

BADWATER TO THE BONE

I read the email around 4:30 p.m. on Thursday, February 15th, 2007. “Congratulations! You’ve been selected to participate in the 2007 Badwater 135 mile Ultra Race”. I had to read it again.....then again. I stared at the computer screen one more time just to make sure. I stood up, walked over to the family room to where my wife Melanie was and said, “Well, I didn’t make it into Western States, but I just got selected to run Badwater!” She said, “You’re not an extremist, are you?”

Two months earlier I was sitting in the same chair waiting for my name to come up on the Western States 100 Lottery Selection. To no avail, my name was not drawn. Disappointed, I waited eagerly for January 4th to roll around so I could apply for Badwater. “Be careful what you wish for” I said to myself as I clicked on the “submit” button.

The Badwater 135 is a footrace which begins at Badwater, Death Valley, California. Basically, the hottest place on the earth. At 282 feet below sea level, Badwater is the lowest elevation in the Western Hemisphere. From Badwater, the race finishes at the Mt. Whitney trailhead, 135 miles away. It used to be called the Badwater 146 until just a few years ago when the race finished at the top of Mt. Whitney at 14,495 feet, the highest elevation in the continental U.S. Now though, the U.S. Forest Service won’t allow the race to continue up to the top on the trail. One must have a hiking permit to reach it. I intend to get one.

I have run Badwater before. 4 times to be exact, but only one finish, and that was in 1995. Now 12 years later, I’m a little tougher and a little wiser (although some would think otherwise because of me attempting this race again). I am due for a good race there. It’s in the cards. I can feel it. Destiny is 146 miles away.

On the weekend of February 17th, I began to get organized. My flight to Las Vegas, hotel arrangements in Furnace Creek, Lone Pine, and Las Vegas were made, and the most important aspect of this race, assembling my crew.

My crew consisted of my leader, Dan Stake from Kingfisher, Oklahoma. Dan and I have done several stage races including Marathon de Sables and Desert R.A.T.S. Dan is driving his mini-van from OK, so renting the SUV is out and so is the expense of that. Dan knows what it will take to get me to the finish line. He was my #1 choice. Next is Anthony Fletcher from here in Houston. Anthony used to be a client of mine and now is a good friend. Anthony crewed me at the HURT 100 in Hawaii in January of 2006 and did a great job. I knew that he was a must for the team. Next is Ruben Garcia, also of Houston. Ruben also used to be a client of mine and is now also a good friend. Ruben paced me at the Hardrock 100 back in 1999. Ruben has done the Boston Marathon and the Hawaii Ironman. He will be a good pacer for me when the going gets tough. Next up is Anilise Larden who currently resides in Portland, Oregon. Anilise also used to live in Houston and be a client. She is now, of course a good friend. She is currently a wellness coach for Nike. She has always said she wanted to see what it would be like to

experience a 100 miler first hand before she did one herself. She will also be a great pacer and crew person when the going gets tough. She is bringing along her boyfriend, Matt Hickok. Matt is also an ultrarunner.

On March 24th, my four Mt. Whitney hiking permit confirmations came in the mail. Now I really have to go to the top! 11 more miles up, 11 more miles down for a total of 157 miles!!

During March, I also received money from some generous friends for expenses for the race: Suzanne Hollifield, the Asakura family (parents of students of mine), Victor Sanchez, and Carolyn Debrick. So far, everything is going as planned. Novartis Medical Nutrition, the people who make Boost Nutritional Energy Drink, sponsored me for 5 cases of the drink. Now all I have to do is train!

Training officially began after track season was over. That was April 6th. I'm a middle school PE teacher and coach, and I was waiting for that day to come when I could really put in some miles. I'm also a personal running coach with my company called runnerOne. April was a slow month for clients so I really began upping my own miles. Training went on without a glitch. Doing runs of 20, 27, 30, and a 34 miler to Kemah all felt effortless.

