

## Pacing Pat at the 2007 Western States 100-Mile

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I had the honor of crewing and pacing my buddy Pat Perry at Western States, this year. I also got to go to training camp with him. He paid my way both times. I met some great people, especially his nice family, and had a lot of fun. I had a great time. Here's my report:

I flew to Sacramento on Friday, the day before the race. From there, I drove to the Lake Tahoe area, and met up with Pat and his family, which included his mom-in-law, his wife, and his three great kids.



Pat's family (and my crewing team).

We got to bed around 7:30 p.m., because of the early start the next morning. Pat, his oldest son, and I slept in our own room to get some good shut-eye for the long trek ahead. We all got up at 3:00 a.m., and got everything ready for the day. We drove Pat to the Squaw Valley starting area for the 5 a.m. start.



Pat, just 5 minutes prior to the Squaw Valley start.



The Squaw Valley (Olympic Ski Area) Start...at 5 a.m. A Chris Marolf (participant) photo.

After the start, Pat's family and I had some breakfast, and got ready for the day. Many of the aid stations were very hard to get to, (but not for lack of trying on our part). All I can say is that it involved a lot of driving (of 2 vehicles) on some really sketchy roads with little to no "real world" directions. What an adventure! The kids are awesome, during our crewing adventure.

In the meantime, Pat is running his ass off on huge vertical ascents and descents, in these spectacular areas:



Running down from Escarpment. Another wonderful Chris Marolf (participant) photo.



Running up towards Red Star. Another wonderful Chris Marolf (participant) photo.





Running towards Red Star, this time - down. Another wonderful Chris Marolf (participant) photo.



Another fully-exposed hot climb. A Kurt Bertilson photo.





Running down after Robinson Flat. Another wonderful Chris Marolf (participant) photo.



One of many "substantial climbs" during the race.

By the time Pat got to Michigan Bluff aid station, he was a little toasted, to say the least. He had problems eating enough calories during the heat of the day, and the uphill had been really tough on him. Not everything was going "as planned" for a sub-24-hour finish. The photo below says it all.



Michigan Bluff aid station at mile 55.7.

I ran with him for a short while after the aid station, to see "where his head was at." I told him to take the next canyon conservatively, and try to get his strength back by Foresthill, (where I start pacing him). He took a lot of fruit and food with him, to eat for a while on the way there. I crossed my fingers.

An hour and a half later, (right on time), he rolls in to the Foresthill aid station, at mile 60. He's looking and feeling much better...he has his strength back.

It's 8:54 p.m., and the sun is getting ready to go down. I'm ready for to run, and I'll be carrying all sorts of stuff that he might need in the middle of the night. I help him get set up with his waist light a new shirt, and take care of some hot spots between his toes with silicone lube. Then we're off, into the night!



Foresthill Aid Station at 8:54 p.m.

I get Pat ready for the last 40 miles of night running that I'll be pacing (running with him).

There's a nice downhill after leaving the pavement of Foresthill. Pat is back to his normal role as "King of Downhill Running," and he's cruising nicely. We get to the next flat and uphill part, and he slows down a little. He figures out my pacing methodology pretty quick, and says, "you stay just far enough ahead to not be out of sight, and turn around occasionally like you're saying, hurry up." I said, "yep, I'm an asshole!"

The strategy works for a while. We are passing a lot of folks, now that it is dark. On the downhills, I let Pat lead, because it's his strong suit. All of a sudden, his stomach starts to go south, and he slows to a walk, again. We get to an aid station, and he takes a little too much time there. He didn't forget my "30 second rule," he just didn't feel too good. With a little coaxing, he finally puked. He felt much better, and we were back to running again.

The aid stations were about every 5 miles or so along the course. They were wonderful, the way they packed all of that stuff into those remote areas.

Pat went through a few "ups and downs" physically/mentally, and took most of the climbs slowly. We finally got to Rucky Chucky Crossing, the American River water crossing, sometime after midnight. There were 2 aid stations...one on both sides of the river.



On the near side, there were a lot of runners that used to resemble humans, just lying around with blankets on them. We got out of there quick, and got into the river. They have attendants to help you across, and they made you grab the rope with both hands. The water was cold (but soothing) to me, but to Pat, I don't think it was much fun at that point.



