

## Frequently Asked Questions



Whenever anyone learns for the first time that I run 100-mile races the usual questions start coming. I can count on this happening almost every week at work during the beginning of a meeting. I enjoy answering these questions and watching the reactions. But I hope they go away with a greater understanding of the sport. Here are many of the common questions asked and my answers.

- **How long does it take to run 100 miles?** It depends how tough the course is. My fastest 100-mile run was 19:40 during a fixed time race called Across the Years. The course was totally flat. My fastest time during a 100-mile race is 20:27 at Buffalo Run 100, a pretty flat course. My slowest 100 miles was 39 hours running across the Grand Canyon four times which involved a lot of sight-seeing. My slowest 100-mile race was a very tough course called Mogollon Monster 100 which took me 35:11. The world record for 100 miles is 11:47:21 on a track.
- **Do you sleep during the run?** No, not on purpose. At times there is a bunch of sleepwalking and weaving going on, but not on purpose. The clock is always ticking so stopping to sleep just affects your finishing time. At times when very drowsy, I will lie down by the side of the trail and take a five minute catnap. But it is hard to sleep because concerned runners pass by and keep asking if I'm OK. One time a couple were hesitant and they whispered, "Should we check his pulse?" There are multi-day stage races held where runners stop to sleep. In a 48-hour race, I rested and slept for 17.5 hours but still reached 151 miles.
- **Do you ever walk?** Yes, a ton, but I try to do it very fast. On a flat course like the Pony Express Trail 100, I can usually run most of the first 25 miles, and then take more frequent walking breaks. On mountain courses, I will walk many of the uphill sections and then run most of the flats and downhills. My goal in 100-mile races is to be able to run up mild hills late into the race. If I can, I can usually finish with a good time because others are walking. I've finished many flat 100-mile races with walking less than two miles.
- **What is your mile pace?** Again, it depends on the course. Most of the 100-mile races I do have big mountain climbs and your pace obviously slows on the climbs. On a totally flat race such as Across the Years, I start with an 8:00 pace, by mile 50 I'm averaging an 11:00 pace, by mile 80, a 12:00 pace, and by mile 100, a 14:00 pace. But all this varies greatly depending on how I feel at the time. For very mountainous courses that have monster climbs, at times I'm lucky to be averaging a 20:00 pace. You will hear frequent cautions against starting 100-milers too fast and doing periodic walking each mile. That is good advice if your goal is to only finish. But once you gain experience and wish to compete, you generally throw that advice away. [See Pace to Race.](#)
- **Do you eat while you run?** Yes, if I didn't, I would get sick and stop by 20 miles. You have to learn how to run with a food in your stomach. However, after a while during a race I will lose my appetite and start forgetting to eat. You have to force yourself to eat or you will lose energy. During one year at the Pony Express Trail 100, I consumed: 1.2 gallons of water, 11 cans of Ensure, 2 liters of Gatorade, one six-pack of coke, three bean burritos, 8 mini-bagels with cream cheese and turkey, two thermoses of potato soup, half a can of potato chips and some Guacamole dip, a few Reeses cups, and about 12 Succeed Caps (electrolytes). Usually I will also consume Hammer Gel, but I did not during that run. I didn't eat enough and probably lost about two pounds. I gained this weight back during the following week. Fueling during 100-milers involves a careful balance of fluids, carbohydrates and electrolytes. [See Fueling on the Run.](#)
- **How do you carry all of your food?** Most 100-mile races have "aid stations" between 4-10 miles apart. At each station you can fill your water bottles, eat and drink, and take food for the road. At some of these stations will also be a personal "drop bag" that I arranged before the race to be delivered to

that location. In that bag I can have extra socks, food, or anything I might need. When I started racing 100-milers, I used to carry a lot of stuff with me and have drop bags filled with junk at many locations. Now with experience, I travel very light. I usually only carry two hand-held water bottles and some gels in my pocket. I will put the things I need for night (warm clothes and a flashlight) in one of the drop bags at a strategic location.

