

July 15, 2010

2010 WESTERN STATES 100 MILE ENDURANCE RUN  
MY FIRST 100 MILER AT THE SUPERBOWL OF ULTRA MARATHONS  
SQUAW VALLEY (1960 WINTER OLYMPICS VILLAGE) TO AUBURN, CALIF  
THE HISTORICAL WESTERN STATES TRAIL OF THE GOLD & SILVER MINERS  
41060 FEET OF ELEVATION CHANGE, SNOW, ROCKS, STREAMS, 40 TO 100  
DEGREES, 1600 VOLUNTEERS FOR 460 RUNNERS, AND A FULL MEDICAL  
STAFF OF 50 DOCTORS PLUS 70 NURSES.

I have run for over 25 years but did not know what an ultra marathon was until the end of 2008. At age 50 I competed in a 50 mile run, so at age 51 it was appropriate to attempt a 100 miler. With special thanks to all the Florida Ultra Runners, Gary Cohen/Wekiva State Park runners, my family, real estate clients, Faye my pacer, and my daughter Leslie (who supported me during all hours of the day and night run). Without your support and knowledge this incredible experience probably would never have occurred.

My mental attitude was tested on our flight out. We arrived in San Fran from Orlando (Thursday 24<sup>th</sup>) only to become fogged in. With no other flights available till race day, we drove till 3am to arrive at our hotel in Truckee. After three hours of sleep, we went to Reno Intn to pickup luggage, shop for race items/food, then hurry to registration. Arriving twenty minutes late I thought the race would never take place for me. Luckily I caught the officials leaving the registration room and begged for entry. Be here at 3:30 am tomorrow for the medical, at which time you will receive your race number. Then had to rush for the drop bag area (food/clothing/socks/shoes I would need during the race), which they had taken away four of ten areas. Staying positive under the circumstances, I was approached by a large man watching me unload my bags in the designated areas. He asked me where I was from and wished me well, then asked if he could take a photo of me. He then asked me, "do you know who I am?" It was the famous Cow Man – the second man in history to finish the run. Leslie and I then met a retired gentleman who was delivering the drop bags to the various locations. Turns out he was a Florida Gator and after a conversation with my gator daughter, he took another one of my drop bags for me. Maybe luck was changing? After the pre race talk, met Tony Krupicka the second overall finisher. He trains in Boulder with a distant cousin of mine. At 3pm we enjoyed a pasta dinner in the Olympic village, and then took some photos at the start line clock showing twelve hours remaining. Bed at 7 pm.

Saturday 3:30am passed medical. Weigh in at 152 lbs. 4:30 am photo with Cow Man. With travel mix ups and little sleep I decided my experience would end positive. The goal would be to finish instead of race. 5 am the start (Squaw Valley/Olympic Village) with camera in hand to document the experience. In the first four miles we climb from 6,200ft to 8,750ft, are welcomed by snow on the ground, and a man hammering the gong at Emigrant Pass. A quick look back to snap a photo of the sunrise over Lake Tahoe. What a change from Florida, I was in awe of the beautiful landscape. Knowing there were only six runners from Florida, most ahead of me were experienced in snow. I observed and quickly learned how to shoe snow ski down the hills with only one fall. Somehow through all this amazement my group of five became lost over a mile off course and we were heading further in the wrong direction. After a few hoots a reply

