

Hardrock 1998  
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Hardrock is a footrace over 100 miles (165 km) with 33000 feet (11000 meters) elevation change. It consists of a big loop through some of America's wildest mountains, the San Juan Mountains in SW Colorado. The course follows mainly old mining trails, but there are also considerable parts where you have to go cross-country without trail or follow more or less faint traces of animal paths. There are 13 aid stations along the course, 6 of which allow drop bags and crew access (drop bags contain your personal items such as clothing, flashlight or speciality food and will be transported by the race officials to the designated areas for you). The high point of the course is Handies Peak, just over 14000 ft (4300 m) there are 7 passes around 13000 ft (4000 m), and 3 more above 12500 ft (3800 m). The low point is the town of Ouray, 7680 ft (2300 m) and the average elevation of the course is more than 11000 ft (3400 m). The two major river crossings were just deep enough to reach up to my shorts. This year there was less snow than in previous years (I was told), but all the steep north facing slopes above 12000ft still were full of snow.

I had traveled to Colorado on Thursday, two weeks ahead of the race to get used to the altitude. My first stop was Denver, where I stayed with my friend Chris and his wife Pam. I knew him from backcountry skiing together a few years ago, after my first year at Ithaca. The first evening we went kayaking together on Boulder creek, the next day. I did a quite challenging mountainbike ride along the Sourdough trail and up to Brainerd Lake. The day afterwards I joined Chris and a few friends for a kayaking trip down the Poudre. The Poudre has all difficulties from V - II. We started the run on a class III section that - for my level of kayaking- was hard but enjoyable. Then I went for a little jog up the mountain while the others were enjoying themselves in the class IV section. I joined them for the lower class III+ section again, which was challenging enough for me. Of course I didn't succeed on my first roll attempt (too nervous) and swam. My second one was fine, but I came back up in a hole only to go right back into the water and swim again.... Somehow, by the end of the day I was quite beaten up and considered this as enough of cross training..... Well, nearly enough as it would turn out. Before recovering we first had to go to the Oasis brewpub and have a few pints of their excellent Stout. There I learnt that some of Chris' friends were planning to go on a backcountry skiing trip the following day and I, as a ski-maniac certainly couldn't give that a miss. Chris gave me his skis and my feet fit well into Pam's boots, so I had all I needed and went up Mt. Toll (sp?) with these folks on the following day. It was a nice sunshine trip with a steep but very skiable slope on the top. The whole climb took about 3 hrs with 1 hr. at the beginning where we had to carry the skis.

The afternoon I left the very enjoyable city of Denver and headed towards Leadville. Joel had been so kind and posted a message on the internet looking for a pacer for me for the Hardrock run. This way I had established contact with Donny Horadam. He was supposed to be camping at Halfmoon near Leadville with a red Truck with Texan numberplates. Of course I had printed out his wrong email, so all I knew was the name of the campground, his name and a vague memory about a red truck. Arriving at Halfmoon at dusk I had to realize that this was a very big camping area consisting of several official and unofficial sites scattered along the road and river over several miles. Needless to tell that there were plenty of red Trucks with Texan numberplates and also quite a few campers. After asking the first two groups if they had seen any runners - of course the reply was negative- I decided to give up, sleep and to try again the next morning. On my way looking for a nice spot I ran across another group, asked them if they had seen any runners -- and it was Donny and his group!!! What a luck! They were all very nice people and I was looking forward to Donny pacing me, as he was a very enjoyable person to hang out with.

The next morning we went for a short run (Donny had had a hard training day before) after 30 min I wasn't quite ready to turn around yet, so I said good-bye to Donny and continued towards timberline on Mt. Elbert. I was feeling great, so I went all the way to the summit at 14433 ft (approx. 4700m) without food, water or sunscreen, of course, because I had set out for a short run, only... Some sympathetic woman gave me water on the top of the mountain another one sunscreen and the third one told me that I had just climbed Colorado's highest peak! This was a pretty good start to high altitude running I thought. The way down was long and hot, but I made it back to my car, refreshed with some fresh fruit and water and continued in the early afternoon driving towards my final destination: Silverton in the San Juan mountains.