- **Why do you use handheld bottles?** I've used camelbacks and waist packs. If I put anything on my back while running it acts as a boat anchor and slows me down. I usually only use one during long adventure runs. I used a waist pack for several years but developed abdomen problems. The problems went away when I went to handhelds. Handhelds are easy to get used to using and they are a great protection when you fall. I have probably saved breaking fingers several times. I let the bottles take the force of a fall rather than my hands. When I broke my hand during a Bighorn 100, I was only carrying one handheld. When I fell, I stuck my open hand out and it caught a rock in just the right place.
- **Do you ever throw up?** Yes, and sometimes I can do it without losing stride. Experienced 100-mile runners know there is no shame in throwing up when your stomach is in bad shape. Most of the time you immediately start feeling better and can carefully ease back into eating again. Some runners brag that they have never thrown up and go slowly just to avoid it. I think they are nuts.
- **Do you ever stop to rest?** At each aid station I will stop to eat and refill water bottles for a couple minutes. I usually don't sit down until after mile 60. One year while running the Pony Express 100 I sat down only four times for a total of ten minutes, including a bathroom break. At other races I haven't done as well, and when I get very cold and sleepy may sit by a warm fire for a while to come back to life.
- **What about the bathroom?** Well, let me put it this way: Ultrarunners quickly get over modesty, especially those who run near the front of the race. Both sexes run together. You learn to avert the eyes and move on. There just isn't time to find secluded private spots. Ladies learn to take care of business about as fast as the men. If runners are hydrating themselves properly, these events occur often.
- **How do you find the time to train?** Most of my training occurs early in the morning before the sun rises and before my family wakes up. As of 2016, I have probably run more than 17,000 miles before sunrise. In 2015 I finally bought a treadmill which makes it convenient getting in some training before work.
- **Do you train every day? How much do you train?** Much less than what you would think. I have discovered that once I have built up my mileage base, I really don't have to run as often to stay fit, as long as I keep doing very long runs. During 2013-16, I concentrated on running very long runs on Saturdays and then mostly resting in between them. I ran 3,200 miles that year, but only ran on average 2.5 days per week. In 2010, I ran 3,400 miles and ran on average 3.5 days per week. In 2016 I ran 43 runs of 50K (31 miles) or longer. As of 2017, I've run 317 runs of 50K or more. [See The Frequent Long Run.](#)
- **Do you keep running in the winter?** Yes, of course. I usually run more miles in the winter than any other time of the year. Many runners take the winter months off and lose fitness. I have continued to run every winter since 2003. As wise runner I knew once said that the secret to being in shape was to never get out of shape. [See Winter Training.](#)
- **Do you ever run on the treadmill.** Yes, I now have a treadmill in my basement and use in year round when the weather is poor or to get a quick run in before work. For me occasional treadmill running helps me develop my foot speed and mental strength. At times I run 30 miles on it in a day. [See Treadmill Training.](#)
- **I've heard that in order to run 100-miles you need do long back-to-back training runs?** Not so. I've never done them and have been successful. I do very long single runs and then make sure I recover from them. I think long back-to-back runs can lead to injury.
- **What about those rigid training plans that tell you how many miles to run each day?** I firmly don't believe in those. I run when it feels like I can, and rest on days I feel like I should. Such training plans lead to burn-out and injury. To push myself, I at times set a weekly goal for miles and try to achieve

that by the end of the week. But I play it by ear on which days I run. I chuckle when I hear people say, “My training plan says I have to run 15 miles today.” [See Training Strategy.](#)

