

## My Western States 100 Training Camp story.



My buddy Pat Perry got into the Western States 100, this year. That's no easy task. You have to qualify and be selected in a lottery. In his case, someone else got injured, and gave his place to Pat. Lucky Bastard!



**Pat Perry**

In addition to qualifying and being selected in the lottery, you must complete 8 hours of service. This may be in the form of volunteer trail maintenance or volunteer work at an

organized trail or road running race. So, they just don't let any old Yahoo into the race that has the entry fee, (like Leadville does).

The Western States 100 Endurance Run is run on the Western States Trail starting at Squaw Valley, California, and ending in Auburn, California. Runners must reach the finish line within 30 hours, or it's considered a DNF. If you finish within the required 30 hours, you get a Western-style belt buckle.

**If you finish within 24 hours, you get a special silver buckle:**



Pacers for the runners are allowed on the course at certain places. That's where I come in...I'm lucky enough to pace Pat this year. I'll be pacing him from Foresthill to the finish line. That will be about 40 hilly miles in the dark, mostly. I'll also be crewing for him up to that point.

This race is the oldest 100-mile "ultra" event; the grand-daddy of them all. That's one of the reasons that it's so hard to get a spot each year. How did it start? Here's what Wikipedia has to say about it:

"In 1974, Gordon "Gordy" Ainsleigh was the first to run the course of the Western States Endurance Run. At the time, the trail was used only by horses participating in the 24-hour Western States Trail Ride. When his horse went lame prior to the race, Ainsleigh decided he would run the torturous 100 miles of mountain trail from the Squaw Valley Ski Resort to Auburn, California, rather than look for another horse to ride. Ainsleigh, amazingly, completed the 'equestrian race', without a horse, in 23 hours and 47 minutes. This was the fabled beginning of the Western States Endurance Run, and the beginning of the modern sport of ultradistance trail running." This is why 100-milers (and many 100-Ks) to this day, still give out Western-style belt buckles (usually) for finishing.

By the way, Gordy still runs the race! And he was at the training camp!

**Here's a photo of me and Gordy after about 25 miles on the first day:**





So...getting back to my blog posting story...Pat and I were there for a 3-day training weekend on Memorial day weekend. This is no piece of cake. The first day, you run basically the toughest part of the course for 34 miles. The 2nd day you run another part of the course for 20 miles, and on the third day, you hit it again and do the last 20 miles of the course.

There are aid stations every 10 to 15 miles or so, to keep you from having to pack too much with you. I still ended up running out of water twice on the first day (on the two toughest climbs on the course). I should have had 3 or 4 water bottles, instead of two; or I should have taken my 100-oz CamelBak with me. Oh well, it was a good learning experience.

The first day, we started at Robinson Flat, near the snow line.



After a short climb, we ran down, down, and more down.



Then we got to climb “Devil's Thumb,” but we first took a little cool-off break:







A shot of Devil's Thumb rock, near the top of an hour or so climb.

We also came across Tonto's gravesite (and a few others). Tonto was Scott Jurek's dog and training partner for 10 years. Scott won the race a record 7 years in a row.



After the Devil's Thumb climb, we descended again and then rose from another canyon to Michigan Bluff. Then we had yet another major downhill and uphill before we could cease running on the first day. We repaired to dinner and our digs at the Foresthill Middle School, where we both had tents set up in the track and field oval.



Along the way, we met some special folks. I met Eric, and found we had a similar past and employer to talk about.



We also got to meet and talk with many of the participants and speakers, including Tim Twietmeyer, who's finished the race more times than anyone, usually within 24-hours, as well. He has also won the race and set a Master's finish time record.



You would have thought that it was tough to get up and run 3 tough days in a row, but I really looked forward to it. Even though I still consider myself not in the best physical condition, I was impressed that I will be able to pace Pat well the last 40 miles, in spite of him being a lot fitter than I am. (He will have been softened-up by 60 miles when he gets to me). I also like to run at night, so that will be a plus, too. I'm just glad I had the opportunity to go to this camp. It's really hard to simulate mountainous running conditions where I live. We have hills, but not 40-minute downhills and 1-hour climbs.

Happy trails,  
Bad Ben