I was approaching the mountains in the evening from Montrose, from the North, and saw a pretty impressive mountain range ahead of me. These mountains rise a lot sharper out of the high desert than the rest of the Rockies that I had seen before. It nearly felt like approaching the Bernese Oberland from the Jura. I felt immediately at home in these mountains: Steep cliffs, avalanche remains and debris to the side of the road and narrow gorges with waterfalls. Just at nightfall I arrived in Silverton, where I immediately went to Charlie Thorn's, the trail marking director, house to inquire about the following day's course marking session.

In the two weeks before the race Charlie and John Cappis, the course director, go out with volunteers to mark the course. This is a great idea, cause newby's like me can get to know the course, the way it is marked and at the same time you can acclimatize to the high elevation. In Charlie's house I met Joel. He had arrived only a few days earlier and stayed at Charlie's house - and had taken on the role of a caretaker, managing all the numerous runners who would walk in and out and doing his best to keep the place reasonably clean! For those who don't know him: Joel is the one who really got me started in the extreme ultrarunning, convincing me to run the Massanutten 100 last year. I also want to thank Charlie for being so generous to have all find a place to meet warm up after a rain and in front of all let us mud covered runners use his shower.

At Charlie's Joel introduced me to Brick and Jim who took me along to their campsite near South Mineral creek campground. It was a great spot there: free, in the shade and with a new bathroom facility. Later I found out that the whole area around Silverton offers very nice spots for camping, but finding this site right on the first night was a big asset. The next few days I went out on course marking trips and drove those parts of the course that were on Jeep roads. I made all those 4WD drivers look in disbelief when I got my little Chevy Cavalier 2WD up and down all the major passes (both sides of Oscars, Engineer from Silverton...) -- and I didn't even break a thing on my car. Over the next few days gradually the weather worsened and finally on a very rainy day I drove out to enjoy the Orvis hot springs. This is a very enjoyable pool with a nicely landscaped garden and, most unusual for America, with clothing optional.

The first week had gone by quickly and now I drove back to Denver to pick up Geri who was going to crew for me. Together we went back to Silverton to see that Brick had occupied my wonderful tent site while I was away! Never mind, the spot right next to him wasn't bad either. With Geri I went on a few hikes, including a climb to the top of Mt. Sneffels. Unfortunately it was raining most of the time. Just sometimes there were a few hours in the morning without rain. These were the time widows we tried to use for getting to the summits. This was a bit of bad luck for Geri, that she couldn't enjoy too much sunshine. On one of the worst days we went again to the hot springs which were very pleasant when it's raining outside. Nevertheless I felt pretty well prepared for the race.

The day before the race I meticulously packed my drop bags. There were 6 aid stations with drop bag and crew access and another 6 without on the course. I tried to pack things for all possible cases: rain, sun night, and hunger. So essentially each bag contained something like a polypro shirt, sometimes tights,

wind jacket, torch or batteries, potatoes, prosciutto, German whole wheat bread, power bars, muesli bar, energy gel and electrolytes. Normally there is plenty of food at the aid stations, but on last year's race I had realized that often you're really hungry but you have an disgust towards everything they have to offer at the aid stations. Therefore I just complemented with some personal treats the food that I was expecting at the aid stations. Even when you don't need your drop bags, the knowledge of them being within a few hours from your position during the race helps to make you feel better.

The weather in the last days before the race had been pretty poor; the tent proved to show some leakage and the forecast for the race days was only marginally better. So we said good bye to our campsite and took a room in Silverton. The evening before the race we went to the big all you can eat pasta dinner organized by a local restaurant for us runners. I had a \*lot\* of pasta and could just barley walk home with my full stomach. After a good night's sleep (just interrupted by the most severe rain showers hitting the roof).

I got up at 4.45 had my good German bread with nutella and felt strong for the race. Of course it was raining and my Gore-Tex jacket was at aid station 4 (Sherman).....

