

Badwater 2001

Rick Miller's Account

My Account of Badwater starts 2 weeks before the race. I had a hard time sleeping **I hate tapering!** So I started reading the book to the Edge by Kirk Johnson I thought it was an awesome tribute to ultra running, a friend bought it for me. I didn't want to read to the Edge (the book) or see Running on the Sun (the movie) before running Badwater, I thought that it might make me too nervous. But after reading Kirk's writings it had a calming effect on me. I thought of Kirk running Badwater not me, which worked out great.

23 July Monday:

Barb drove me to Enterprise Rental car to pick up our Van; Enterprise buffed us up by giving us a big discount (thanks). We were suppose to get a mini Van but they had a large number of 1 ton Chevy white Vans on their lot, just what we needed. I drove the mega Van home and Mark McKinney met me at our house to take out the Van seats and put the ice chests in. Barb, Mark and I went to Albertson's and did the last minute shopping.

That evening Barb cut up fruit and I baked potatoes, I used a syringe with a big gauge needle to inject Soy sauce into the potatoes (a trick that Barbara Elia taught me). We finally got to bed about 10:00pm.

24 July Tuesday:

4:00am our morning started, Barb and I loaded the remaining food into the ice chests and waited for Mark, Elaina and Chris to arrive. We left about 6:00am and dropped the Explorer over Mitch's. The plan was for Mitch to drive the Explorer to Panamint Springs Wednesday after work so we could have a backup vehicle at Badwater. We had Breakfast at Denny's (a BIG breakfast) and left Ridgecrest with big bellies, I remained silently nervous.

We arrived Death Valley about 9:00am, we parked the Van under a large tree and stenciled my name and race number on all 4 sides. We checked into our room about noon and unloaded the necessities. We had lunch and I had my first Portabella Mushroom Sandwich, maybe it helped me during the run maybe not. Barb, Chris, Elaina and I attended

the 2:00pm meeting, we saw all the runners (I was silently bubbling over). Chris and I went to the pool while Barb and Elaina attended the blister care/prevention class given by Denise Jones. They started performing their magical taping act on my feet as soon as they got back to the room. Barb, Chris and I decided to get a bite to eat so we headed to the restaurant and had a Lemon Meringue pie. After the snack we picked up some ice to top off the ice chests for the days ahead. Barb and Elaina cut fruit for the run and videotaped the fun. We finally went to bed at 9:30pm, I slept well just had to pee every hour (hydrated to the max).

Barb got up at 4:00am the rest of the crew followed, I slept in as long as I could.

25-27 July Wednesday-Friday:

We left for the start of Badwater at 5:00am, there were really bright stars in the dark sky. I felt that the stars were eyes of my family and friends watching my progress, it was a weird nervous time for me.

When we arrived the air was warm and felt humid, the temperature was about 96 degrees. My Crew and I walked down to the Badwater lakebed and looked up at the mountain wall. Elaina asked what was on the side of the wall? I told her a sign that said sea level, we all said "WOW". After a long series of pictures the race started. I fast hiked the first 2 to 3 miles and got my head together for the task at hand. I started relaxing and got into my game plan, simply "be smooth, steady, efficient and methodical". I saw Ben Jones about mile 3; the Mayor of Badwater was clapping for me and said I was smart for starting out slow, I felt good.

The mountains opened up and I was in the sun for the first of many miles, Mark joined me in the sun about mile 8. We ran to Stovepipe Wells together through the toughest part of the course. I ate really good throughout the Valley which consisted of Strawberries, Kiwi, Bananas, Water Melon, Honey Dew Melon, Cantaloupe, Slimfast (Creamy Chocolate), Grilled Chicken with Swiss Cheese wrapped around it, Spinach Tortillas with Macaroni & Cheese and Tuna (my secret weapon). The Valley was starting to heat up a bit; I started catching up to some of the runners who had started faster than me. One of my fellow runners that I caught up to at mile 30 was Chris Moon, an extremely tough guy. He's a double amputee from England and you can read his bio at <http://www.badwaterultra.com/>.