Hal Koerner (the winner of the race) crosses Rucky Chucky Crossing in broad daylight. We would cross here in the middle of the night. A Michael Kirby photo.



Hal Koerner getting out of the water at Rucky Chucky Crossing, mile 78.1. A Michael Kirby photo.



After Rucky Chucky, there's a nice 1.7 mile steady climb. Pat's walking slowly again, (what I refer to as a Mall Walk). I remind him and try to "inspire" him to walk faster, at a 3.5-4 MPH pace. It works, somewhat. We speed up to about 3.5 MPH for at least half of the climb.

Pat's stomach troubles are always on the radar, from here on. We get into Green Gate aid station at mile 79.8, and he pukes again. He is light-headed whenever he stops running. (So don't stop, Pat, I'm thinking). He takes some antacid and has some soup, and feels better. We burn about 9 minutes here. We start running. And I mean RUNNING! Pat and I have a really good spell, and run for 5 straight miles at a really decent pace. We pass 14 runners and pacers during this stretch. (In fact, even though Pat was having problems, I counted 72 runners & pacers total, that we passed during the last 38 miles of the race).

We got to the Auburn Lake Trails aid station, and he went through the nausea and dizziness stage again, and sat down. (Beware the chair)! He gets some potato soup into him, and we start walking down the trail. We walk for about 2 miles, then start running again. We make it to Brown's Bar aid station, and he goes through his routine again. I get an O'doul's NA Beer, and it hits the spot for me. (Never thought I'd say that).

We take off from Brown Bar's, and do a fair job of walking with spurts of running here and there. The sun is starting to come up. Pat realizes that there is no way to get to the finish in under 24 hours for his silver buckle, but we resolve ourselves to get there as quickly as possible, given his physical condition at the time.

Highway 49 aid station seems to take forever to get to. Maybe it's because it's light out. We get there, and don't stop at all. "Let's get this baby over with!"

We get to No Hands Bridge, pass the aid station and keep going. At this point, I surprise Pat by pulling out my cellphone, and calling his wife. I told her we'd be there in approximately 32-minutes and 11 seconds...(I lied...I just wanted to make sure his whole family got to the finish line on time).

From No Hands Bridge on, it's little over a 5K to go, but there are some gnarly hills and altitude gain to go through to get to Auburn. We climb and climb, and comment about not remembering this much climbing during our training run, the month prior.

We finally get to the pavement of Robie Street. There's about another 1/2 mile of pavement to climb, and

then we're free from any more uphill! Yeah! We start running again. Pat can "smell the barn door," so to speak, and he gives it everything he's got. We cross over the railroad bridge, round a few corners and hit it hard. We see the high school. He zips through the fence and onto the track, and his family is waiting to run around the track with him. He finishes in an official time of 26:51:50.

The pictures tell the story:



Pat Finishes!!!



Pat (and I) cooled off our legs in the canal behind Placer High School, after the race.

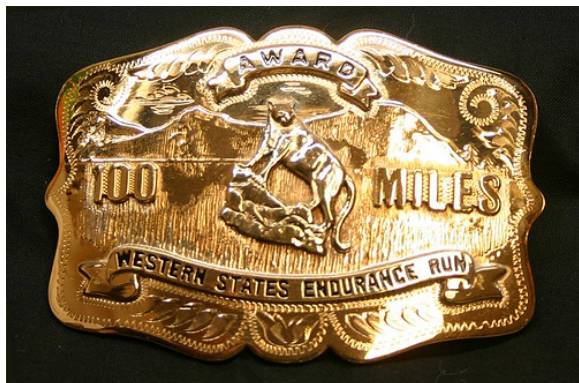




Pat finally sits down.



Pat at awards ceremony, proudly wearing his Trail Nerds shirt.



Pat's Finisher's buckle.



Bob Miller (right), couldn't run this year, and gave Pat his entry.

He and his daughter come out from Michigan each year, and work there tails off as volunteers for the race. What a cool guy! His daughter was nice, too.



Dad (Pat) gets the royal treatment from his kids.

I had a marvelous time crewing and pacing for Pat. Training camp was a blast, too.

I felt very priveledged to be part of this special race for Pat.

Happy trails,

Bad Ben Holmes