- **Is stretching part of your training regimen?** For me no, unless it is before and after tempo or speed training that tends to tighten up the muscles. I would rather get running than spend a bunch of time stretching. I find that after running a few miles, I’m warmed up nicely. For me muscle strains have been few. In 2013 early in the year I pulled my hamstring and it has affected me ever since, but that happened running a silly 5K..
- **How many miles do you run in a year?** **2002:** 291, **2003:** 566, **2004:** 1,193, **2005:** 2,109, **2006:** 2,576, **2007:** 2,600, **2008:** 3,148, **2009:** 2,865, **2010:** 3,479, **2011:** 3,943, **2012:** 2,065, **2013:** 3,202, **2014:** 3,007, **2015:** 4,564, **2016:** 4,742 for a total of 41,450 miles.
- **Aren’t you afraid running alone at night in the mountains?** For me night running is a very peaceful time to run. Usually at night I only run on very familiar trails or a marked course during a race. In 100-milers it does get lonely as runners spread out and I won’t see another person for hours because we are running at the same pace. Most of these races allow you to have a “pacer” run with you to keep you company for the second half of the race. I usually don’t use pacers except for local races when I want to share the experience with running friends.
- **So you run 100s without pacers or crews?** Yes, most of my 100s have been run without any pacers or a crew. For me, pacers tend to distract me. I worry how they are doing. Sometimes they slow me down. Interesting conversations distract me. The best pacer for me is an experienced runner who knows me well and can play the right mind tricks with me to make me run faster. Crews can be a great help to cut down time in aid stations, but I’ve also observed many runners who spend way too much time at aid stations with family and friends. The objective should be to get in and out in a couple minutes.
- **What about wild animals or serial killers?** My wife is always worried that I’ll run into a serial killer, but so far, so good. I think I can outrun one anyway. I’ve almost run into deer, elk, moose, porcupines, rattlesnakes, skunks, rabbits, bats, birds, and mice. During an early morning run I once came upon an angry mountain lion who was tracking a deer. It screamed at me pretty loudly for a minute but then ran away. I have seen three mountain lions in ten years. I’ve also come upon a few bears, but they have always taken a look at me and ran quickly away. What scared me the most were two sheep dogs who came up from behind quietly during the night and started to nudge me. They wanted the bacon in my pocket.
- **Why do you use a green flashlight?** In 2004, when I was a spectator, high on the Wasatch 100 course in the middle of the night, I observed that many of the front-runners used green handheld lights. I struggled for months running with enough light at night and finally decided to buy a green light, a very durable diver’s light. I was amazed how it helped me run much faster at night. The green light is easier on my eyes and doesn’t wash out the trail. By using a handheld light, the angle of the light is much lower than a headlamp which allows me to see the shadows of the rocks on the trail much easier and there is less tripping.
- **Do you ever get lost?** Yes. Most races mark their courses well with little flags or reflectors hanging on trees and bushes both at turns and along the way to give you confidence that you are heading in the right direction. However, when your mind gets tired, at times you do miss turns. Pacers can help to keep you on course. But everyone eventually experiences the panic of being off course. It is part of the sport. You finally convince yourself that you are on the wrong trail and turn back. For those who aren’t leading the race, looking for foot prints is a great help. I am now very good in spotting fresh footprints. On one 50-mile race, I took a wrong turn with a half mile to go. What I feared most was the ridicule and jokes that would pile on me from my friends as they would see me coming in from the wrong direction. Sure enough, I’m still putting up with that. [See Blunders and Trail Comedy.](#)
- **Why do you like to run 100 miles?** Several reasons. 1. I enjoy the intense challenge, to push myself to physical and mental endurance limits. 2. I enjoy being able to see very remote places with just one-day of effort. 3. I enjoy running at night. 100-mile runs for me always require night running. 4. Because

it is possible 5. Because it teaches me a lot about myself. 6. Because it reduces day-to-day stress. 7. It motivates me to keep my fitness level high.

