

In 2011 I participated in my inaugural Psycho Wycho. What an event! I ran. I fell. I ran some more. I fell some more. Then I ran another lap. No running event I had participated in compared to the satisfaction of running big with The Nerds. Nerds Rock!

It's 2012. 6:00 a.m. game day and it's 7 degrees. This is Cheese Heads on the Frozen Tundra cold. At 7:00 am I check in at registration. It's 9 degrees. Here's hoping for double digits by kick off. At 7:15 I'm in uniform and ready. Fast forward the tape: every joint in my body is sore, my knee is throbbing, my calf is in a semi permanent cramp, I've got a bad case of carpal tunnel, it's going to take a month to thaw my fingers and toes. I spent over nine hours on the trail and I'm exhausted. And I never made it past The Triangle. That's right: I stepped it up this year and registered for Psycho Wyco, Run Toto Run as a volunteer.

I've participated in running events for the better part of the last thirty years. But prior to the last several months I have never volunteered. Never. If I have the time I'm going to run. Right? So the good Lord decided it was time to teach me a lesson and offered a recurrent injury as my teacher. He sat me on the bench. The only way I'm going to get my runners high is to get close enough to the track and hope some of it rubs off. I'm going to find greatness vicariously.

If you think it's hard to get up for a race when it's seven degrees outside, try volunteering. (Maybe they won't miss me?) By the time I arrived, fellow volunteers were already hauling equipment to The Triangle Aid Station. We spent the next hour organizing, setting up and preparing. At 8:00 the first wave of runners hit the trail. By 8:15 we thought we were pretty well set. By 8:16 everything was frozen. It's 12 degrees. At 8:25 the first runners arrived. They were fast. They looked as if they ran without effort. I was observing greatness. I was impressed. At 9:00 a.m. another 300 runners are headed our way.

The spigots on the water jugs were useless. The Coke wouldn't pour. Equipment is freezing to the table. Mountain Dew Slushy? GU'cicle anyone? Everything was frozen solid. Runners offered up water bottles and hydration packs rendered useless by the elements. We're filling cups as fast as we can and they're freezing as we pour them. "Sir, do you have any waters that aren't frozen?" "Oh how I wish. And don't call me sir!" Note to self: tuck the hydration hose inside your shirt to keep it thawed. GU goes in your pocket to keep it GU'ey

So I call Matt Holmes. Matt puts in yeomen's effort with his old man to organize and run these events. You want a tough job, try organizing volunteers.

9:00 a.m. phone call to Matt:

Q. "Matt, everyone's water bottles are frozen. Any good ideas?"

A. "Sure" he says, "we're pouring hot coffee to thaw them out".

Q. "Arrrrgh! I'M AT THE TRIANGLE! WHERE AM I GOING TO GET HOT COFFEE?!"

Welcome to The Triangle!

Last year I was understandably consumed by my own experience. But as a volunteer I was honored to witness and participate in the experience of over 500 athletes. I can say without pause that I was

blessed with inspirational stories, inspirational personalities and inspirational incidents. My friend Chris Wristen completed his first 50K (6:22). Mr. Consistency, Jay Mooney was unstoppable (6:49). Ooo-rah! Brian Brooks was smiling at his first lap and laughing when he passed us the third time through (6:14). Brian was a volunteer at The Triangle last year. Good luck at Western States! We're all rooting for you! A year ago Brad Bishop (5:00) organized dozens of Psycho training runs. He always arrived early and stocked an informal aid station along the course with sandwiches, snacks and fluids and served and motivated us all. And when necessary, which was often, he dragged behind to keep me moving to starve the Cougar. Thanks Brad! Did you see Jerry Frost (7:19)? His cold, bloody, smiling picture defines Psycho Wyco. He represented the SLUGS and donated his eye ware and the bridge of his nose to The Triangle. We tried to mend his wounds.....he's bleeding, certainly in pain and probably can't see without his glasses. But he couldn't stop smiling and just kept running. How cool was that: greatness comes in all sizes, ages and paces!

What many runners didn't know is that they were being served by a team of all stars. No not me. I was a mid-packer at the Ground Hog Run. No, I'm talking about the rest of the team. If you enjoyed a cup of frozen goodness at The Triangle, it was probably served by Marty Borchardt, a Psycho veteran and avid trail runner, Mark Inbody who ran a 17:15 last weekend at the Rocky Raccoon 100 miler, or Craig Duhn, a multiple 100 mile finisher and qualifier for this summer's Western States 100 Mile Endurance Run. Craig drove from Northern Iowa just to lend a hand!

Or did you know that The Sweeper – the guy who cleans up after the parade - was local super hero Danny Miller, a very active volunteer whose prestigious resume includes last season's Western States. I heard that Larry Long showed up at 6:00 am to help set up and register runners, and then ran the 50K (5:39). The volunteer roster was a who's who of the running community and included injured runners, tired runners recovering from recent races (Matty and Ashley set 100/50 mile distance PR's last weekend!) and many friends and families of runners. You know you're being well taken care of when these ultra super stars are serving, supporting and cleaning up after you.

What a joy to train and compete in an event with the aura of Psycho. We train for the Runners High: the sense of accomplishment after pushing ourselves farther and faster than we thought we could go while braving unreasonable conditions. But I challenge you to try the Volunteers High. We served snacks and beverages, defrosted hydration devises, massaged cramped muscles, offered words of encouragement, attended to injured athletes and chipped ice off of everything. We provided what we could to offer comfort, support and encouragement. Maybe we made a difference. Maybe someone's race was improved because we punched a hole in the ice cap on their water cup or tried to sooth their aches and pains. The joy of having served my friends and fellow runners as they showed their greatness gives me a tremendous sense of satisfaction and calm.

Thank you for blessing us and inspiring us with your strength and perseverance.... a little bit of your greatness might have rubbed off on me. And please Dear Lord, I'm ready to run again? I promise that I will do my part and continue to give back to the running community as it has given to me. Lesson(s) learned. Nerds Rock!