

THE BEAR 100, 2011
Coming Full Circle
By: Trish Godtfredsen

Arriving at the start line of a 100 mile event is never an easy task. The training takes dedication, hard work, and the usual blood, sweat, and tears. That I can do. However, finishing this event takes more than that. The Bear and I first met in 2009. It was my 3rd 100, but my first attempt at a race outside of California. I was well trained and confident that I would snare the Bear in the allotted 36 hours. Well ... that didn't happen! I finished in 36:07. Post race inspection revealed that too much time spent at aid stations and lack of familiarity with the course, equaled 7 minutes late, no buckle, and no plaque! I came up short and the Bear had kicked me to the curb. I vowed never to return. Well we all know how that goes ...

It's September 2011 and I am back!!! I am not a sponsored runner (although my husband likes to say he is my sponsor), I am a Wife, a mother of 4 including a set of twins, and I work part time. My incredible family, for which I am so grateful, made this possible through their sacrifices and support. Tackling the Bear 100 in 36 hours is my mission, my goal, my day, my race!

It's go time! 6:00 a.m., 250 runners, and its cold. Temperatures are expected to swing from near freezing at night to near 90 during the day. I'm prepared for it all. We head to the first climb. The hills here are steep and they are a plenty. In the past, this race has been known for its sketchy markings which add to the challenge. However, this year the course is well marked; pink ribbons for the main trail, pink and yellow for the turns, and even a blue "WRONG WAY" ribbon. A view of Logan Utah at the top of this first long climb, was nothing short of awesome! The website reads "Please come and "Rock the Bear" with your tunes". I plug mine in and embrace this race.

The first aid station is over ten miles from the start, which is a good reason to carry a full pack. The first 30 miles prove to be as challenging as I remembered. The course is more beat up than two years ago. The long wet winter has left the trail extra rocky and technical with many downed trees. The R.D. did an excellent job of informing the runners of this as well as clearing out many of the obstacles. My mission is to make it to the Temple Fork aid station (mile 45)before dark. Crews are there in abundance, none for me however, it was uplifting to hear so many positive well wishes before heading into the cold very dark night.

With the dark came a food thief. I hate losing all my cookies in the woods, but sometimes it's necessary. Throwing up and running became my night time pattern, with thoughts of ...Just keep going, no matter how hard or how bad, don't stop! I had no pacer to lean on however I spent the night crossing paths with new and unfamiliar faces.

When I reached Franklin Basin at mile 61, I refueled with soy milk as the liquid diet was working well. The sight of my own breath told me it was cold and the up, up, up, told me the hill was endless. I reached the top, caught my breath, and found peace in it. I let gravity take hold as I cascaded down the hill to Logan River and then suddenly I was sliding into home plate, launching my water bottles across the trail, and creating a huge dust cloud that billowed beneath me. I felt blood trickling down my knees,

I didn't look. I arrived at the aid station, refueled, and moved toward the sound of the river. Stopping allowed the bitter cold to engulf my body, so I didn't. I plunged into the river wasting no time getting across the slippery rocks. The water felt like pure snow run off, wait, that is exactly what it was. Colder still on the other side with my feet now wet, moving faster in hopes of defrosting.

It's always the coldest before the dawn, and this dawn was no exception. A technical and rocky section led up to Beaver Lodge at mile 75.8. I stumbled into the warm and inviting lodge, retrieved drop bag items, some instant coffee, and reluctantly headed away from the warmth. Steadying the hot coffee was a challenge with my seizure like hand movements. Some friends caught me here and it was our goal to beat the Saturday morning ATV and Motorcycle riders. This is their territory and they don't share. Within 30 minutes we were sucking down some serious dust and I think the riders were using us as target practice, move or be run down!

It was finally warming up and with relentless forward motion I told myself...run all the flats and the downhill's, keep your cushion of time. Hot spots were developing, but fresh sock in my drop bag at the Beaver Creek aid station, will do the trick. I arrive, but my drop bag didn't ...moving on.

It's all fire road between Beaver Creek and the Ranger Dip aid station. It's rocky, open, exposed, and such a mental challenge spotting runner's far ahead. I was on day 2 and through iron will, I kept putting one foot in front of the other. The hot spots had developed into blisters and it was only a matter of time before they reached critical mass and popped. I focused only on the section of trail right in front of me, then like an oasis, the Ranger Dip aid station at mile 93 appeared. I rolled in with one thought, get out.

Naturally, an Everest like climb to the highest point in the race (9060) comes at mile 93. The only thing missing was the snow and my own Sherpa, however, there was Jack. Jack Meyer had promised to come back and finish this race with me. This would be his 4th Bear 100. After the ascent, we started the run shuffle on a long rocky downhill that led back to civilization. That's when gut wrenching pain hit like a bad virus. Both blisters had popped and I'm pretty sure there was molten lava in my sock. Determined, I ignored the pain and pressed on until I saw the bridge that led to the finish line road! As my blistered feet hit the pavement I glanced over at Jack and the only words I could whisper were "Thank You."

Thank you for being a man of your word, thank you for coming back with me, and thank you for being here with me as I accomplish this goal.

My sprint, at least in my mind, to the finish line was a blur. So many thoughts burst into my mind. Two years in the making and I was finally under the finish banner in 33:28. I realized something so simple in that one moment of euphoria. In 2009, I had been my own biggest obstacle. It was not the race and how difficult it was, I had let myself get in the way and let self doubt creep in. But not today! I stood there underneath that banner thankful and proud. I made it, I had come full circle!