- **Do you ever win?** Yes, a few races with smaller fields. I'm a mid-pack runner that works hard, has a firm determination not to quit, and can usually finish in the top 25 percent which is pretty good for my age. I do usually fair very well in fixed-time races. I won the pretty complete 2010 Across the Years 48-hour run with 187 miles. For my age, 57 in 2016, I did finish a 100-miler in 20:51, which was the 5<sup>th</sup> fastest in the world in 2016 for runners age 57+. Also in 2016 I won Crooked Road 24-hour race, and ran 110.2 miles at Across the Years which was the 4<sup>th</sup> furthest in the world in 2016 for runners age 55+. [See Running Against the Aging Curve.](#)
- **Who pays you to do this? What do you get for finishing?** The biggest award is just the satisfaction of reaching your goal and finishing. Each race usually has "cutoff" times. If you don't reach locations on the course by a particular time, you must drop out. When I started racing 100-miles, I constantly worried about these cutoff times. Now I am fast enough to stay well ahead of them. If you finish a 100-mile race within the cutoff time, the award is usually a belt buckle. Yes, a big shiny belt buckle. The tradition finds its roots from horse endurance races. I now have a very large collection of custom belt buckles.
- **How often do you run 100 miles?** I've averaged about 8 100-milers per year. In 2016 I set a personal record by finishing 12 100-milers. As of early 2017, I've finished 87 100-milers in twelve years. 87 finishes is 9<sup>th</sup> in the world for career finishes.
- **How many people are crazy enough to run 100 miles?** Worldwide it is estimated that about 32,600 people have finished a 100-mile race since 1980. In 2016, there were about 12,000 runners who finished a 100-miler that year. When I finished my first 100 in 2005, there were only about 1,500 finishers that year so the sport has been significantly growing. But it still is pretty small. In 2013, there were about 240 runners from Utah who finished 100s. The average age for ultrarunners is early 40s. The oldest runners to ever finish a 100-miler were 75 years old. In 2015 about 120 different 100-mile races were held.
- **How long does it take you to recover?** After my first 100-mile attempt in 2004, I could not run again for four weeks. Now, if I don't get injured, I can usually start running again in five days. I can race again in two weeks. Twice I have ran two 100-mile races within five days of each other and did very well in all. If I do longer runs closer together, my body gets trained to recover more quickly.
- **What were your favorite runs?** The runs that I have enjoyed the most have been adventure runs in the Grand Canyon and the Uintas in Utah. I get the most attention locally from my six consecutive summits of Mount Timpanogos. That was crazy. Among my favorite 100-mile races are Cascade Crest in Washington and The Bear in Utah. [See Running 1000 miles in the Grand Canyon.](#)
- **What was your hardest race?** The toughest 100s that I have finished are Mogollon Monster 100 in Arizona and Plain 100 in Washington. Mogollon Monster runs on a very rocky course with long climbs and was hot during the day and cold at night. Plain 100 is a self-supported race with no aid stations and no course markings. It also is about 109 miles. [See review of 32 100-mile courses that I have run.](#)
- **Why have you never run Western States 100?** For me, Western States 100 is not the type of 100-mile race I like for a few reasons. 1. It typically is very hot. My body does not do well with hot races. Heat training helps, but for me recovery is still hard after a hot 100. 2. I enjoy low-key races far more than over-hyped races that seem commercialized. That's just me. 3. Western States requires getting through a difficult lottery process. There are so many other 100-mile races out there that are more beautiful, aren't as hot, and aren't as hard to get into. I observe people who get so depressed about not getting selected for Western States and I wonder if they haven't yet discovered there is a world of ultrarunning outside the Sierra Mountains.
- **What are fixed-time races and why do you run them?** The winner of a fixed-time race is the runner who can run the longest distance in a fixed number of hours. I like these races because of their competitive nature. You can track your competitor's progress and have a more controlled environment to keep a steady pace. I discovered that I can compete very well in these type of races. I only run a

couple of these each year, but I've won a couple and usually place pretty high. My best 12-hours is 67.1 miles. My best 24-hours is 117.8, and my best 48-hours is 187 miles. [See Running Fixed-time Races.](#)

