

# HURT 100

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Arriving on Oahu, I was having a lot of pre-race anxiety, I had not run nearly as much as I had wanted to while in Central America and worried that in the last week, I would have somehow 'fallen' out of the training I had been doing for the race since August. Realistically, I was in great shape, but I was still anxious as ever, and the bit of Montezuma's revenge from Mexico I was experiencing was not helping.

Friday before the race, I couldn't help myself and I decided to run the first seven miles of the course, just to see what my friend Keith back in San Diego had described to me 'fucked up shit' (FUS)...and ya that's pretty much what I discovered. Roots, just roots and nothing but roots, I don't think my feet touched the dirt until the top of Hog's back. The climbs to my surprise were much more gradual than the climbs I had been training on, but the terrain was nothing like San Diego or Flagstaff could even come close to offering, even despite it being a 'dry' year. I made it to Manoa Falls in roughly 1hr and 21mins, that was about 30 minutes fast of my race pace I was aiming for on these loops, although it seemed almost agonizingly slow at the time.

## Race Day

I woke up to a buzzing alarm at 4:00am, which wasn't hard as back in San Diego it was already 6:00am and in Mexico (where I was still time-oriented too) it was already 8:00am, so I had had enough sleep. The pagoda hotel, although it wasn't on the main drag of hotels in Honolulu, was only about a mile and half away from the start line, so we were there with plenty of time to spare. I have been so accustomed to races starting upon the moment of my arrival (Death Race, Barkley) that waiting for the race to start was a strange concept. We lined up on the bridge at 5am and the gun was off, it was still dark, really dark and my headlamp sucked, luckily I had a hand lamp but that only lasted about two miles before its batteries burnt out...way to go me for checking that before take-off...

## Loop 1 (Miles 0-20)

Climbing up hog's back seemed much more difficult than it did the day before, it was dark and the amount of people surrounding me meant I couldn't just have whichever part of the trail I wanted to. I was forced more or less into the middle of the trail where the root density was at its highest. I strategically moved to the left of the trail where the roots were the least dense and noticed Hal Koerner 'manning' his way through the roots in the middle, it's a race and I was keeping up fine with my less rooty section so I stayed where I was up hog's back. As we continued to climb, I passed one or two runners and one or two runners passed me as we began to settle into our respective positions for the first loop. Everybody at this point was still running everything, no matter if it was up, down or just F.U.S. I slipped on my butt coming out of a bamboo thicket on the way down to Manoa falls aid station but wasn't too offset. I hit the aid station at 1hr and 17mins...about 33 minutes too fast...I needed to slow the hell down if I was going to 'burst out' during laps 4&5 which had been my plan. On the way down to Manoa falls I

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had divided the climb into three sections, bamboo thickets at the top, annoying switchbacks with scattered rocks and roots and the tourist section on the way down from the falls. Dividing it like this made the climb back up feel really short. I then crossed the 1/2 mile of FUS and roots and started heading down to Nu'una aid station, now this was the downhill and level of climb that I had been training on, this thing was like better frikkin' grab a tree or butt scoot kinda steep, it was exactly what I had been expecting. I flew down this section, the sun was just rising and I was on a knife blade ridge on top of jungly forest in Hawaii, I couldn't help but draw the energy from my surroundings. On my way down, I divided this climb into three distinct sections as well, the knife blade grassy/ fern section, pine forest and rooty FUS flat section before Nu'una.

When I arrived I was in eighth place, I didn't care about my position at this time, the race has almost nothing to do with your position at mile 15, it's just a matter of surviving until the later miles. I dipped in and out of the aid station quickly and headed back up the steep climb. For me this climb was the most difficult, lasted the longest and had the most obstacles to maneuver around. When I finally reached the top or what I considered the top, I ran back through the FUS and started following the orange marker tape. After passing through a steel gate, this section was pretty slippery and overgrown but had very little roots. Once the small climb topped out began my favorite part of the whole course, the roughly two miles of very gently rolling downhill with minimal roots and obstacles. I flew through this section and worked my way quickly through the small amount of uphills on the way back to the top of hog's back. I then made a mistake that you could say cost me my sub-24hr finish. I started running down hog's back following the white marker tape and ignored the fact that the orange marker tape actually went the other direction. Luckily after about ten minutes or running down what I consider to be the second worst climb at the HURT 100, Jason the leader spotted me and asked me what the heck I was doing and kindly directed me back up the hill...He took off like a speed goat and I didn't see him again the rest of the race. I reached the top of hog's back again and was well aware that at least 4-5 people had now past me due to my mistake. But it was only the first loop and there was plenty of time to make up for that mistake. I flew through the rest of that loop, foolishly trying to make up for my mistake and even managed to catch two people on the way back to the nature center aid station.