hoot was heard giving us direction again. Trying to stay positive I told the group we would be known as the 102 mile group and that the time lost would be insignificant in a 100 miler. We ran through twenty miles of snow, ten very cold snow melt streams (due to above normal 115% snow fall), 100 degree canyon temps, and wet shoes for most of the first seventy miles. At 22 miles, running a steep decline into Duncan Canyon on various sized loose rocks, my second fall occurred. Luckily I carry a water bottle in both hands and have mastered falling head first and using the bottles to slide on. With a few scraps/cuts I start climbing again toward Robinson Flats (6,730 ft/29.7 miles). After weigh in (150 lbs) I here three ladies yelling "dad", it was two others helping Leslie get my attention. This was my first time to see my crew since the start. Leslie was waiting for me in a lawn chair on top of several feet of snow. After refueling and a hug of encouragement, I was back on my way. Several more miles of snow and it was growing old. Upon arriving at the Last Chance aid station (mile 43.3) weigh in (150.5 lbs) my feet were water logged and a bit tender. A nurse and her assistant quickly removed my shoes and applied meds/bandages. The volunteers in this race treat every entrant as elite runners. Having run in the Junior Olympics, National AAU, and the 100th Boston Marathon I can honestly say they do not compare to the 4/1 ratio of quality volunteers of this event. The bandages were still in place with no blisters for the remaining 57 miles. I broke the Croom fall record, with my third while running another steep decline down into Deadwood Canyon (2,800 ft @ 46.1 miles), falling head first again and being saved by my H2O bottles. The canyons were yielding 100 degree temps. Upon crossing a small bridge (marked 5 runners or three horses at a time) I met the two safety patrol volunteers. This was the start of one of the most brutal climbs, Devil's Thumb, a 2,565 ft climb with 36 switchbacks in only 1.7 miles. During the climb I looked many times at my "Steve don't quit" wristband made by Andy Man and his daughter. Under those conditions it is remarkable how powerful a simple wristband can be. Devil's Thumb aid station (4,365 ft @ 47.8 miles) my weight/hydration was excellent at 151.5 lbs. With a little quad cramping, a volunteer recommended two Tylenol which worked. I also started taking more potassium via bananas, potatoes, and oranges. Down again for 5.1 miles with a fall in elevation of 2,665 ft to El Dorado Creek Canyon (1,700 ft @ 52.9 miles). Then a climb of 1,830 ft for 2.8 miles to Michigan Bluff. After running in the wilderness, for fifty plus miles, it was a welcome to see the quaint town of Michigan Bluff (aid station mile 55.7 @ 3,530 ft). After weigh in (151 lbs) I was excited and motivated seeing Leslie waiting for me. I sat for a while enjoying being served food/drink and a pep talk from my daughter/crew. She walked with me up the hill encouraging me to return to my pace. The next stop was another small town called Forest Hill (3,225 ft @ mile 62 or 100 km). Weigh in was 151 lbs. While refueling, telling my volunteer about one of my Florida running spots (Wekiva Springs), and comparing the year round 72 degree spring water to the 40 degree snow melt streams someone shot a video. My sister discovered the video on u tube. The volunteers were again great and suggested I have a pacer. After meeting Faye (my pacer), picking up my headlight from Leslie and looking at my wristband, we headed back into the wilderness as the sun was setting. Running in the wilderness after dark can be very tough mentally, again the volunteers came through. From complete darkness and silence, you are energized by the lights and sounds of the next aid station. The volunteers get to choose the theme of their stations. With music playing, rope lights, dancing, and decorations it's hard not to be motivated.