A week of training usually went with either doing a trail run or Rice Stadium steps on Monday, a long run of 10-15 miles on Tuesday, back to Rice on Wednesday, and a shorter run on Thursday to rest for Saturday's run. Fridays were either off or an easy 3 or 4 miles with a client. Weight training was every other day.

May came and I really pressed hard. 1st week was an 80 mile week, then an 85 mile week, then a 95 mile week with a 35 mile run around Houston. The next week was a shorter week, but I had a great 40 mile run around Houston. I was feeling stronger and fitter than ever. Now if the heat will just come! I also learned that I am in the 3rd wave of starts for Badwater. There are 3 waves: 6:00 a.m., 8:00 a.m., and 10:00 a.m. Rookies and slower runners go at 6:00 a.m. Middle-of-the-packers at 8:00 a.m. and the "faster" runners at 10:00 a.m. I also had a VO2 max test done to see where I was physically. My VO2 was 57! Not bad for being 45 years old! School would be out soon and I could hardly wait. June will be at least a 400 mile month with no school and lots of time to train.

June training pretty much went as planned with lots of miles and strength training. Later in the month, all the training and miles began to take its toll. Couldn't sleep, but was tired. Losing weight, but eating lots. Focused, but edgy at times. Classic signs of overtraining. Even my second VO2 max test on June 13th was sub-par. I was tired going into it and was wasted. I could only manage a 53 this time around. July's test would be better I felt since I would be tapering for the big day.

My last "big" run came on July 7th of 40 miles in just over 6 hours. It was not quite as hot as I wanted, but it sure was humid enough. It was 87 degrees with the humidity of 90% or above. After this run, the tapering finally began. I ran just over 60 miles the week of July 8th with a 20 mile run on Saturday, July 14th. After that run, my wife, Melanie threw me a "Send Off" party that night with 50 friends and clients attending. It was a special night for everyone to wish me luck and to be safe. It was also a sad night as Anthony Fletcher, one of my crew, withdrew himself from crewing. He had knee surgery on June 22nd and he wasn't recovering as fast as he wanted. I respected his decision and making that choice. So now it would be up to the "Fantastic 4" to get

me to the finish line: Dan, Ruben, Anilise, and Matt. My last VO2 test was on July 19th. It was 57 again! Just like in May.

On Friday, July 20th I arrive in Las Vegas as Dan picked me up from the airport and we drive over to the luxurious Motel 6 on Tropicana Blvd. Ruben flies in on Saturday. We met Anilise and Matt at the pre-race meeting in Death Valley the next day.

Sunday, July 22nd. We three got up, packed our bags and headed to the Wal-Mart Supercenter on Charleston Ave to pick up all the supplies and food we will need for the next 4 days. Gatorade, water, fruit snack packs, chicken, hamburger meat, bread, tortillas, ice, just to name a few of the items we purchased for the journey. Finally, we headed out to Furnace Creek at 10:30 a.m.

We arrived at the Furnace Creek Visitors Center at 12:30 for runner check-in. I got my goody bag, took my mug shot for the webcast, and then grabbed my Coleman 82 quart cooler every racer received. Then the 3 of us headed over to the Furnace Creek Ranch to get our rooms and wait until the pre-race meeting at 3:30.



Going to get our Coleman Cooler



Entrance to the Furnace Creek Visitors Center

The pre-race meeting lasted 2 hours with Chris Kostman, the race director leading the meeting. We heard the Ranger from the National Park Service talk about safety. An officer from the California Highway Patrol discussed safety, and Dr. Lisa Bliss, also a runner in this year's race, talk about safety. She said that there is "nothing healthy" about running 135 miles. We all laughed and giggled at that one. Then we saw and heard Dr. Ben Jones and his wife, Denise gets inducted into the Badwater Hall of Fame. They both speak, and finally, a few last words from Chris, and the meeting is over.