I had told my mom and sister (my crew) about the mistake and they told me to just ignore it for now and keep on going. They loaded me up with Hydra C5, thermolytes (salt tabs) and my odwalla bars and I was off again, this time going the right direction UP hog's back.

## Loop 2 (Miles 20-40)

Hog's back was already taking a huge toll on me. The temperature had increased dramatically since the first loop or I just hate humidity...Either way I was sweating hardcore. This lead unfortunately to that feeling you get in your legs right before they cramp up... This was not what I needed...I had developed heat cramps at a race back in September and they were so bad that I

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fell over on the trail and just laid there for a while until I could stand up and limp/ run three miles to the finish line. I did not want to be limp/ running for the next 80 miles. I kept track of my time up and down the climbs on my way to Manoa Falls, I had slowed down to 1:27 for the second loop, but this was nothing major as it was still 23mins ahead of what I 'should' be doing...but you ultrarunner's know how plans just kinda fall apart during races. I came into the aid station in a bit of a low, and my mom being the hardcore woman she is just told me to shut-up and keep going as she forced some food onto me and pushed me out of aid station in under two minutes. During the race, I never once thought 'o I'm at mile 30 or whatever', I divided the race into the distances between the aid stations 7, 5 and what I thought was 7 but learned on mile 92 that it was actually 8 miles (it was like learning that Santa Clause isn't real). On the way back up from Nu'una, the heat cramps really started to kick in and I was not a happy runner. As well, I had come into the aid station a bit too early and a bit too quick, my crew had missed me. As a result, I didn't have my usual 50oz of water for the eight miles, I had a 24oz water bottle and hydrating in humid death weather is ESSENTIAL. Needless to say, I arrived at Nature Center (mile 40) in a dehydrated low with muscle cramps I wasn't quitting or going to slow down or anything, I just wanted to complain to someone other than myself. My crew didn't care though, nor should they have. Within three minutes my shoes were changed, my shirt was off, my pack was back and refilled and I was back on the rooty, FUS known as hog's back.

### Loop 3 (Miles 40-60)

Dividing the race up into 1hr and 30min segments between the aid stations helped me out immensely. It wasn't this big distance or big block of time I was working against, it was only an hour and half, and running for that long was easily comprehensible. My splits between aid stations had slowed down about ten minutes from loop 2, which I somewhat expected. I had caught up to a few people during this third loop, while a few others seemed to have pulled way ahead of me and I didn't give up hope getting in top 5, but it seemed like it was going to be much more difficult than I had anticipated. The heat cramps continued throughout this loop, forcing me to walk here and there to avoid locking up, but in hindsight walking and taking it easy on the third loop may have been what allowed me to blast away on the other loops. I arrived back at the nature center (mile 60) feeling 'ok' but ready to keep moving.

### Loop 4 (Miles 60-80)

Up to this point I had not hit any major 'I hate this race, I don't care about my time, I don't care...' lows, but I was setting myself up for that... At the nature center before taking off for loop 4, my crew had laid out a vanilla ensure, a starbucks double shot and a can of coke, intending for me to choose one. In the rush and thirst of things, I made a stupid mistake and drank all three one after the other. I then decided a bag of yam fries and espresso beans would be good enough to get me to the next aid station, instead of the odwolla bars I had been consistently