On Sunday morning 1:30 am, Faye and I, arrive at the Rucky Chucky near (745 ft @ mile 78) to cross the American River. This year with the above normal snow fall/melt, we cross the river by boat instead of foot. The river is deep with strong current. On the other side the volunteers change my shoes and socks from my drop bag. The bandages are still in place from mile 43.8. Wow, the fresh shoes feel so comfortable. Faye encourages me to eat more as I have only been eating at the stops. She brings me some chicken noodle soup and does that ever taste good. The volunteers have filled my water bottle and mixed my Gatorade in my second bottle. Faye tells me it's time to go and we head out. She has run with me now for sixteen miles and been very supportive. Her lights are superior and a great help as she leads and lights up the trail. She paced me for the final 38 miles. This is her final long run prior to tapering for the Tahoe Rim Run 100 miler in three weeks. She is a mentally and physically strong runner that is passionate about ultras. That combination will provide her success at her race. The following three to four hours prior to sunrise will prove to be very challenging. I am very tired running in the dark through the wilderness. Faye and I rarely encounter other runners but only hear wildlife. Between concentrating on the rocky footing and hydrating, I continuously look at my "Steve don't quick" wristband for moral support. The lights and music of the Brown's bar aid station (89.9 miles) wakes me up. They are offering Quesadillas and beers plus all the other aid items. I am tempted but only go for the Quesadillas. Within the next few miles the welcome sounds of birds tell me the sunrise is soon. With sunrise comes renewed mental and physical strength. Highway 49 (mile 93.5 aid station) Leslie is waiting to greet me, she is a sight for sore eyes. It is 7 am Sunday and breakfast is served with items like bacon, sausage, and a new food (bacon and peanut butter sandwiches). Faye tries and likes the b & p sandwich, I go for just plain bacon and some orange slices. Eating oranges since Last Chance, I am convinced they have kept the muscle cramps away. Now I can taste the finish, start visualizing it and the reality of finishing my first 100 miler is believable. Back on the trail we cross the American river again, this time via No Hands Bridge (mile 96.8). With about a mile and a half left we go onto asphalt as we enter Auburn. I see a sign marked "one mile to finish", my watch says 27hr 51min, and a new goal is set, under 9min for the final mile yields under 28 hours. A sub 9 minute mile after 99 miles is a worthwhile goal. I take off and start passing others, Faye is behind me now, she catches up as we enter the stadium. A large crowd is cheering, the announcer recognizes the runners on the track by name, and then I cross the finish at 27 hours 59 minutes 43 seconds. A 8:43 final mile. I feel proud, excited, and relieved. I have just finished my first 100 mile run, 13 hrs 29 min longer than any race previously experienced, and on one of the most challenging courses in the world. The finisher medal is placed around my neck. I throw away my long sleeve shirt that has been in place now for 30 hours. Finish weigh in at 154 lbs. I must have eaten a lot since sunrise. I never thought I would look forward to a shower in a high school gym sooo much sooo refreshing, I was born again. Then a free but painful massage and a full hot breakfast by the track. Real food again tasted sooo good. I witnessed Gordy Ainsleigh finish in 31 hours (The first man finisher in 1974 as he ran in the Tevis Cup - a 100 mile horse race). 12:30 pm Sunday awards ceremony, temp at 104 degrees.

Monday 9am breakfast, Lakespur Inn Auburn. While having breakfast with Leslie, a couple asked to share our table. I noticed his toe nails and asked if he ran the WS100, yes he did. I talk about my running and asked how he did. He finished 22<sup>nd</sup> overall in

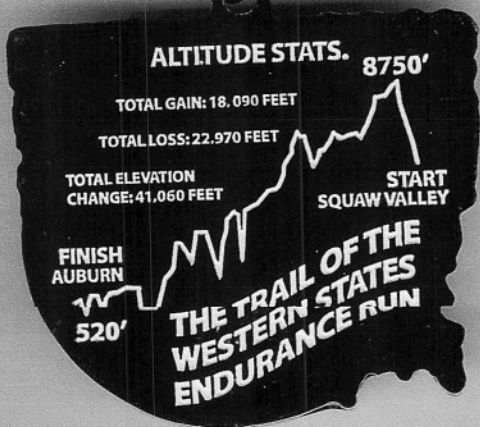
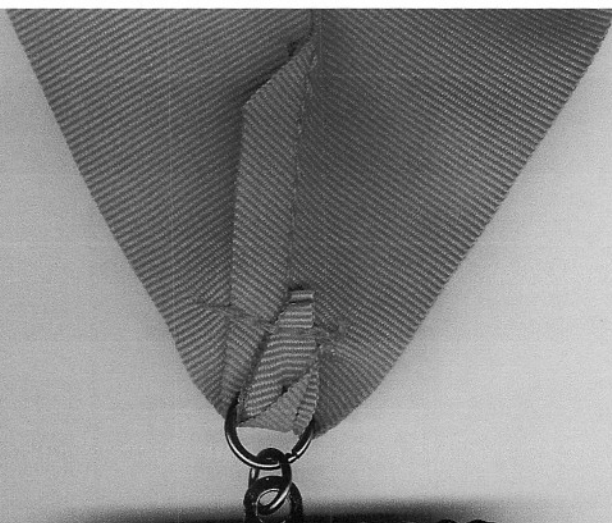
19hrs 30 min or so. After they left Leslie said she recognized him from a photo in the WS magazine. After revisiting the magazine, I realized we had breakfast with the 2009 Montrail Ultra Cup Champion. Victor Ballesteros was the overall winner of the 2009 ultra race series comprised of 11 ultra marathons. That was like having breakfast with the king of ultras comparable to breakfast with Richard Petty. Rest on Monday. During our return flight on Tuesday I met, Tim Johnson, the Ironman swim director. He held the Croom 50 mile record at 6 hr 42 min.

