

Race Director's Report: 2007 Vasque Free State Trail Run

April 28, 2007 By Bad Ben Holmes

Well, the 1st Annual Free State Trail Run, held at Clinton State Park in Lawrence, Kansas is now history. What a fun event! I loved every part of this process...the planning, the build-up, and especially the delivery.

The Planning:

For the past 4 years or so, Kyle Amos and I had kicked-around the idea of holding a 50-miler at Clinton State Park, on the North Shore trails. We even had



Both photos by Rachel Seymour, Lawrence Journal World Newspaper



The wonderful medals and buckles were designed by Jason Crosby

it in a local race schedule (in 2004) for a few months before pulling it. The reason we pulled the plug on the idea? This venue didn't conveniently lend itself to a 50-mile course, with loops of a little over 20 miles per loop. We also thought that 50Ks and 50-Milers are done to death in the ultra-world at large. And it just didn't "feel" right.

Flash forward to Winter of 2006 – We were on a Thursday night training run on the Blue River Trails, when Kyle said, "why not a 40-miler and a 100-K?" That idea struck us like a bolt of lightning. Later on, Greg Burger

thought it would be nice to add a trail marathon as well, with the intent of drawing-in some crossover pavement-pounders. Yep. Another good idea.



Why would we pick a 40-mile and a 100-Kilometer distance, you might ask? Why not? Many aspiring ultra-distance runners would like to move up in distance from a 50K to a 50-miler, but want to run an "in-between distance" first.

The same goes for runners who have finished a 50-mile run, but would like to move up to the 100-mile distance. There just aren't enough in-between distance ultras to run "out there," especially ultras that are on 100% technical single-track trails. It would also be nice if these in-between ultras were positioned in the Spring, prior to some of the popular 50 and 100-mile races. It would also be nice if these races were close to a major airport, thus eliminating the need for long drives in rental cars for out-of-towners. It was a slam-dunk of an idea!

With the planning for numerous short-distance trail races and our three years of experience planning and implementing a successful 50K in the dead of Winter, (Psycho WyCo Run Toto Run), we knew we had the knowledge, skills, and connections to pull it off. Having Vasque (trail shoes) pony-up as our 2007 Trail Series sponsor helped, also.

The Build-up:

We ran on the actual race course on multiple Sunday mornings for the months leading up to the race. Us "Trail Nerds" seem to do our best planning on our feet; especially on long trail runs. The re-hash every week in our muddy outdoor "meeting room" seemed to have paid off. We looked at the race from a lot of angles, and fleshed-out the details pretty darn well.

We had nothing but a good and helpful experience with Clinton State Park, Kansas Department of Recreation & Wildlife, and the Army Corps of Engineers, as far as planning and getting the necessary permits in order. Top notch folks, all-around. We also had some expert help for race day coming from KUS, (the Kansas Ultrarunners' Society). Stacy Sheridan, Phil Sheridan, Randy Albrecht, Jim Davis, and Matt Becker signed-on to run our half-way aid station. This helped put my mind at ease quite a bit.

The week leading up to the race was of course, very busy. It was also raining cats and dogs. The race was going to be held on Saturday, April 28. On Thursday night, Greg Burger and I marked about 4 miles of the course. On Friday, I was at packet pickup all day with the Midwest Vasque rep. (Dan Dehlin), while Kyle led a group of Trail Nerds (Greg, Ben Reeves, Mike Swords) to mark the majority of the course. It was raining hard and threatening tornados as they marked it.

Friday night, my wife (Vicki) and I camped at the park at the Start/Finish area, along with Josh Pool and Caleb Chatfield. I drove my last load of stuff out to the park at 12:30 a.m.

The Delivery:

Saturday morning was beautiful. We did some last-minute marking and logistics deliveries, and then started checking participants off of the list as they arrived.



Photos by Rachel Seymour, Lawrence Journal World

I started the 40-mile and 100-K ultra races very close to the scheduled 7:00 a.m. starting time. The marathon soon followed at 8:00 a.m. And, they're off!

In very short order, it was obvious that it was going to be a hot, sunny, and humid day; our first "hot running day" of the season. When Kyle Amos came in on his first 20-mile loop of the 100-K, he said, "start pushing the electrolytes and water, and keep it up all day. It's



getting hot out there.”