I arrived at Stovepipe Wells about 4:30pm and changed into Teva running sandals. Elaina took over from Mark and we headed up Townes Pass. My Back started to feel a little stressed from the Tevas so I ditched them and put my original New Balance back on. I started feeling a little nauseous, so I ate 3 Roloids and wolfed down a zip lock baggie of Mac & Cheese while hiking up to the Pass. Elaina said we had passed Marshall Ulrich, he's a Badwater legend doing the first quad crossing. He had already ran from Badwater to the top of Whitney and back to Badwater. He started his second trip with me and would be going up and back again. Read his bio at <http://www.badwaterultra.com/>. I didn't see him so in my mind he was still in front of me (I'll explain later). We had fun watching the sun set, I looked at my thermometer it was 118 degrees. Three quarters of the way up the pass 2 friends from Ridgecrest showed up, Tom Miller and Phil Martin. It was great to see them, I thanked them for coming out. We got to the top about 11:00pm, at the top I had a bowl of Chicken Noodle Soup and did a Blair Witch imitation as well as a Slimfast commercial for the video camera.

Mister Chris Rios took over as pacer and we were off. We told ghost stories and looked at the Milky Way. The downhill was steep so we fast walked or should I say fall forward. We met a fellow runner who had bad blisters and a sleepy crew (I don't think he finished). We arrived at Panamint Springs about 2:30am 72 miles, I used the facilities and Eric the Master Kajiwara and I were off. Eric, Jo and Mitch were with me now as part of the new crew.

The second mountain range was hard going but I had some fun at about 4:30am. I saw what I thought was a cement road divider in the middle of the road. I asked Eric if there was a road on the other side of the road divider and he kind of looked over to where I was talking about and said "no" then I said, "you didn't even look". I went to the middle of the road put my hands on the road divider to look over it and almost fell on my face as the road divider was a hallucination and it just melted into the road. At mile 80, 5:30am I sat down for the first time and took care of blisters on my toes. I cut a small hole to drain them and put Liquid Bandage on them, I woke up fast (it's more like liquid hornet). At the same time my feet were being doctored up a couple of photographers drove by from New Times a LA weekly paper. They took pictures of my feet, my crew, and my Tattoo on my ankle. Most ultra runners experience renewed vigor as the sun comes up I didn't, I couldn't keep my eye's opened. I asked for a 5-minute nap and was told that I should try ice instead, it didn't work but the sleepiness wore off

down the road. On the second morning the sun was hot so I put the sun suit back on, it was a little crunchy from the day before. Eric and I were running and walking strong, when all of a sudden a giant flying bug from hell arrived. Eric tried to swat the beast but it stayed just ahead of his deadly blows. Finally he made contact, we heard a thump on the ground but didn't see the monster. We both agreed that Eric kicked the crap out of him and he wouldn't return after such an ass whooping. WRONG the monster returned and attacked with such ferocity that Eric had to whip out all his ninja skills. He hit the beast on the first blow with his hat, the giant flying bug was now knocking at heavens door as Eric threw the final deadly blow. The giant flying bug was gone, but the fun of watching Eric battle the beast was spectacular. However as the battle between Eric and the bug was in progress the Crew in the Van got an eye full of what they thought was going on. They thought Eric was trying to motivate me to go on by beating me with his hat, they couldn't believe their eyes.

At mile 90 Barb took over as pacer. Barb and I had a great time talking, we ran downhill until my feet started to tell me something was wrong. Both my legs ached to the bone, I hadn't complained to any of the crew and I didn't want to start with my sweetheart. I did complain and she said that she'd ice my feet at the next stop which was 100 miles, I said GREAT. I stopped at mile 100 with a time of 29:52 (better than Angeles Crest 100), Barb iced my feet and I pulled the tape I had been wearing for the last 100 miles back to expose the blister. I had a deep blister on the ball of my right foot. It was difficult to cut a hole in it so I had to stick a needle in it, lift and then cut. Mitch helped me drain it, then my favorite wake up call was added "Liquid Bandage".

