

"Les Miserable"

Another 100 miler report from the Rio De Lago 100 Endurance Run. 9/10-11/2011

If you don't want to read another bad news race report, stop here, because I don't have a good one. I knew I was not going to have fun running an Ultra race, especially a 100 miler. But I had hoped this would be a better one after a couple of years of running and a few Ultra races. But the Ultra God threw me another one. A 100 miles under those race day conditions was a tough one. Each time I stopped at an A.S. I heard that racers were dropping like flies. At Horseshoe Bar aid station I saw elite runner John Pommier lying down motionless over in the corner and an aid station person was asking him if he was going to drop or finish. A race like this really checked to see who had big balls. I gained the utmost respect for Ray Sanchez. At one point he was way ahead of me, and next time I saw him he was walking in the dark, glassy eyed and soulless way behind me and still trying to continue the race. That is an accomplished Super Elite Ultra racer!! I can admire. I also wanted to drop many, many times through the night. I thought I was a little bit tougher after living 58 years. After I left Dasie at Rattlesnake A.S. mile 56 and between mile 65 at Twin Rocks A.S. turn around I was preoccupied with thoughts of where and when to drop out, how to do it, who to notify and how I could get a hold of Dasie.

The air was very still, warm and humid at the start. From Twin Rocks A.S. at mile 7, I already started using one of the two bandanas I carried with me to cover up the back of my head and neck. The sun was already beating u down a lot earlier. I was going to carry a 20oz. bottle of water and another one for my concentrated electrolyte drink. Since the distance between A.S. wasn't great, I thought I could get by if I hydrated extra at each A.S. As usual, as soon as I arrived at each A.S. seeing Dasie or other familiar faces, getting excited and greeting, and talking, I totally forgot about the strategies of eating and drinking at the aid stations. And on top of that, making another rookie mistake, trying something new at the race I didn't try on the training runs. I was using endurolytes instead of S-caps for the first time because I read the article in the Hammer brochure that said their product is better than S-caps. Just like I used Ensure and V8 at Western States because I read an article that Gordy Ainsleigh said he used. And ended up puking all over the pristine trail all the way to the finish from mile 62. What an idiot!!! This little Budda-head never learns!!! I had to pick the most humid race to try something new. Thanks to Dasie, she got S-caps from Coach Bob, and gave them to me at the Overlook A.S. the second time around. Thank you, Bob!!!! You are my savior.

Without knowing, by the time I hit the bottom of K2 (the training hill) I was so low on electrolytes and dehydrated, as I stated making the climb, my left shin started to stiffen up, and in no time the stiffness hit me everywhere from both feet to the back of my neck, in severe pain I fell back trying not to roll down the K2 hill. Each toe was pointing in a different direction, and my calves were having waving motion like its own creature. I was rolling around halfway up K2 and all the other racers were having a hard time themselves, but they still asked me if I was OK. The cramps eased up, I stood up, but as soon as I started to walk and climb, the cramping started all over again, another severe cramping happened 20 yards from the peak and I had to lay down and take the last of my electrolyte I had and emptied my only bottle of water I had which I refilled at No Hands Bridge A.S. bottom of K2. Only one mile, and I had emptied my whole bottle! It was a long walk to Cool Fire Station A.S. where Dasie would probably be wondering why it was taking me so long. And the thought of the dreaded Olmstead Loop I so hate after this

cramp situation in the hot afternoon wasn't giving me high hopes. And being passed by so many other racers during this ordeal was very depressing. Beginning with high hopes for this race became the same old strategy as other races I ran. "Just walk to the next A.S." Guess I didn't pay respect or pray enough to my Ultra God.

While hobbling and walking around Olmstead Loop, getting passed by other racers, the only thing that kept me going was the thought of plunging into the cold, refreshing Knickerbocker Creek. Oh my God!!!! Instead there was no running creek!!! Knickerbocker Creek was dried up. Where is the raging, running water I saw a few months ago? Up the dry cobble stones, I found a pool of water but it was bubbly standing still muck with all the tiny insect larvae were flipping around. But water is water, right? It had to be cooler than the hot air. I sat down in 6 in. of water and all the floating brown mossy stuff got all over me while trying to find clearer water to soak my hat and bandana. As I was climbing up Knickerbocker Hill, I was trying to swat away all these small winged creatures buzzing all around me. I was so miserable I felt like a lost child in the deserted Arizona highway under the hot sun between Knickerbocker Hill's unmanned A.S. to the Cool Fire Station A.S. At this point, my sole mission became just to get to cool water and remembering from the morning, there is some running at a small waterfall below Robie Point. Just like a horse being lead to water as soon as I left Dasie, Glenda and Sarah at the Fire Station, my point of walking was to get to where that cool waterfall was. From No Hands Bridge I was walking up the hill, my head down, following a young couple at the same pace, they kept looking back at me probably wondering what I'm doing. As we went down the hill and as they crossed to the waterfall, I plunged right into the pool of water, lay down and soaked myself head to toe making all kinds of splashing sounds, Oh my God!!! It felt sooo good!!! I'm now refreshed and feeling better, and walking faster. As I was walking faster and as I was passing the young couple they gave me a funny quizzical look. I must have scared them with all the noise I was making back at the waterfall.