- **What do you think about as you run?** The time passes amazingly fast. I think about my pace, the sights I see, the pain I feel, and the people I meet. I strategize as I go, making plans on what I need at the next aid station stop. I enjoy listening to music as I run and I'm not shy about singing along as I go which my pacers usually hate.
- **You sing while you run?** Yes, at times. Singing gets my mind off the pain and helps me stay awake at night. I think I'm a great singer, but others who run with me have differing opinions. I admit that my singing does fall apart by mile 80.
- **Doesn't this long running hurt?** Yes, sometimes it is agony. Most of the time there is just minor pain and after a few miles the pain shifts to some other place, so I don't have to worry about the first pain. But other times, even at mile 90, I feel no pain and can run very fast. There are wide swings from feeling good, feeling bad, and feeling good again. After all is said and done, the memory of the intense pain fades and I look forward to the next long run. Perhaps like childbirth, but to a lesser degree?
- **Aren't you destroying your knees?** I hope not. My knees have become very strong. I can run down steep hills for many miles without pain. I try to run very few miles on hard pavement. Dirt roads/trails are much softer and easier on your knees. I had knee surgery in 2003 before I started serious running. I was told by the surgeon to not run anymore. Since then I lost about 50 pounds and as of 2017 have run over 42,000 miles on that repaired knee. I think starting to run much later in life than most runners will make a difference in my running longevity. I'm very careful and listen to my body. If it needs rest, I rest and don't feel guilty that I'm not exercising.
- **I heard ultrarunning is bad for your health, is that true?** Sitting on the couch is bad for your health. I've lost 50 pounds and in my late 50s I am in the best shape of my life. I no longer get frequent colds. I don't need to sleep as much as before. I haven't had the flu at all since I started ultrarunning. My resting heart rate is about 50. For me, it is like I've had a new life, full of energy, and if anyone tries to call me old, I say, "Let's go run, I'll race you." Every year some study is published proclaiming that "excessive" exercise is bad. If you read these closely they usually are studying marathon runners who are not in very good shape. [See Health and Life Balance.](#)
- **Do you ever get injured?** When I was first starting out, I would frequently get over-use injuries because I would try to go too far too soon. As I became more fit and experienced, the injuries were far fewer and were minor, usually healing up in about two weeks. But I've had some bad ones. During Bighorn 100, I once slipped, fell, and broke my hand at mile 30. But since I don't run on my hands, I continued on and finished that race. Another time I slipped and fell during the first few miles of a 50-mile race and probably cracked a rib. I continued on and finished that race. During the 2012 Rocky Raccoon 100, I ran on a fractured tibia that kept cracking more as I ran. I finished that race but that was stupid and I couldn't run for six months. Now in my late 50s, muscle pulls are a little more frequent if I do tempo runs. [See Injuries and Rookie Mistakes.](#)
- **Do people ever die during these races?** They are very, very rare. Unlike marathons, most of the runners who attempt 100-milers are in excellent condition. There have been a very small number who have died the day following a race but most of those have been from pre-existing conditions or medication problems. However, hospitalization afterwards are more common. Kidney shutdown is what you will hear about now and then. After my Pony Express race, three runners have been hospitalized, two because of a gall bladder attacks, and the other from overdosing on Tylenol. Years ago Mark Heinemann died of pneumonia related to a bacterial infection after running 207 miles at Across the Years 48-hour run. Joel Zucker died when he returned home after finishing Hardrock 100 in 1998. In 2016 a runner from Mexico died of hypothermia during a 100-mile race in Chile. The race had extreme dangerous weather. More have died in car accidents while returning home from races. Most ultramarathoner deaths recently have occurred in the high mountains doing dangerous adventures without using proper safety precautions. [See Dangers and Safety.](#)