At the end of the meeting as we were heading out the door, I see Anilise and Matt. We exchanged greetings and hugs and headed back to the Ranch to get them their room. Afterwards, we ate dinner consisting of pizza and beer. This was a great way to get ready for the next 2 days ahead.

Monday, July 23rd I got up promptly at 7:00 a.m. and began my pre-race ritual of eating Chocolate Fudge Pop-Tarts and a Dr.Pepper. I hooked my iPod up to some speakers to play my theme song blaring. My theme song for the race was James Thurogood's "Bad to the Bone." We all leave in Dan's van together at 8:30 a.m. The rules state that we can only have one crew vehicle between the start and the first checkpoint, which is Furnace Creek at mile 17.4.



Before heading to the start.



Dan's mini-van. Ready to go!

As we drove to the starting line at Badwater, we passed other runners who have started at 6:00 a.m. and 8:00 a.m. Dan honks the horn and we all wave as we pass each runner. We arrived at Badwater Basin at 9:15 am. It is already 108 degrees. It is an overcast day, which means lower temps, but higher humidity. I check in, get weighed, and go about my business of pre-race bathroom jaunts and just basically getting mentally ready. We took my picture in front of the Badwater sign and also all of the crew.



Badwater before the 10:00 a.m. start.



The Fantastic Four: Ruben Garcia, Dan Stake, Anilise Larden, and Matt Hickok with me in the middle.



Dan and Anilise getting ready. The arrow points to the “Sea Level” sign.

I lubricated with Vaseline all tactical places that chaffing may and will occur. Chris Kostman, the race director, gets on the megaphone and says, “10 minutes until we start! Don’t think about the 135 miles ahead of you. Don’t think about the 120 degree heat. Don’t think about the 16 mile climb up Townes Pass. Don’t think about the 8 mile climb up to Father Crowley’s point. And don’t think about that last 12.5 mile climb up the finish. Don’t think about all the pain and agony you will go through to the next two days. It will be worth it.” We sang the National Anthem, and just like that, the 33 of us are off.



10 seconds into the start. Lookin' strong!

Everyone cheered and screamed as we took off toward Furnace Creek. Luckily, we had a 10-15 mile an hour tailwind which was pushing us. The overcast sky doesn't make it seem like it is 112 degrees. Actually, it was kind of nice.

As everyone settled into their pace, I could tell that this was the FAST group. 10 or so runners were already ahead of me in the first ¼ mile. I said to myself not to worry about them, just run your own race. I turned on my iPod and cranked up the tunes, settling into a comfortable 8:30 mile pace. I actually felt pretty good, which scared me.

My crew passed me and offered me encouragement. They then "leapfrogged" the entire race with me. This means that they drove ahead 2 or 3 miles at a time, waiting for me to catch up, see if I need anything, and then fulfilling any requests I had. The funny acronym for C.R.E.W. is "Cranky Runner, Endless Waiting".

I caught up to them around 3 miles and I had already drunk my 32 ounces of Gatorade. Ruben walked along side of me to switch out Camelbaks. Anilise and Dan also walked beside me spraying and sponging me down with cold water while I got sorted out. Then I'm back to running. This routine goes on until we get to Furnace Creek at mile 17.4 miles, the first checkpoint. It is 117 degrees. I've already drank 7 quarts of Gatorade plus the 2 Boosts, making a total of 7 ½ quarts of fluid. I arrived at FC at 12:36 p.m. I am 24 minutes ahead of schedule. "That's OK", I say to myself. The "cooler" weather and tailwind made me do it. Matt and Anilise got into their Xterra to serve as the backup "gofer" vehicle. Now everyone is happy!





On the way to Furnace Creek. Still lookin' strong!

I cruised on by the checkpoint calling out my race number as I see other runners cooling down, taking a break, or tending to blisters on their feet. Next checkpoint is Stovepipe Wells. 24.6 miles away.