What started out stressful and almost completely missing the race, turned into one of the most incredible life experiences. The experiences were many and extreme; they truly let one feel all the way to their soul. Most only feel the pain in life. If you can pass the pain through mental toughness, you may experience the power of your soul. Our minds and bodies can accomplish much more than we imagine.

For all the runners; if you want to experience the ultimate challenge, great Olympic Village location, the beauty of the Sierras, the best managed race, the absolute best volunteers, and get in touch with your body/mind/soul this is the run for you!

Thanks again to everyone for the training, expertise, friendship, and support.

Happy trails, Steve Wheeler





# Western States 100 Webcast

June 26-27, 2010

Elapsed Time:

Runner:

**30:00:00**

- Race Information
- Overall Leaders
- Top Men
- Top Women
- By Checkpoint**
- My Favorites
- Starters
- Finishers
- Drops
- Live Blog
- Finish Video

### My Favorites

<< Return Steve Wheeler - 447 (Finished)

Refresh	History	View Map	Add Favorite	Remove Favorite
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Steve Wheeler - 447



#### Current Status

Status: Finished  
 Place: 222  
 Distance: 100.2 miles  
 Station: Auburn Finish Line  
 Elapsed Time: 27:59:43  
 Time In: 08:59am  
 Time Out: --:--  
 Next Station: Not Available

#### Information

Gender: M  
 Age: 51  
 Hometown: Altamonte Springs, FL  
 USA  
 Finishes: 0

Est. Time In: --:-- to --:--

CheckPoint	Mileage	Time In	Time Out	Elapsed	Pace	Pace for Section	Place
Squaw Valley (Start)	0	--:--	5:00:00am	--:--	--:--	--:--	--
Escarpment	3.5	--:--	--:--	--:--	--:--	--:--	---
Talbot Creek	13	--:--	--:--	--:--	--:--	--:--	--
Poppy Trailhead	19.6	08:26am	--:--	03:26:00	10:30	10:30	118
Duncan Canyon	23.8	09:18am	--:--	04:18:00	10:50	12:22	125
Robinson Flat	29.7	10:52am	--:--	05:52:00	11:51	15:55	133
Miller's Defeat	34.4	12:26pm	--:--	07:26:00	12:57	20:00	157
Dusty Corners	38	01:04pm	--:--	08:04:00	12:44	10:33	166
Last Chance	43.8	02:01pm	--:--	09:01:00	12:21	09:49	151
Devils Thumb	47.8	03:52pm	--:--	10:52:00	13:38	27:45	195
El Dorado Creek	52.9	05:08pm	--:--	12:08:00	13:45	14:54	198
Michigan Bluff	55.7	06:26pm	06:58pm	13:26:00	14:28	27:51	219
Bath Road	60.6	--:--	--:--	--:--	--:--	--:--	---
Foresthill School	62	08:34pm	08:43pm	15:34:00	15:03	20:19	234
Dardanelles (Cal 1)	65.7	--:--	--:--	--:--	--:--	--:--	--
Peachstone (Cal 2)	70.7	11:01pm	11:01pm	18:01:00	15:17	16:53	224
Ford's Bar (Cal 3)	73	--:--	--:--	--:--	--:--	--:--	---
Rucky Chucky (near)	78	01:31am	--:--	20:31:00	15:46	20:32	213
Rucky Chucky (far)	78.1	--:--	--:--	--:--	--:--	--:--	--
Green Gate	79.8	02:43am	--:--	21:43:00	16:19	40:00	251
Auburn Lake Trails	85.2	04:33am	--:--	23:33:00	16:35	20:22	236
Brown's Bar	89.9	05:54am	--:--	24:54:00	16:37	17:14	218
Highway 49	93.5	07:00am	07:12am	26:00:00	16:41	18:20	220
No Hands Bridge	96.8	--:--	--:--	--:--	--:--	--:--	--
Robie Point	98.9	08:42am	08:42am	27:42:00	16:48	18:53	216
Auburn Finish Line	100.2	08:59am	--:--	27:59:43	16:45	13:37	222