At 6 am we finally took off. The pack went out rather slow (compared to Massanutten last year, where a pack of about 20 runners started out at marathon pace for the first two miles), a few front running bastards were fighting for the lead and I tried to position myself somewhere around place 10. I met Joe Clapper whom I had been running with for the first 20 miles of MMT 100 last year. He seemed to have a similar goal to start somewhere around 10th position. However we both failed and were in 1st place after only 2 miles or so. We didn't think we were going very fast, so we continued with a pack of about 5 or 6 chasing after us at constant distance. On the climb towards the first pass the hounds had caught up with us. I was leading with Ricky Denesik and chatting away until Randy Isler's voice shouted from behind "first test failed boys" And indeed we had missed the turn off the Jeep road and gone about 20ft too far. I had helped setting this part of the course. So missing it was pretty bad. Anyhow I was warned and would take better attention on where the trail was in the future. Up the final climb no one wanted to take the initiative and thus they had the unknown German guy do the lead work, which I willingly accepted as I could set the pace just according to how I felt. Same story on the downhill. I was about 100yards ahead when I crossed the stream into Cunningham aid station (mi 9.2, km 15) at 8:07. I felt good; I had drunk my whole water bottle and didn't really need any of the food they offered me. But, helas where was Geri with my pack for the rest of the race? I couldn't see her anywhere. I only had a bottle holder with me. A pack for a jacket, tights and a little food was vital for me to go through the next 30 miles before the next crew access aid station.

I just grabbed a banana and followed somebody pointing out that the crews were "back there" (sounded not very reassuring at that time), but indeed I saw Geri walking up towards me - with nothing in her hands. I was pretty psyched for doing so well and then suddenly the whole race was at risk! Of course my fanny pack was just nearby on the car and everything was fine but my nerves lay pretty much open that moment. In a race that lasts 40hrs. Loosing 1 minute is of course nothing and what I lost was probably only 15 seconds. But in such a situation you just don't think too rationally. Btw. yelling at your crew is certainly not what you want to do on a 100-mile race - treat your crew as she does deserve it and she'll continue to care for you for the rest of the race. Would I end up having to finish without crew after not being very pleasant???

So these were my thoughts as I went out of the aid station, still hanging on to a 1-minute lead. I made good progress on the road but was a little uncertain and shaken now: Am I still right, did I miss the right hand turn? Generally the course is very well marked. However they put only very few markers out where the course is on a good trail or road which is easy to follow. However if you miss the turn off a good trail and continue on it, there is little to tell you

that you have gone the wrong way. So I checked my map and immediately saw the turn just 50 yards ahead of me. Here the climb to the Buffalo Boy mine and pass begins. During this climb first Randy and then Ricky caught up with me and took over the lead. Ricky's walking speed was just amazing. He fully took advantage of his "daddy longlegs" legs. I don't know his size, but he surely would make a good Basketball player, he must be way over 6 ft tall! There were places where Randy and me were running and Ricky was just walking next to us at the same speed!

After the climb to the ridge at Buffalo Boy mine Randy and Ricky had pulled away some 100'. On the snowfields in the descent I did some good skiing slides on my feet and got closer again, just to fall behind on the following downhill. Suddenly I lost sight of them - and of the trail. However the tent of Maggie Gulch aid station could be seen in the valley floor and I just worked my way down towards it. A few minutes downhill I hit an old road and - saw Randy coming down it behind me! I guess I had cut a couple of feet from the correct trail. Some purist might call this cheating, I think its within the "natural error margin" for such a race. So I held my 1st place going into Maggie gulch aid station (mi 16.5, km 27).

The 3 of us left the aid station at about the same time and started the easy climb to the next saddle. The next 20 miles would be on a territory that I had not seen before. Randy and Ricky had pulled nearly out of sight on this uphill. I decided not to loose sight of them because they would show me the way and thus make life much easier for me. Indeed, I managed to reduce their lead to about 100 yards when we reached Pole creek aid station (mi 22.4, km 37).