An issue begins to occur about mile 20 as I am beginning to chaff between the legs. Unlike here in Houston with the humidity, you drip with sweat, and your clothes are soaking wet as there is no evaporative cooling effect. Well, now here in the “dry heat”, the sweat is evaporating, and the salt and other minerals left behind are accumulating on my shirt and shorts. This created a cardboard feeling effect on the shorts making them stiff. That stiffness rubbed the inside of my thighs raw as the Vaseline is not working. The next alternative was putting white athletic tape around my thighs. This helped, but it was too tight as I ran down the road. In the meantime, Matt and Anilise drove to Stovepipe Wells to see if Medical had a solution to the problem. They came back about 45 minutes later with some Sport Shield packets. The Sport Shield along with Dan’s supply of Hydopel to put on other “sensitive” areas did the trick.

Around the marathon point, I got my first “hot spot” on my right big toe. I tell the gang, and they meet me about a ¼ mile up the road with the MASH unit ready to go. It gets fixed, and then another hot spot on the left toe comes up about 2 miles later. Again the MASH unit is ready.



On the way to Stovepipe Wells. Mile 35, and 118 degrees

By the time I got to Stovepipe Wells, they have patched and repatched my hotspots about 4 times. Even through all this, I managed to run to Stovepipe Wells (mile 42 and the 2nd checkpoint) in 7:01. 44 minutes ahead of my 32 hour finish schedule!

Matt and Dan are there waiting at SPW ready to do a major overhaul of my feet. Anilise went to get ice as Ruben went to get me an ice cream sandwich! The frustration sets in as I can't understand why I am having problems with my feet. I don't know if it is the dry heat, the burning asphalt, or a combination of both. I never had this kind of problem in Houston training at any time. This pit stop takes 20 minutes. The ice cream and the time sitting down were good, but it was time to go.





Blister repair at Stovepipe Wells.

Ruben decided to be my first pacer of the race, as he wanted to run/walk with me to get some exercise in. I stood up and I could feel the stiffness in my legs. I began a slow walk to climb out of Death Valley. It is 5:22 p.m. and 115 degrees. I now faced a 16.5 mile, 4956 foot climb up to Townes Pass and out of Death Valley. This climb is deceiving. It is steady and upward. It seems like it goes on forever. The tailwind I had for 35 miles is now a crosswind blowing left to right at about 20 mph. My legs finally loosen up and I began to run a little bit, but I'm out of my previous groove and it is a struggle to get going. So I walked and ran up this section.

Ruben and I talked about this and that, and at the 1000 foot elevation sign I told him it was dinner time (he is our official cook). I'm getting hungry as now and I am craving salt and fat. I told him to go ahead and begin cooking up some grub. "Chicken Fajitas!" I yell out and away he goes in the mini-van. Dan and Anilise began the pacing duties as I am pretty much walking now. I was running low on calories and needed some "real" food.





Going up to Townes Pass. Floor of Death Valley in background.





These last 3 pics of Dan exchanging my “head wrap”. Notice the salt deposits on my shorts. I just changed shorts only an hour before this.

Finally, at the 2000 foot elevation sign and this little “Oasis”, Ruben was there waiting patiently for us. It is mile 50.5 and it is 8:00 p.m. It has taken me 3:40 to do 8.5 miles. Now, my pre-determined schedule has caught up with me. The crew again began to take a look at my feet while I chowed down on a chicken fajita taco. Man! Is it delicious! After eating, I changed into some new Texas shorts. The ones I’m wearing were chaffing me badly. This little break took about 15 minutes or so, and I am back on my feet. Stiffness has set in again, and the slow process of loosening up begins. It is now Matt’s turn to go with me. After about 30 minutes of walking, I felt warmed up and tried to run. The chicken taco plus the cooler air does wonders for my psyche and attitude. I began to run and run hard up to Townes Pass. We passed many runners in this section as I am feeling great. I tell each runner I shoot by, “I’m back, baby!” I reached Townes Pass (58.7 miles) at 11:30 p.m. still feeling good. It is a nice 94 degrees.