- **Do you run marathons? Ragnar?** I did a few marathons, just for fun. I don't like running on pavement and am not motivated to chase faster marathon minutes. In 2009 I did run three marathons and set a PR of 3:24:49, qualifying for Boston. The following year I ran Boston, setting another PR. But to me, marathons are painful and not very fun. I'll run an occasional 10K race for some speed training. My best 10K was also in 2010, 42:04. In these shorter road races I can usually medal in my age group. I don't train to be fast on roads. But because of good endurance, I can perform well in these types of races. See the chapter: [Dabbling in Road Races](#). Ragnar? I've never run it. It sounds like a fun thing to do with friends, but running a handful of 10Ks isn't very hard, no offense intended.
- **What kind of shoes do you run in?** I run in trail shoes. In recent years I have run mostly in max cushioning shoes called Hoka. My shoes must have good room in the toe box. If they fit right, I don't get blisters. I do change out the insoles at times depending on the terrain, whether my feet will be wet, and because of other factors.
- **What about running barefoot?** The book "Born to Run" really started a barefoot craze. I believe man invented shoes to protect his feet from injury. I think running the distance of an ultramarathon barefoot is asking for an injury. I've seen people try it and observed their beat up feet afterwards. I would much rather finish a 100-mile race with feet that are not sore. I can connect well with the ancients with shoes on.
- **Do you get blisters?** I used to, but I've learned to take care of my feet and also the feet seem to get tougher. Before a race I tape certain areas of my feet as a precaution. When I get dehydrated, the feet are more susceptible to blistering. Also over hydration (fluid-retention) makes blisters more likely. Now I rarely get serious blisters during a 100-miler. Usually I only get minor ones that I don't notice until I clean my feet after a race. [See shoe and foot care](#).
- **Do you change your shoes during a race?** Rarely. If the shoes are performing well, there is no reason to change them. I do very often change or clean out my socks every 30-40 miles or so.
- **How often do you buy shoes?** I usually put 400-600 miles on a pair of shoes. After that, they start breaking down, my feet hurt more, and I start getting hot spots. I usually have several pair and alternate them. So, I will buy a pair of shoes about every other month. My sons fight over my old shoes. They like to wear them.
- **Are you sponsored?** No, and I don't really have any desire for a sponsorship. I use gear that works for me, not gear that would bring me other benefits. I see others who seem to "sell their souls" for a sponsorship and are "over the top" about how the gear helps them perform and hashtag them in all their posts. I am not into gear. You'll see me running with a garbage bag instead of an expensive rain jacket because it works. If a certain shoe doesn't perform well, I'll switch. I'm into running and inspiring others to run, not into gear and getting freebies.
- **Do other members of your family run?** Not as seriously as I do. I have a wife, six children, and six grandchildren. All my kids have been swimmers, most of them captains of their teams. One son runs ultras now and then, and has finished a few 50s and a 100. A couple other kids like casual running. I have an older brother who has finished quite a few ultras and three 100s.
- **I've heard about hallucinations during these runs. Do you get them?** Yes, at times. When sleep deprivation kicks in this can happen. I recall seeing a toy submarine on the trail during a race. I next saw a nice park bench out in the high mountains. Neither were there. In the Grand Canyon the large rocks start turning into buildings or people. It bugs me so much that I have to keep my eyes to the ground until it stops. The next one happens very frequently. It seems my mind detaches from my body. Thoughts like, "We need to make him eat something" go through my mind. It's like I'm two beings, a mind controlling things, and a body that it takes care of. It freaks me out at times.
- **Are you the guy that summited Mount Timpanogos a record six consecutive times?** Uh, yes. The record has been called "a record for the criminally insane." The story is [here](#). I also compiled a list of [unusual runs that I've been the first to do](#).
- **Have you met Dean Karnazes, the "ultramarathon man"?** No, but I've run in a couple races that he was also in. I understand that he is a very nice guy. I respect the impact he has had on the sport and

## My Path to Ultrarunning – Davy Crockett

how he has inspired thousands of runners. He's a very good runner, but is no longer an elite ultramarathon runner. He hasn't won an official ultra since 2006 (Vermont 100), and now runs very few ultras and isn't very competitive in them. He's now 54 years old and now about my speed (or slowness). His marketing folks at times have attributed some questionable records to him. Since his first book came out, he's concentrated on performing and inspiring others rather than racing. I hope new ultrarunners who come into the sport will also become familiar with the true elites in the sport who's racing accomplishments dwarf those of Dean.

- **How many Hundos are you going to do?** They aren't called "Hundos." They are called 100-mile races, or 100-milers. Those who refer to them as "Hundos" probably are cyclists. When someone says "Hundo" to me, I think of a car company. I hope to finish 100 100-milers someday. [See Reaching for 100 100-mile finishes.](#)
- **How did you get into this sport?** The answer is long, and I have a long answer prepared. See ["My Path to Ultrarunning."](#)
- **Are you nuts?** Probably.

Also, [Listen to a podcast](#) where I answered more questions.