I still felt good, took just a quick sip of Gatorade, two bananas and off I went together with Ricky and Randy. Now there was a long gentle uphill along a wide creek bed along a good hiking trail to follow. At some point the course would leave the continental divide trail however and traverse to Crystal? Lake. I didn't want to miss that junction and made sure to always keep in sight of Ricky and Randy who were alternating in the lead. I managed all right up to the lake, but then I didn't feel so good any more. I was getting tired and my stomach didn't feel great. I lost sight of Randy and Ricky (and wouldn't see them again until the finish).

At Sherman aid station (mi 31.7, km 53) I tried to revitalize myself by eating and drinking, but it didn't work. I wasn't feeling well and had to walk most of the road towards the creek bed, which would lead me up towards Handies Peak. On the road Joe Clapper overtook me easily. No way I could have kept up with him at this moment. The climb began and I still felt bad. I think I had eaten and drunk too much salty stuff and hadn't given enough plain water to my body. So I started to drink more water. The stream looked pretty clean and I filled my water bottles from it.

At the beginning of the steep climb towards Handies I hadn't seen a soul behind me, but suddenly they were here. First Scott Mills? flew past me and soon after Kirk Apt also. In the distance I could see another person. Soon they were way ahead of me. But I was slowly feeling better again. I wouldn't say stronger - at mile 25 going steeply uphill at 12000 ft (3700 m) you simply don't feel strong. From now on the distance to the leaders didn't increase any more. The sun was out and this climb was pretty hot. Somewhere around 13500 ft you have to climb a steep scree slope to reach the ridge. This seemingly took forever. While I was climbing I saw dark clouds moving in very rapidly. But there was nothing I could do. I was already going at my top speed. On the ridge the rain started to hit me.

Fortunately I had -despite of the hot sunshine - picked up my Gore-Tex jacket at Sherman, just as I had planned before the race. This kept my upper body warm and the \$.99 plastic hood which Geri had bought me did an excellent job keeping my head warm in the storm. You could have passed about 40 ft below the summit, but as a real mountaineer it was clear that I went all the way up to the top to put my foot down on the highest spot. Just at that moment a loud blow of thunder

came down on me from the sky. So I ran down the exposed ridge on the other side into American Basin as quick as I could. Some more thunder and rain and by the time I had reached Sloan Lake everything was over. I punched my race number (the punch was there so that people wouldn't shortcut and destroy the fragile Tundra vegetation) and continued over to Grouse Gulch pass. Now I knew Grouse gulch aid station wouldn't be far and that I would have a chance to make it all the way into Ouray before darkness. Running down the last slope I just saw Kirk, Joe and Scott leave the Grouse Gulch (mi 42, km 69) aid station together. And I heard someone cheering for Gi! Yes, this time Geri announced early that she was there, waiting for me and I didn't have to worry.

What a service at this aid station: Geri washed my socks and shoes to get rid of these grinding rocks under my feet, I devoured this gorgeous banana custard, mashed potatoes and some other foods. Great aid station, good food, and nice people This is my personal number 1 of all the aid stations of the course. From a runners point of view the aid stations on this course varied strongly in quality. Some were just perfect, others had friendly personnel, but they just didn't know what a runner needs (such as clear display of the foods available, support with filling water bottles etc.). This is not meant as a complaint, but as a fact. You did get all you need at any aid station just the ease was different from aid station to aid station. Running a 100 miler I am happy about everything that I can get at the aid stations in addition to my drop bags and maybe some water, but of course I appreciate everything on top of this. Anyway the problem about this particular aid station was that it was sooo good. So I spent too much time here and when I left the aid station Dave Horton was already ahead of me.

I left my flashlight in the drop bag at the aid station because I was pretty confident to leave Bear Creek canyon before nightfall. When I had checked out the course I had driven the part to come, the climb to Engineer pass. It had looked pretty runnable in parts because the grade wasn't very steep. However I hadn't thought about how tired I would be by the time I got there. So it was mainly walking for me now, with a few running steps in between. Shortly after leaving the aid station the second hailstorm hit me. This had some pretty heavy winds and strong hail, but was over in only a few minutes. I was walking fast; nevertheless

Dave was constantly pulling away from me. He is an unbelievably fast walker. As I finally reached Engineer Pass the sun was shining again. Dave was already out of sight and I started to drop down towards the aid station. The climb had taken me longer than planned (about 90 min) and I was beginning to worry about the amount of daylight I had left. Fortunately I had checked out this part a few days before. Then it had taken me 1hr15 from the pass to the road, now I had about 2 hrs of daylight left.