A 3316 foot drop into Panamint Valley in only 9.4 miles. Most of this drop in elevation is at the first 6 miles of this descent. It is a quad crushing downhill with banked switchbacks that don’t make the descent any easier. It is something that you have to be careful with or this one will “trash” the quads and make them weak the rest of the race.

I took it very easy going down into Panamint. About 5 runners passed me on the descent. I told Matt not to worry; I will pass them on the next climb. Coming down we could see across the valley the line of red lights from support vehicles. The lights traveled all the way to the other side where the next climb begins. It is a pretty cool site, but scary because I could see where I still have to go. We eased on down onto the Panamint Valley floor, and I told Matt to go ahead and have the MASH unit set up once again at Panamint Springs. I’m having foot problems again. I need to take care of them ASAP. I felt good as I ran the whole way across the valley floor into PS ready for a pit stop. I arrives at 2:28 a.m. and mile 72.

I could see a line of crew vehicles at the parking lot of the restaurant. Some were waiting for their runners. Some runners are taking a prolonged break before the next climb. People are passed out everywhere from the day’s (and night’s) event. I sat down and I just wanted to get a leg massage. Dan massaged my right leg, Matt rubbed down my left leg, and Ruben massaged my shoulders and neck. It felt sooo good! I looked up to the night sky, and the stars are brilliant! The Milky Way fanning across the sky with a ¼ Moon slowly going down just above the Inyo Mountains. It was a very surreal moment. My eyes faintly close and I’m asleep.

Next thing I know, everyone is telling me it is time to go. “Oh no!” I tell myself thinking how long I was out and how much time I lost. I glanced at my watch when I stand up. It is only 2:37 a.m.

Well, that little rub down and power nap rejuvenated me. It was time to tackle on the 2nd climb of the race



This photo taken at Father Crowley's Point Elevation 4000 ft. Mile 80. Looking back over the course. You are looking at Panamint Valley. Red arrow indicates road descending into PV, mile 66. Blue arrow indicates Panamint Springs Resort. Mile 72. Then the 2030 foot, 8 mile climb.

3080 feet in 18 miles. 2030 feet of that climb comes in the first 8 miles. Anilise decided to pace me to Father Crowley's point at mile 80. Still feeling pretty good at this point, I began to run. We wind our way up the mountain, passing everyone that passed me on the way down. It is still a pretty cool 90 degrees as the 8 miles go fast with her. We reached FCP at sunrise with a beautiful view of what I've just accomplished in the rear view mirror.



Sunrise over the Coso Range.



Anilise with me just before Sunrise.



At this point, Dan joins me for a little camaraderie. Once again, I began to get hungry, ready for some breakfast. “Breakfast Tacos!” I say to Ruben. He says, “Coming up!” and drives on down the road to set up the rolling Taco Stand. Dan and I walk and run, walk and run, up and up the winding road. At every turn, we think that we are going to see the mini-van with Ruben holding his ready-made creation for me. But no, every turn is a disappointment. “Where is that #\$@*^ Ruben?” I said to Dan. Dan can’t believe it either. “How #\$@!*% far did he drive up?” I say as my mouth is salivating. Finally, we get to Anilise and Matt in their Xterra parked on the roadside, and we still can’t see the van. “Guys,” I said. “Would you go get me my breakfast, please? I’m running on fumes!” They, of course, abide and drive off. About 5 minutes later Dan and I crest a hill and there is the van, about a ½ mile away. Then about 30 seconds later, Anilise jumps out of her SUV and runs across the road with taco in hand at around mile 85.