My next mission of searching for water was at the Overlook. I so knew there would be cold running water in the canal and Dasie knew as soon as I arrived that was the only thing I was after. She told me to drop everything and go to the water. Oh that was Heaven. One thing about these 100 milers, they sure make me so religious. As I was leaving, feeling sorry for myself, I forgot to even thank Sarah and Glenda for being there and helping me. I was dragging my feet, feeling like my Mother was telling me that I had to go to school in the morning. Walking along looking out the corner of my eye at the canal with all that cold running water was pure torture. It always helps to see other racers having a more miserable time than you are. There was a young lady who passed me flying up K2 earlier having trouble going down Cardiac Hill. I could tell her quads were shot. I ran past her and gave her some encouraging words which I knew was not going to help her. But it sure made me feel better passing her. As I was making the climb out of China Basin, I saw two gentlemen, one the pacer standing in front of the other gentleman with a very worried look on his face, the racer sitting on the side of the skinny single track trail. His head was between his legs. I asked his pacer if there was anything I could tell the next A.S. and he said no and then I thought it would be good to get his bib number just in case. The pacer said he would try to get the runner back to Cardiac A.S. which was about a mile and a half back. I just said OK and left the scene thinking better him than me. As I moved slowly to Manhattan Bar, there is a small creek I know and always stop there. I stopped and wet both of my bandanas and tied them right above my calves and that seemed to ease my cramping and soreness in both

calves and soon I was able to run down the hill faster. I stopped at another creek and repeated the same procedure. As I was nearing the bridge at Morman Ravine the lead racer with his pacer was coming toward me, and that put such a dump on my spirit, so much so that I totally forgot about going for a swim in my secret sandy water hole by the bridge of Morman Ravine that I was so looking forward to. From the experience of what the bandanas around my legs did, as soon as I arrived at Rattlesnake Bar A.S. Dasie helped me to put on my compression sleeves on my calves and it really did wonders to ease the cramping and pain in my calves.

I was already way behind my planned time by the time I left Rattlesnake Bar A.S. and heading to Horseshoe Bar, I could tell I was running out of daylight and having a hard time distinguishing the details of the trails. I put one of my headlamps on that I had used for RDL and Western States with no problems, but this time I just didn't like it, it didn't feel right. And didn't look and shine right. I don't know what it was, maybe my condition at the time? At Horseshoe Bar A.S. I took out my other lamp I had in my drop bag from the morning part of the race, put in new batteries, and used the second brightest setting because it was going to be a long night. Sure didn't want to have a black out in this treacherous rocky section of trail. As I was saying earlier, during that night between Rattlesnake Bar and Twin Rocks a.s turn around, the section between mile 56 to 65 was the lowest point of the race. Mentally, the thought of having to turn around at Twin Rocks and do the same course back to Cardiac all over again and the temptation of being able to finish as a 100K even though dropping out was so great, little Kuni the devil kept whispering to me. Then all of a sudden, I see all these familiar faces were running toward me from Twin Rocks A.S. turn around who I didn't know where they were in the race, and thought they were way ahead of me. It was then I realized I was not too far behind them and some of them were even behind me or had dropped out. This sure boosted up my spirit and I started to power walk, concentrating shuffling both of my feet faster. Even though the air was still warm, humid, and stagnant, in the darkness I started to see more familiar faces of racers, and some friends who were pacing other racers. Seeing them and the thought of catching up to the racers ahead of me took my mind off wanting to drop out of the race.

After the nightfall it is all about the 100 mile racers. Running or walking is just concentrating on seeing 3 feet of lighted trail about 10 feet ahead of you. And after seeing one shredded up skunk fur on the trail, it's about finding a safe place to go off trail to get relief after all the gels and sports drink. Then I got sandwiched between a panicked live skunk coming toward me, as a racer was running behind it, twice. By the time I came in to the very nicely lit up trail into Rattlesnake Bar A.S. for the third time, the thought of wanting to drop out was totally gone, I just wanted to catch up to the other racers and finish this darn race and get the F*%@?XO!!! Buckle!

There were two really nice guys working at the Cardiac A.S. turn around. They offered me a very tasty chicken noodle soup and a chair to sit on. I first refused, said no thanks, but after 10 seconds of silence, I just crumbled in front of temptation. But it was a good thing. I sat down in that comfortable chair, having the soup, we chatted a little in the darkness with our lamps on, and I started to see the light at the end of the tunnel. As I said my thanks and was leaving, the guys told me I was the 14th racer!!! I went "You have got to be kidding me!" when going down the hill, I came up to a friend that I thought was way ahead of me. Man, the race was on!!! After I got my new supply of goodies from Dasie at Rattlesnake Bar for the last time, I came upon two more racers and ran past them before Twin Rocks. I actually stated to run uphill.

At Twin Rocks, the race director Molly was there and after she got my bib# for the last time she said "Kuni, congratulations you did it, enjoy the victory and the rest of the race to the finish line." I told her the race was tough, said thanks to her, told the A.S. people they were great and left the Twin Rocks A.S. for the last time. The sky was already getting lighter, I was feeling much better, turned on my music for the first time and was actually running on that stupid, hated sandy trail section by the Granite Bay horse stables for the first time! Of course with thinking no more stupid 100 mile racers for me ever!

Smart people run Marathons, do more speed work and run around High School tracks. No more hydration packs. May be I'll even start to run without my shirt like those guys at the track, they always look so cool. And go do 10K races and Half Marathons, that would be cool. But then I came up onto the top of the levee and could see the finish line area with the people waiting towards Beal's Point from afar. It was very emotional. I kept my eye on the spot and ran toward it. As I ran past the finish line pads, I turned and bowed toward the course I had just run and paid respect to the Ultra God so that he will be nice to me next time. I'm no dummy.

I still don't know why I do 100 mile races. Sorry Dasie.

Keep moving and some good things may happen.

Kuni