Well, I for sure was going much slower, reached Engineer aid station (mi 49.6, km 82) where people had all the food well wrapped to protect it from the earlier rain and hailstorms, but I was a little confused about what they had to offer. I ended up drinking a cup of something didn't manage to unwrap the hard candies and started out of the aid station a little bit confused with a candy in my hand. The trail to come now is probably the most dangerous part of the course. After some descent through the trees and along / across creeks and an old frozen avalanche chute the trail goes across the steep canyon walls of Bear creek. Most of its way it is blasted into the vertical rock and is about 5-ft. (1.5m) wide. To the left of the trail the cliff drops vertically for some 100ft to Bear creek. The trail descends gradually for most of its length, so it is perfectly runnable, but you have to watch your steps: If you stumble here and go over the edge you'll be gone forever. I was happy to leave Bear Creek canyon, just as the dusk began.

I had made it down to the road in about 1:40 from the top of Engineer's, not too bad, after all. Runners behind me would have to go through the canyon at

nighttime and thus would be slowed down by the dangerous terrain. It made me feel a little more comfortable knowing that it would be hard for anyone to catch up with me anytime soon. -Yes, I am competitive during the race. It doesn't "really" matter who is ahead of me and behind me. I mainly race against the course and the clock, but after all it's important to me how I am doing with respect to the other competitors. From the road crossing it's a short descent to the Uncompaghre River which has to be crossed. From the thunderstorms it had gone up considerably and it was a wild, brown and muddy raging river (At least it felt this way to me). Here the course director had installed a fixed rope to help the runners negotiate the crossing. For sure I would not have dared to cross here without the help of the rope. The current was strong, though not as bad as I was afraid of when I first saw the river, and the cold water reached halfway up my shorts. In the last glow of daylight I made it down on the other side of the river to Ouray. Here is a short section where you backtrack your steps on the way in and out from the aid station. Here I met the three guys ahead of Dave and me. Ricky and Randy had been already too far ahead to meet them). Just as I reached the aid station it was pitch-black.

Perfect timing. Here in Ouray aid station (mi 57.5, km 95) I would pick up my Petzl Arctic headlight. Its battery case you can hang around your neck, so it is easy to carry and the batteries stay warm so that they last longer. I went through the whole night on one set of batteries. As an emergency backup I had a mini AAA maglight in case I needed to change bulbs or fix my light in the darkness.

Geri was here atg Ouray, Donny my pacer also. In Hardrock one pacer is allowed at a time, starting from Grouse Gulch aid station. The pacer is just there to keep you company and help you find the trail but not for any kind of running aid, such as carrying food or drink for you. I was tired at Ouray aid station, I didn't really feel an urge to eat. Geri and Donny tried to convince me to eat something but I didn't take much more than mashed potatoes (which I had on every aid station, my favorite ultra food) and a few cookies. I was craving for oranges, but they had none and Geri had finished the Orange juice, which I had put in the car had I also put on my tights thinking the night might get cold in altitude. The weather looked perfect, so I dropped my Gore-Tex jacket at the aid station and just kept the light windbreaker in my pack.

So I started out with Donny through the town. I was feeling pretty tired, I wasn't feeling bad, just tired. It is a long gradual climb on a wide dirt road to Governor Basin aid station. Most of it is perfectly runnable, but in my present state I had to force myself to run (in a very slow pace) on the flat stretches and walked even the slightest uphill. So much for another part of the course where I wanted to speed up and gain some time..... Donny kept up my spirit and followed me on my side. I guess it must have been pretty boring for him, as I probably was not too talkative at this moment. The moon came out and lit up the valley and the peaks and we slowly made our way to Governor Basin aid station (mi 64.7, km 106).