The taco hits the spot with a little Gatorade to wash it down. When we get to Ruben, Dan decided he wanted a taco and hands over the pacing duties to Matt. Matt and I run a little, walk a lot in this section as I let the taco settle in my stomach. Just before we reach the next time check station at mile 90 at the Darwin turnoff, Matt and I come upon a scorpion in the road. Not just any scorpion, but a GARGANTUAN scorpion. It is about 4 inches long! We can’t tell if it is alive or not, nor did we bother to see or care. But I kind of wish I had my camera to take a picture to show my daughters.

We finally arrived at the Darwin Turnoff (elevation 5050’) at 8:14 a.m. 22 hours and 14 minutes into the race. I crossed the road to check out the blister situation once again.

Dan and Matt did their thing to minimize any damage. My neuroma was flaring up in the left foot. (Neuroma pain is classically described as a burning pain in the forefoot. It is caused by nerves in the ball of the foot squeezing together causing a “bump”.) So along with the hot spot right where the neuroma is occurring, it certainly does not tickle. I was very concerned as the pain was getting worse and worse. After a short 6 minutes here at Darwin, Dan took the duties going with me. We began to walk/run every 1 or 2 reflector posts alongside the road. This was very frustrating because the rest of my body felt fine and this is the easiest part of the course. This section from mile 90 to the Town of Lone Pine (mile 122.5) drops 1350 feet. It is a gradual descent and I should have been running this trying to make up time. But the foot was hurting and I begin to have a little pity party. I didn't say much, I'm just concentrating on putting one foot in front of the other. Matt and Anilise, along with Ruben, alternated meeting us at 1 mile intervals.

We passed the 100 mile mark at 11:55 a.m. (25 hours, 55 minutes). It was 108 degrees, but the sun bore down on us. The 10 miles took me 3 hours and 40 minutes to complete. “\$#+*&! I'm moving slow!” I say over and over to myself. I began calculating the pace I was doing and when I would finish tomorrow. “Would I beat my time of the last time I finished? (42:55)”. “This is a nightmare! I should be in Lone Pine by now!” I now concede that the hiking permits won't be used on Wednesday, but I keep on moving.

Just passed the 100 mile mark in my pity party, I tell Dan I need to cool off with some A/C. I really don't need it, but it is an excuse to sit down. We crossed the road as Dan put my official race stake in the road to mark my exit point. I get in on the passenger side. Since the van won't be efficient in cooling just idling, Ruben drives back up the course about 3 or 4 miles to get the A/C cooling. It really doesn't do any good. I just wasted 8 minutes of the race.

As I get out of the van at the point I got in, Ruben wants to hang with me and Dan takes over the driving duties.

One by one, other runners begin to pass me. It is demoralizing. I started to count them, but soon I lose count and really, I just don't care anymore. I walk and walk. Miles pass and the pain gets more intense. I sat down every so often just so I could get some relief.

We pass the ghost town of Keeler (mile 107.8) and head into the Owens Lake Bed which is dry. It begins to get very windy as the wind is a crosswind. It is stirring up the dust in the lake bed and the sand was stinging our ankles and legs. I put Ruben on the left side of me to partially shield me. We see a dust storm up ahead forming on the other side of the lake bed.

Around 6ish, Matt and Anilise decided to go into Lone Pine to get our hotel room and get more ice. Also, Dan trades out with Ruben. Matt asked me if I want anything, and I tell them a cheeseburger and fries would be nice. “No problem!” He says and they drive off. About an hour and a half later, they show up with food in tow. At this point I'm at mile 117. I eat half the cheeseburger and about half the fries. It really hits the spot as I down a Dr. Pepper even though I wish I had a chocolate shake to go with it. It fills my belly as the sun is setting and it becomes to get cooler.



Inyo Mountains around mile 117.



At mile 117. The black zig-zag line indicates the Mt Whitney Portal road to the finish. The end of the line is Mile 133.



“The road goes on forever, and the party never ends.” – Robert Earl Keen



“Hey Tim. I’ve got some stuff and it is real good!”