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relying on. Within ten minutes of leaving the aid station my stomach was gurgling and I did not feel well at all...I walked all of hog's back and walked it slowly, I was not going to be catching up to anyone on this leg...that was for sure and I was now at this point worried as hell that people were going to be catching me. The race still had forty miles to go, but a runner with adequate strength at this point could have probably kept me off the rest of the race. On the way up to the steel gate before beginning the descent down to Manoa falls aid station, I started to feel really nauseous and tried to eat yam fries but my stomach insta-rejected them. I then tried making myself throw up by trying to swallow huge amounts of yam fries at a time but this coupled with trying to walk up a steep hill just made me choke and out of breath. Frustrated, I stuck my finger down my throat a few times and just ended up dry heaving up the rest of the climb. I never vomited sadly, but the stomach pain had resided more or less by the top of the climb. Looking back this was definitely another mistake that cost me a sub-24hr finish. On the way down Manoa Falls, I noticed 5th and 6th place were not that far ahead of me. I ran into the aid station, found a bathroom and was out of the aid station and climbing again within three minutes, now on my strict and usual mashed potato and granola bar running diet. The stomach pain had resided and leg cramps were no longer an issue as night had returned and with it cooler weather. Consequently, I ripped through the climb and ran everything that wasn't covered in roots or stupidly steep (so I ran like .00025 miles of hill) and on the way down to Nu'una falls I spotted 6th place. I knew I was going to have to David Goggin's it if I was going to stay ahead. So I got real quiet and acted like I was in no pain whatsoever, I then picked it up from a 9min/mile to about a 7:30min/mile (down an extremely dangerous rocky, cliffy portion of the course) and proceeded to pass the runner. Within minutes, I was out of sight and far beyond sixth place. When I arrived at the Nu'una aid station I was pretty whipped and sat down for a second to eat some rice and chicken soup, the aid station volunteer said "You're doing great! Slow down, relax!" To which my mom quickly grabbed my delicious rice soup from my hand threw it down and said "That's shit! Don't listen to him Nick, Don't relax! You get up and you get your ass out of here! You can relax when you're done!" Frightened and distraught from the death of my delicious rice soup, I took off. Seventh place was right on my tail and I didn't want them to get any closer so I moved quickly. So quickly that during the last hill on the way into the nature center, I noticed fifth place precociously stumbling over the rocky terrain, luckily running stupidly fast down awful terrain was a specialty of mine. I pulled another David Goggin's and became completely silent, and picked up my pace from a casual jog to Ryan Hall against Meb and passed fifth place long enough to hear "err I hate this terrain" I laughed inside and got out of his sight almost instantly. I wasted no time in the aid station and within one minute I was back out ascending hog's back for the last time.

### Loop 5 (Miles 80-100)

I found fourth place much faster than I had expected. I passed him rather slowly expecting some degree of a fight for the position, but I think we were both too tired and the race was still too

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young for either of us to really fight for fourth place, plus prizes were only top three. I was now in a position where I was sure I was going to get passed if I didn't run everything again and move as quick as possible. So I ran everything, just at a much slower pace than loop 1. I saw second place on the way down to Manoa Falls, I had no clue who third place was or if I was even close to them, so I didn't try to catch them at all. On the turnaround, I noticed that I had gotten way ahead of fifth, sixth and seventh place. This relieved some pressure, but I was still worried about them getting that almost finished 'boost' in the last segment, so I sped up even more descending Nu'una like a boss. I noticed on the descent too that I had gained at least ten minutes on second place, which made me really curious as to the whereabouts of third place. My crew at Nu'una told me that third place had come in and said "I gotta get out of here quick, there is some kid on my ass" which in turn made me even more motivated to get up Nu'una and back to Nature Center as quick as possible. After reaching the end of the knife blade on Nu'una, I ran every part of the trail back to the Nature Center, roots, rocks and hills no longer mattered, I was almost finished and I did not want fifth place to get anywhere near me.

## Finish!

I crossed the finish line in 24hrs and 18mins, I was about thirty minutes off from third place and fifth place was about fifty minutes off from me. What I thought was going to be a 'close' finish was luckily a comforting stable finish, which in an ultramarathon I much prefer.

I want to thank my mom and sister for coming out to Hawaii with me and supporting me through this whole 24hrs and 18mins, without your hard-ass motivation, I would be a lazy-ass runner. I want to also thank Carbopro for their continued support in my athletic endeavors. The HURT 100 volunteers and race staff did a phenomenal job at marking the course, providing aid and information. This is a great race and it is wonderfully organized. I would recommend it to any experienced endurance athlete looking for the next hard 'thing', this is NOT a race for beginners.

## Top 5 Hardest Races

And for the sake that everyone has been asking me, here is my most up-to-date top-5 hardest races I have competed in:

1. The Barkley Marathons (for the sole reason that I was timed out at mile 60, but we will see how this ranks after I finish the full hundred this April)
2. The Arrowhead 135 (-40 degrees Fahrenheit, 135 miles on 'ok' packed snowmobile trails, three checkpoints (mile 32, 72, 112 and the finish line...), dragging a 30lb sled full of survival gear, food and water, need I say more?)

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3. The Death Race (They don't tell you when it starts, they don't tell you when it ends, you carry, cut, throw and roll more logs than the average lumberjack does in a year)
4. The PLAIN 100 (It's actually 112 miles but you only get credit for 100, one checkpoint at mile 55, self-navigated, self-supported, 23,000ft of climbing and bears!!)
5. The HURT 100 (24,500ft of gain and F.U.S. (see paragraph 2 for definition), roots, mud, bamboo, water, slicker rocks and wild pigs!!)

Honorable mentions: Furnace Creek 508, The Badwater 135, Western States 100