Here we were having quite a lot of food and drink and the light wind made things a bit chilly. I had a can of coke (as I would have on the subsequent aid stations) to wake me up. This was the only kind of "drug" I was using during the race (except for some minerals). I believe it was here where I put on my long sleeve shirt. From this aid station it is a steep long climb towards Virginus pass. I had plenty of time to prepare myself mentally to the end of this long climb (5500 ft, 1650m) out of Ouray).

I don't know if it was the coffee and coke at the aid station or the fact that we were climbing towards real mountains (and not trotting along the dirt road) or whatever: I was feeling much better after leaving Governor Basin aid station. Soon we were at the end of the dirt road, crossed steep snowfields and worked our way up the steep snow pitches towards the pass. It was well past midnight now and the snow was frozen on its surface. I put on my polypro liner gloves and took two pieces of wood (remains from the old mine activity) to serve as ice

picks for the last steep grade. I didn't have to use them but it made me feel more comfortable. Donny climbed without any aid for his hands (except gloves). Suddenly we heard a voice from above "why don't you use the rope next to you?" and indeed there was a rope hanging down a few feet to the left of us. Donny reached over to get it and we both negotiated the last few steep and icy meters with the aid of the rope.

Here we were at the course's most scenic aid station: Virginius pass (mi 67.9, km 112) 13100 ft (4000 m) high. Just a small tent, a tarp against the wind and two camping chairs perched on the narrow arrete that's all of the aid station. The aid station personnel had to carry in the equipment the same long way, as we would have to descend on the other side. It is great to have all this initiative from volunteers helping us runners! Up there were clear skies full of stars above us beautiful views over the moonlit basin over to Mt. Sneffels and great helpful aid station personnel which gave us hot drinks to warm up. It wasn't easy to leave this welcoming spot in the middle of the night but hey - I wasn't here for pleasure, or was I???

I left towards Telluride, Donny shortly behind me. On the next drop into the basin of a creek that would lead us down to village we had a hard time finding the markers. First all of them had been knocked over and then we weren't even able to see a fallen over one. We stopped briefly to check on the map where the course would go and then went down into the basin along what we assumed must have been very close to the course. And indeed, only a few minutes later we picked up the markers again and followed the long trail down into Telluride. My left shin started to hurt a little. This was the same injury, which I had retrieved the year before at MMT100. There it had made it virtually impossible for me to run any of the downhills after mile 85. I was worried this might happen again, so I took it easy on the downhill. WE entered Telluride around 3am. There were still people on the road and we heard some shouting. Funny things are going on in these towns at 3am we thought..... Later we heard that there was an art festival going on and that these were probably the last night owls out.

At Telluride aid station (mi 73.2, km 120) I picked up my ski poles to support me on the steep ascent towards Oscars pass and in front of all to help me descend its steep backside so that I would not have to put too much weight on my hurting shin. During the ascent we could see a faint light quite a ways behind us. This was the first sign of another runner since I had Ouray! On the climb towards Oscar's pass dawn was slowly arriving and when we reached the top the sun had just come up from the Horizon. Seeing the sun after such a long night - I can't describe that feeling. I think this is one of the reasons you do 100 milers for: There are impressions so strong - you wouldn't feel them otherwise! Oscars pass was quite a surprise to me: The descent was frozen solid and extremely dangerous to descend. If you slipped here you would go down a few 10s of yards and then crash into a boulder field. While not deadly, certainly good for a few bruises or a broken limb - Not a pleasant thought at all! I carefully negotiated my way down with the help of my ski poles and Donny took a longish detour where the grade of the snowfield was easier. The descent was as steep, hard and rocky, as I had feared. My ski poles were a good help to me. Despite the steep descent my shin problems did not aggravate. Finally we reached Chapman Gulch aid station (mi 82.3, km 135).