We didn't get the middle aid station setup until after the start of the marathon. This aid station was a logistical challenge. All of the supplies had to be driven to Campground #1, taken through a special gate, and then hand carried to the course location. And, there was an additional challenge. There was very limited access to Campground #1, because of a road bicycle criterion being staged. This station had to do double-duty as well, because the runners went through it twice on each loop. (This fact had escaped us during the initial planning, for

some reason). Stacy Amos, Josh, and Caleb were in charge of this important station, and they did an awesome job, despite the restocking issues.



*2007 Free State Trail Ultras
Clinton Lake, Kansas*

Dan Dehlin (right)

Photo by Dick Ross, www.seekcrun.com

In the meantime, the 3 races were proceeding nicely. We had some notoriously fast trail runners for all three events. We also had some “trail rookies” and quite a few trail veterans.

Of the marathon speedsters, we had our Midwest Vasque representative, Dan Dehlin, who had recently won a tough trail marathon in 2:52:00. He ended up winning the Free State marathon in 2:40 and change! He had also been a big help at packet pickup the day prior. Maria Eifler, of

Lawrence, took 1st place female honors in a time of 3:36:40. Dann Fisher (sans his usual K-9 race companion Bart), flew through the course and took 2nd place overall in just under three hours. Ivan Marsh from Ashland Nebraska was third. Second place female honors went to Emily Horn, of Lenexa, Kansas. Third place (and enjoying the race the whole way) was Erika Nilles-Plumlee of Lawrence, Kansas.



Alex Luedtke, 2nd Place 40-Mile Photo by Rachel Seymour, Lawrence Journal

The 40-Miler had two fast runners battling it out for first place. Michael Adams (36), who had won the Lake McMurty 50K just two weeks prior, was competing with Alex Luedtke, a fast young runner from Omaha. Both

men are new to ultra-distance trail running. Michael won the 40-mile race in 5:54:22, with Alex a little way back at 6:12:43. Rich Stigall did very well in his first ultra, taking third overall in 7:05:17. Rich, a resident “Trail Nerd,” is slowly gaining confidence and will be hammering out 50-milers soon enough.

In the women’s 40-mile race, S.L.U.G. Deanna Stoppler of Ashland, Missouri cruised to a 8:15:18 victory, followed by local (Shawnee, Kansas) Trail Nerd, Deb Johnson. Deanna had way too much fun, and hung around to eat multiple burgers and was excited about winning a pair of Vasque trailrunning shoes. Deb, ever the tough trail runner, was paced on a loop by her ultra-hubby Stuart. Third went to Rachel Kugel, of Des Moines, Iowa. Rachel seems to like our Trail Nerd races as much as we like having her run them.



Deanna Stoppler, 1st Fem. 40-Mile



Deb Johnson, 2nd Fem. 40-Mile



Michael Adams, 1st Place 40-Mile

Photos by Dick Ross, www.seekcrun.com



Phil Sheridan

In the 100-kilometer race, there were three front runners: Kyle Amos, Phil Sheridan, and Tammy Stone. Kyle and Phil were within a minute of each other for 40 miles! Tammy was always within striking distance, just in case either one of them slowed significantly. All three of these runners were a joy to watch; they were focused, friendly, and were having fun, despite running a tough race.

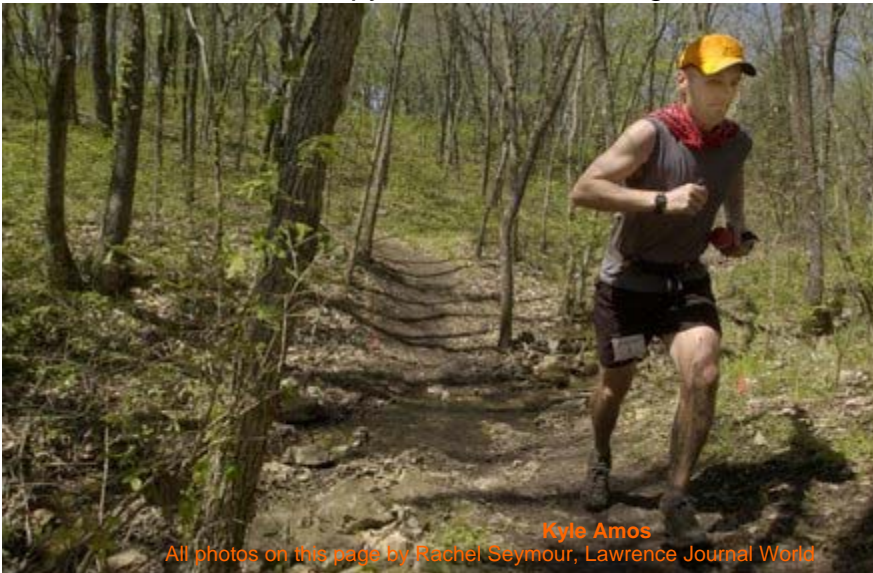
Kyle is co-founder of the Trail Nerds, and is a fast and solid ultrarunner. He had spent all of the rainy day before the race marking the course. Phil has set records and masters records at many ultra trail races. He's also a favorite co-Race Director of the Rockin' K Trail Runs, with his wonderful wife, Stacy.



