

## My first 100-miler – defeat and victory



night, two runners were so lost they had to spend the night up on a ridge and wait until dawn. But I navigated pretty well. I carried my GPS with me and several times it helped me stay on course.

My sore knee was a serious problem at times but I continued to push through it. It was such a pleasant setting for a run, fall colors, snow, pleasant temperatures, and beautiful sunlight. My crew was great at each of the stops and lifted my spirits and cheered loudly as I arrived. With the small field, we became very spread out and at times I wouldn't see another runner for hours. For miles I ran near ultra-legend 62-year-old Hans-Dieter Weisshaar who has finished more 100-mile races than anyone in the world.



Early portion of the Bear 100 course in 2004



I reached 50 miles at about the 13-hour mark and changed into my warm clothes for the night. I was familiar with much of the remaining course because it was the same route as the Midnight Mountain 50K, which I had run recently. The 60-mile mark was a high point. I was feeling great and running strong. But by 8:00 a.m. in the morning, at mile 79, I started to feel sick. During the night my body had retained water and then dumped it continually in the morning. I had a bad imbalance of electrolytes and carbohydrates, and experienced my first hard "bonk." I couldn't understand what was happening

and it felt like I was dying. I pushed on slowly with my pacer Pablo, but at mile 85 it was hot and I just couldn't pull myself out of the shade. I now was in last place. By mile 87, I wasn't moving anymore, and knew I was not going to make the next cut-off. It was time to quit. I had given all that I could. A couple

guys on motorcycles came by and offered to take us forward to the next aid station. I took them up on the offer and DNFed (Did not finish) my first 100-mile attempt.

After a ride to the finish, my family was there to greet me. I announced that I had attempted my first and **last** 100-miler. I watched runners who I had run with finish and I concluded that I just wasn't cut out for the 100-mile distance. The other runners seemed super human. I even said running 100 miles was "stupid." The runners who had finished, and were resting nearby, were kind to me and treated me like a finisher. I did go the furthest of anyone who didn't finish, 87 miles.

Within two days, I changed my tune and vowed to run and finish The Bear next year. I learned many great lessons, but the best lessons were simply from the experience itself and facing the many challenges along the way. Clearly I needed to learn proper fueling and keeping a good balance of electrolytes, carbohydrates, and fluids.

A Bear 100 film was produced using footages from both the 2004 and 2005 race years. I make several appearances in "Dancing The Bear" including a funny night scene when I look totally hammered at an aid station. [You can view the video on YouTube.](#)

I came away from my first 100-mile attempt injured and humbled. I went to various doctors, had an MRI, but it turned out to only be soft tissue, over-use injuries that took a couple months to heal. This gave me time to learn. I received advice and encouragement from Todd Holmes and Joe Kulak. I came to the conclusion that I needed to make the transition to a runner, and truly learn to run. As I recovered, I first ran on soft golf course fairways and worked on my foot speed. I soon put aside the trekking poles which helped me run much faster. I also adopted the use of handheld bottles instead of a cammelback. I felt lighter and still increased my speed some more.

Through the ultralist, I finally became acquainted with local runners including Jim Skaggs who had recently moved to Utah. We got together to run and I took him on a 50K run around Lake Mountain. I had been documenting most of my adventures in a Word document that I had shared with a few friends, but now I started publishing them on the Internet.

I fully recovered from my injuries and in December 2004, I got the idea of running the [Pony Express Trail](#) from my home clear to the Nevada border in stages. (This would eventually evolve into the creation of the Pony Express Trail 50 and 100 race.) I was able to publish two articles about my run in the national publication "Marathon and Beyond." My running skills and speed increased and so did my confidence. I finished 2004 with a total of about 1,400 miles. I realized that I should run a much easier 100-mile race to get my first finish, so I entered the popular [Rocky Raccoon 100](#) in Texas, to be held in February.

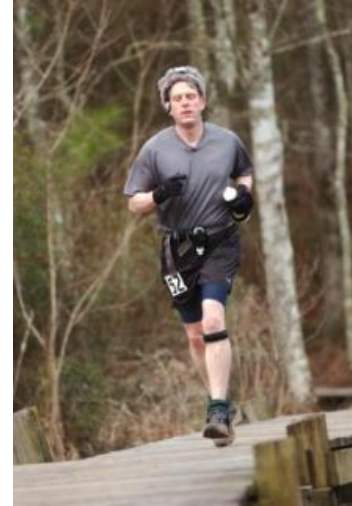


In addition to my lowland winter dirt road training, I added midweek treadmill training for the first time. I noticed my foot speed increasing. I was starting to turn into a runner. My weekly miles increased to about 50 miles per week. Since I would be running in Texas, renting a car from Alamo, I had the great idea of starting to use the name "Davy" as my running name and bring a coonskin hat with me to Rocky Raccoon. Texas is always kind to Davy Crockett and the jokes started at the airport at the car rental counter.



This time, I approached the 100-mile race with great respect. I wasn't racing against anyone else, I was trying to beat the race itself. The course for this race consisted of 20-mile forested loops in Huntsville State Park, north of Houston. I would be running with a large field of about 150 runners. With the flatter course and all my recent training, things went very well early on. I finished the first 20-mile loop in 3:29 in 25<sup>th</sup> place.

People had noticed my name on the entrants list and with my coonskin hat on, I was continually greeted on the out-and-back portions with "Good job Davy", "Looking good Davy", "Keep it up Davy." "Davy Crockett, who are you running from?" I replied "Santa Ana." A few erred and tried calling me Daniel Boone. Hans-Dieter called me "Beaver Boy." I found a group of new friends, most from Colorado.



Wearing coonskin hat at 2004 Rocky Raccoon



I reached 50 miles at about the 10:30 mark, a huge personal record for me and I was running in about 50<sup>th</sup> place. With better education, my fueling strategy had advanced to items such as Gels, Ensure, boiled potatoes, soup, PBJ sandwiches, and Succeed Caps (salt). Also new during this race was my signature green handheld light. It made an enormous difference and let me keep my pace going fast at times during the night.

time and was no longer in a hurry.

At about mile 72, I started to crash. I had a bad blister under my foot, my knee started to hurt, and my leg muscles were thrashed. But I kept on going and was thrilled to consider that I was eight hours ahead of my pace compared to the Bear 100. I mostly walked the final 20-mile loop which took me nearly eight and a half hours, but I knew I had plenty of

Dawn arrived at about mile wind started to blow, but away. Friendly volunteers at some warm oatmeal that hit "had it made," with less than the longest three miles of my the finish, kind spectators congratulated found a jogging pace, and a time of 26:53 in 72<sup>nd</sup> place.



95. I felt a few raindrops and the thankfully the storm stayed the last station greeted me with the spot. They told me that I three miles to go. Those were life. When I finally arrived near clapped, cheered and me. Somewhere inside of me, I finished the race with pride, with

I received the traditional finisher award for a 100-miler, a belt buckle. All my hard work had paid off. I felt happy, but tired. I had accomplished my goal. I flew home that afternoon and after arriving in pain, told my family that I would never run a 100-mile race again. This time that vow wasn't rescinded until 24 hours later. I now was truly an ultrarunner. I held my finisher buckle in my hand and smiled. (I would go on to finish Rocky Raccoon 100 five times by 2012 and received a 500-mile jacket.)