Support at this aid station was not too generous: Geri was not here (as later turned out she had missed a turn on the loooooong way around the mountains from Ouray and missed me by 15 minutes). I had written down for Geri the times I might make it to a given aid station in the optimum case and I was still running ahead of this optimum schedule. -My fault to underestimate myself! Also we had pretty much to get all the food and drink we needed ourselves and were not cared for as much as in the other aid stations where usually all your wished were read from your eyes and where people were killing themselves just to fulfill your

wishes! I also dropped the ski poles and flashlight here. Donny usually developed a much bigger desire for food drink and adjustment of his running gear than I did. So I left the aid station - as usually the case- a few minutes ahead of him. I hope I didn't push him too much making him feel he had to leave with me. But I just didn't want to loose too much time at the stations and Donny was a good bit faster than me, anyway. So he easily caught up with me within a few minutes from leaving the aid stations.

Going out of Chapman gulch the sun hit hard on us and I was getting hot at this low elevation. Just a little while ago I had rejoiced about the sun's rays and now I hated them. Strange things happen...Fortunately we caught some shade before attacking the most grueling ascent: the scree slope up to Great Swamp pass. 3 steps up would have you 2 steps slide down. But I was feeling good and fought my way up to the top. The descent on the scree slope on the other side was kind of a reward for the effort climbing up and I quickly descended to the little lake. Here I emptied the rocks out of my shoes and we continued down toward Kamm Traverse. I had checked out all the parts from the top of Great swamp pass to the finish ahead of the race and was feeling very confident about the route finding: Too confident! I did not miss the turn off to Kamm traverse but took a wrong turn during the traverse. I quickly realized this and Donny found the right trail so that we didn't loose much time. Leaving the trees in KT offers a spectacular traverse along a steep grassy slope, which eventually leads to the Kamm Traverse aid station (mi 89.1, km 147) at S. Mineral Creek.

It was hot sunny and I didn't have my sunglasses and sunscreen (the plan was that Geri would have brought them to Chapman aid station) I had no problems with my eyes but my skin was turning "brown like a tomato". KT aid station was great: Geri wasn't there (no crew access, but I later heard she made it there to bring me my sunglasses. However she had to drive around the whole mountain range and couldn't catch up with me running). But even without her I still had two women care for me: The older mother like type would put sunscreen on my arms and neck while the pretty young one served me food and drinks (shouldn't it have been the other way round??). Anyway this was world class aid station service, I was feeling good and I left the aid station in good spirits. From here on I ran just to finish: my body had switched to "survival mode" no complaints, I was going just like a machine up and down the hills with no particular speed but also no slow stretches. The climb out of S. Mineral Creek was hot but as soon as we were above timberline the climate was more pleasant. A long traverse, a hard climb and we were on the last pass of the race. Below us we could see the last aid station, Putnam Basin (mi 95.1, km 156).

I looked on my watch and realized that I still could make it back in to the finish before 3pm. I was feeling good, so I blew right past the aid station towards the valley. Donny went to the aid station but caught up very soon. The descent is a long traverse down a very hot valley and across numerous boulder fields. Just imagine what you don't want at the finish of a 100 miler: you would find it here. The good thing was that my left shin was still holding up very well. Every now and then I could feel that it was a little overworked but I did not feel any major pain! The descent was longer and hotter than I had thought. We both ran out of water (I should have stopped at the aid station to refill my water bottles) but we knew the finish was near. The river crossing at the bottom was easy with the help of the fixed rope and Geri was there to cheer us on and to take pictures. Across the road and up the hill to the old railway bed. Here I stepped on the same sharp rock, nail? or whatever that I had stepped on while checking out the trail before the race. It hurt pretty badly for a few moments but this couldn't stop me from running towards the finish line. A last small but hot climb on the dirt road brought us to the Shrine overlooking Silverton. It was a good feeling to see the finish and we headed strait down across Main Street, Donny was stopping the traffic for me. The last thing I would have done was stop for traffic right now. All I had in my mind was to cross the finish line. Under Geri's and few other bystanders' cheers I made it into the finish at

14:42. The race directors congratulated me and some kids brought food and drink, though no beer was available.