Right after the meal, Dan brings up in the conversation that he has some painkillers in his backpack. He feels it may help my foot pain go away. I say, “OK, give me one.” 30 minutes passes and I feel no relief. I say, “Let’s try another one.” He says, “Hmmm...let’s wait a little bit.”, as you’re only supposed to have one every 4 hours.

Another 30 minutes passes and still no relief. Just before we get to the Lone Pine turnoff, Dan agrees to give me another painkiller.

Darkness falls as we get to the turnoff at mile 120. 2.3 miles to the next checkpoint at Lone Pine. It is 9:17 p.m. We come upon a McDonald's on the left side on the outskirts of town. I say, "Dan, I sure could go for a chocolate milkshake right now!" He says, "You want one?" and off he heads to the MickeyD's door. As I am walking by myself, the pain is still intense and once again I begin to calculate my finishing time. I tell myself, "I've got to finish this thing under 40 hours or I won't respect myself in the morning!" 2:00 a.m. is the 40 hour mark. "I've got to do it. It doesn't matter how much it hurts!" So I begin to run, and run I did.

I don't know if it was the painkiller or not, but it felt better to run. My legs felt strong and relaxed. My foot, I suppose of the different footstrike, didn't hurt as much. I felt rejuvenated and my attitude made a 180 degree turn. I reached the checkpoint at 9:42 p.m., 35 hours and 42 minutes into the race. It has taken me 13 hours and 29 minutes to do 32.5 miles. I was one of the slowest runners in this section. I had slipped to 52nd place.

Still running, I made the left hand turn on Whitney Portal Road with 12.25 miles to go. The other 3 crew members were cheering me on from the other side of the turn. "Where's Dan?" they yell. I responded and they all laughed. Dan, not knowing that I was running, was feverishly trying to catch up with me. Running with my Camelback in one hand, and my chocolate shake in the other, the crew said he was a sight to see.

The crew picked up Dan and caught me about 2 minutes later still running up the road. This last section rises 4671 feet in 12.5 miles. It is an unforgiving climb to top off the world's toughest race. Dan handed me my shake and uses profanity at me because I made him run so fast to try to catch me. Matt then jumped out of the van to pace me to the finish. I tell the crew to phone my wife, Melanie, my mom and dad to tell them I am close to the finish.

I am running, and I am running hard up the mountain road. It's time to make up time and places. I radio the van to ask where the next runners are. Everyone ahead of me is walking, but I'm not. Every few minutes, I pass another runner who can't believe I am running. We keep our headlamps off to sneak up on the unsuspecting walkers, only to turn them on when cars pass us coming down. I'm a big bass as I swallow up guppies one at a time.

We pass men and women, huddled over and head down. One woman walker had calf cramps so badly she was walking up backwards. We rounded corners and looked back at the line of creeping headlamps and headlights coming up the mountain. I have passed them all. I have never felt better. Every crew van was cheering me on.

Every so often I ask how much further as I am still calculating my finish time. At one point, the crew says 3 miles to go. It is 12:15 a.m. "I can break 39 hours!" I say to Matt and push harder. Then about 10 minutes later, I ask again how much further. They say, "2.6 miles!" "That's bull#@&*!" Matt and I say. "We're closer than that!" The crew was mixed up on lookout points and really wasn't sure. I backed off the pace as I wasn't sure either and I don't want walk. Eventually, this cost me to break 39 hours.

With about a mile to go, I change back into a pair of Texas flag shorts for the finishing photo. "Gotta represent!" I say to the crew as they all smile and give me high fives. 5

minutes later we entered the Whitney campground, through a parking lot and I could see the floodlights of the finish. I dashed across the finish line in 39 hours, 8 minutes, and 40 seconds with a 29th place finish and a smile on my face. I had the 3rd fastest time for this section. Feeling ecstatic that I did it, but relieved that it is finally over! Will I do it again? You bet I will. There is nothing else like it in the world.





With race director Chris Kostman



TEAM TIM! BADWATER TO THE BONE!