Mitch and I started out walking, my feet and legs felt great after taking care of the blister. We saw the switchbacks going to the Portals, it looked awesome 35 miles away so we started to run. Mitch and I had fun calculating out miles per hour and estimating how long it would take us to get to Keeler. I liked every step I took because I was in unknown territory, anything over a 100 miles was new ground and it felt good to run.

Jo and I started out mile 110, Jo was so careful to make sure a car wouldn't hit me. She had her hand at the ready to push me out of harms way (all the pacers insured that I wouldn't get hit, Jo was just a little more assertive). John Anderson showed up about 2 or 3 miles from 395 with his son Mike and 2 pots of Casa Java coffee. He said he would get me a hamburger in Lone Pine. Jo and I left the Van and I was

looking forward to getting into Lone Pine, I had to use the facilities. As we were moving along I noticed a coin on the road; I pointed at it (I couldn't verbalize). Jo picked it up and we found out it was an Italian coin (nice snag), I'll place it with all my Badwater memorabilia.

We got to Highway 395 and Elaina and I started out, I reminded her that I needed to use the facilities. We stopped at the Alabama Hills Hotel and asked the Clerk where the bathroom was located, he said around the corner. I looked around the corner and there was no bathroom, I thought maybe he got a whiff of my two day old body odor and decided he'd not tell me the exact location. Anyway while I was looking for the facilities Elaina saw a guy with a 5K T-shirt on and said you're a runner, aren't you? He said "yes" and then she said do you have a room here? And he said "yes" again, then she asked if he would help out a fellow runner by letting me use his bathroom. And he said "sure", I entered his room and there were 2 other guys in the room unpacking their clothes (they had just arrived). The 5K guy explained to his friends what was going on as I used the facilities, I apologized and thanked all as I exited.

Now I was totally happy entering into Lone Pine, I could see the last check point the Dow Villa. As I got closer I saw the silhouette of a Boxer dog; I asked Elaina if she saw a Boxer dog and she said yes. I knew I wasn't hallucinating, it was my dog Murphy. My daughter Mandie along with her husband Jacob, my granddaughters Katie and Hope Joy and Jakie my grandson had come to see me finish. I didn't know they'd be there, it was a really big happy moment. I checked into the Dow Villa and hugged my family and greeted Lisa and Glen Bennett from the track club.

Elaina and I headed for the Portals Road and a long pit stop. I wanted to check my feet, eat a burger and talk with friends and family. My stay was cut short; I didn't feel good so I decided to leave. 2 miles down the road, 11 miles from the finish I started to shake, I felt like I had a fever, nausea, headache and body aches, I didn't think I was going to finish. I held Barb and told her I needed to lie down she threw a blanket on the side of the road and I laid down for about 10 minutes. My shakes stopped so I stretched my legs and said, "let's go".

Eric and I headed out; I forgot my water bottle so Chris Rios sprinted from the Van to us. I must have felt better because I was laughing at how fast Chris was running. Now remember way back at Townes Pass I said that I didn't see Marshall Ulrich when Elaina said we passed him, well I still thought he was in front of me and I was so inspired by his

tenacity that I started to feel stronger every step I took. **I knew I was going to finish!** My crew decided that they were going to switch out pacers every 2 miles so they could enjoy the last couple of miles with me. 2 miles from the finish I opened a can of Whoop Ass, it's a beverage to boost your energy. I took a sip; it tasted like crap to me (Barb drank it down).

1 mile to go, Barb was with me. Eric, Jo, Chris, Mitch, Elaina and Mark walked down to join me on the final journey. I finished in 43:36:20, 1:36am Friday morning and fell on the ribbon holding girl Elisabeth.

Originally I decided to do the race to challenge my body and mind. This is better than that; my Grandchildren will pass this on forever.

I want to thank my lovely wife and best friend Barb, she supported me throughout the whole enchilada. My Crew Elaina McMahon, Eric and Jo Kajiware, Chris Rios, Andrew Mitchell and Mark McKinney, I couldn't have done it without you guys **"THANKS!"** I also want to thank Ben and Denise Jones, 2 very special people and Chris Kostman the Race Director for putting on such a top shelf event.