It was great to sit there at the finish line and just relax. I felt great finishing in such a short time (my goal had been finishing before darkness) and was happy not having to run for a few more hours. It is pretty inconceivable to me how people can stay out there on the course for another night of running (what many people have to do!) Just after 3pm the next runner came in. He must have come down the mountain in an incredible time, because I had not seen anybody follow me since Oscar's pass.

Then we drove back to the campsite, had a few beers and I tried to recover a bit. First I had thought my legs weren't stiff at all but after sitting still for a while I realized that walking or getting in and out of the tent wasn't such an easy task any more. After a shower at Charlie's place and a good dinner at the Brown Bear I slept perfectly.

The next morning my legs were sore but I could walk normally if I put a little thought to it. At the awards ceremony I tried to walk normally up to the podium to receive my Original Hardrock picture numbered with my rank. I had decided to join the group of those who pretended that the little warm-up jog we did the previous two days wouldn't have an effect on us after one night's sleep. The other fraction was limping up towards the podium to demonstrate what hardship they had suffered and still managed to finish. Ginny did the best demonstration of this and was awarded with standing ovations. It was her second attempt to finish Hardrock. Last year she had dropped out around mile 75, but this year she finished well before cutoff. At the ceremony I also met Joel, it was his third HR finish and he's the one who had so vividly talked about Hardrock that he is responsible that I ran my first 100 miler last year and came back to the US to do Hardrock this year! Yes it's quite an illustrious circle of runners participating. Most of them return because they didn't finish the previous year even though in some bystander's opinion they'll never finish. Take for instance this guy whose third attempt failed this year, he has never gone more than 25 miles or so, I think but I am sure he'll be back next year. It's a great course and being out there in this beautiful area preparing for the race is nearly as much fun than running the race itself. This may be part of the reason why people keep returning to this race. I for sure would like to return one day (and of course improve my time???) to run another Hardrock. They alternate directions every year, so you have to run it at least twice to experience all that Hardrock has to offer. If I'll be able to spend 3 weeks of vacation for this in the coming year isn't clear yet, but I certainly will keep it in my mind!

As a sad note to be added: Joel Zucker died the day after the race from a cerebral hemorrhage. Efforts to awake him from the coma had failed the second time he slipped into the coma. He knew he had very high blood pressure but this apparently hadn't affected his ultramarathon performance until that date. He suffered from serious headache during the last third of the race. While the ultra isn't proven to be the cause for his stroke the headache is a serious pointer in that direction. The lesson that I draw from this is to listen to my body carefully during such a race, not to take strong medication (to be able to feel all warning signs of body) and not to finish by any means but rather drop out when I feel major pain or discomfort. I don't know if this would have helped Joel, but this is the way I look at ultra racing. I am still thankful to Joel for all his help, advice and motivation he gave to me. Without him I would have never entered the exciting world of the 100 milers.

Thank you Geri for your crew work and your support, thank you Donny for being a great pacer, thank you all the volunteers and race officials for putting on this great race! I truly enjoyed it and I hope I'll have a chance to return to Hardrock again some day!

Of course I don't want to forget to mention that I recovered very quickly from the race. It might have something to do with the fact that I had been training more than before last year's 100miler(then it took me 6 weeks to recover). Also I had the impression that by the altitude and the large number of climbs I was mainly limited by my aerobic capacity and not by my leg muscles. After MMT last year my legs had been extremely sore and stiff for a whole week. This time they were only a little stiff for about two days. The light shin splints (tendonitis?) on my left calf was completely gone after 3 weeks. Now I am dreaming of future races, Hardrock in a sub 30hr time and..... Little of this will ever come true, but dreaming and mental preparation ahead of the race is nearly as exciting as the whole run to me.

For those of you interested in knowing more about the race check out <http://www.run100s.com/HR> for the "official"site and for a lot of pictures <http://www.geocities.com/~ultrarun/reports/HRH/HRHPhotoindex.htm> showing nearly the whole course. If you didn't quite get motivated enough to entering next year's race: The area makes a beautiful hiking terrain and the course would be a great 7 day backpacking trip.