finish was very possible. I went back to running, forgetting my feet were still wet. My beloved wife Dora joined me at mile 88 where we turned to the beach again. That is where I realized that blisters had developed on the balls of my feet from the running in wet socks. Knucklehead! No sense changing socks now, just power walk it. The thought of a sub 28 hour was a reality but quickly pushed that away. Just finish!

Along this section, there again was Darlene DeFusco's crew, again! These wonderful angels had adopted me and countless others on the way. *Of note: The personal intimacy seemed to magnify on each AS the second half. Or maybe my mind just became a steel trap: rusty and illegal in 37 states.

Approx mile 91 with the one I worship:



AS9/A Little Emotion/Then More

**Through the night, I had come upon some FUR's who were having rough patches. I don't mention their names not because I don't want to. When you see people you care about struggling, it's private. Their suffering was real and it weighed on me. Some made it. Some didn't*

There was Scott Johnson, Robert Rounsavall and RunAlexRun again! Don't these people ever sleep! Hugs everywhere and encouragement. The relief to hear there were only 7.5 miles to go. I got a lump in my throat as I looked to the north part of the course knowing folks we all knew were hurting out there. Scott was filming me and asking a few questions. It was both a sickening feeling worrying about our FUR's, and relief to know Scott, Robert, Alex and Kristen Beck were there for them. My voice cracked a bit when I cried out "IT'S THE PEOPLE! THESE PEOPLE!" Another shot of Coke, collected myself and on my way.

Trevor was back pacing me and I told him to stay in the car. He had been with me over 20 miles and I was not comfortable with him putting in those miles even power walking, err there was no "power" left actually. I could see him favoring his left foot. "Blister, huh?" "Yeah". "Want Nigel to pull up and we can tape it?" "Nah." We kept walking and I looked at him, studied him.

"You want to feel the pain, huh?"

"Yeah.... I'm proud of you dad."

I stopped. I looked at him for a few seconds. Then embraced him with all I had. Images of Nigel and Trevor as babies, birthdays, remembering when they always smelled. When they

would sleep with me and I would wake up with gum in my hair. Knowing as they crewed me they helped at AS's all the way down. Knowing Nigel will ship off to the Navy after graduation. How nice they are to people. To see these boys grow into honorable manhood. To become young men I look up to and admire..... wow. It took me 7 snot rockets to process that moment. Three more just to type it.

**As we all know, very few moments in life earn 10 snot rockets.*

My family joined me the last half mile along with Nigel's buddy Saleam Elbanna who like Nigel will be joining the Navy, too. A few hundred yards from the finish I see 2 guys running flat out towards us screaming and waving their arms. "Awe crap, it's the cops!" As if I needed another emotional moment, I stood there with my arms outstretched as Daniel Jones and Thomas Grinovich crushed me. "We told you Jamie! We were gonna be here for you! NOW RUN YOUR ASS OFF AND GO GET IT!"

Dora had heard me speak of these guys all the time. That night, she told my parents that seeing Dan and Thomas hugging me almost moved her to tears.

It hurt like hell, but I sprinted it out and crossed the tape. When I stopped my head filled with confusion. I had never been "here" before. What do I do?

"Jamie, go to Dave for your hardware."

"Oh yeah, I should 'prolly do that."

"Jamie, sit here."

"Oh yeah, I should 'prolly sit down."

"Drink this beer."

"Oh yeah, I should 'prolly drink a beer."

"Let's get you showered."

"Oh yeah, I should 'prolly shower."

I felt like Jim Ignatowski at the cab driver exam. "What does

yellow mean?” “Slow down.” “What. Does. Yellow. Mean?”

It took a while to realize it was over, but not for everyone. I took off my medal. I still had friends out there in the second day of heat. We sat on the deck eating with Mark Cudak, Darlene and her crew. I kept staring down the beach and with great joy, one by one my friends finished their suffering off by rubbing their buckle on the boo-boos.

I will run Daytona 100 again. As long as I can. In the meantime, my volunteer is back on and on to Azelea 12/24/50M and help my buddy Winston Fletcher. And I have good news, due to overwhelming demand the DELUXE HUGS are now free. I've been doing some push ups to make sure I don't run out.