Tammy Stone

Tammy Stone is a fast veteran

ultrarunner from the sleepy little ex-coal mining town of Florence, Colorado. She



Kyle Amos

All photos on this page by Rachel Seymour, Lawrence Journal World

ended up mining our 100K for gold! She ended up as first-place female and third overall, with a time of 10:59:03.

Kyle Amos and Phil Sheridan were hitting aid stations at about the same time for their first two 21-mile loops. It was fun to watch.

They even took a cooling dip in the lake at about the same time. Both men were doing their best to stay hydrated and cool on the very humid and warm day. At the aid stations, Phil would have us put ice in his hat, and Kyle had us put ice in his neck bandana. Caleb Chatfield was working the middle aid station with Josh

Pool and Stacy Amos and waiting for Kyle's last loop (to pace him the last 15 miles). That was the turning point for the Kyle-Phil first place battle. Caleb



The picture says it all. Kyle finishes in 1st place and receives his buckle. Photo by Stacy Amos.

pushed Kyle back out of his comfort zone and into a pace 1 to 2 minutes faster per mile. He finished in 10:02:34, and Phil finished in 10:16:50. Gary Henry (Lawrence, KS) ran a steady race and took 4th Place at 13:06:13, followed shortly by Chis Corbin (Sand Springs, OK), and Patrick Perry of Lees Summit, Missouri.

Gabe Bevan ran a smart and steady race and nailed the 100-K race in under 14 hours. Greg Burger had a tough last loop, but had the fortitude to finish his first distance over 50-Kilometers. He was very emotional after finishing, to say the least. His words at the finish line (to Gary and me) were, "how the heck do you guys run one hundred miles?" One step at a time, was what we told him.



2007 Free State Trail Ultrarun
Clinton Lake, Kansas
Kelvin Riley: "Most Inspirational" Photo: Greg Ross

Steve Hughes (of Chicago), "toughed it out" to the end. Charles Stroud (from St Louis, Mo), who'd had me a little worried earlier in the race, finished strongly. Kelvin Riley of Olathe, Kansas finished last, and just 13-minutes and 5 seconds under the race's deadline. Kyle Amos, who after his race-winning finish, had gone to work the middle aid station with his wife, had decided to "sweep the course" and come in with Kelvin. On his way in, he also picked up course markings. (Keep in mind he also led the course marking effort the day before the race in a rainstorm).

Kelvin was an inspiration to all of us. He had never run further than a marathon distance and had only one (short) trail run to his credit. He was a very

determined runner. "Quit" was not part of his vocabulary. I'm sending him the "most inspirational award" for his day long life-changing experience. This is what makes being a race director such a rewarding experience!



We had so much good help with this race. Stacy Sheridan, Phil Sheridan, Randy Albrecht, Jim Davis, and Matt Becker (and Jay) took care of the half-way (KUS) aid station in the Army Corps of Engineers area. Stacy, Phil, Randy, and Jim are ultra-distance race directors, and Matt, Phil, Randy, and Jim are top-notch ultrarunners.

In the middle (Land's End) aid station, Stacy Amos has 3 years experience of taking care of ultrarunners at aid stations. Caleb and Josh are very speedy ultrarunners, and know just what the runners want, (even if the runners don't know what they *should* want, themselves). And Kyle...well he's just terrific.

At the main aid station, we had Vicki Holmes, aid station worker and "Cook Devine." We also had Sara Risser, who knows how to put on a race, and local speedy "trail-ace" David Wakefield, helped me with the finish line, (especially



when I was out rescuing runners). Ed Payne and Laura were huge helps, also. And Ben Reeves was everywhere; he would restock water, drive and or run everywhere and anywhere needed. Mike Swords was Mr. Everything, too, along with running in the marathon. As Gary Henry put so succinctly in his race report (about experienced ultra-distance race event help), "they've all been through it, so they know how to do it." Even my 4-1/2 year old grandson got into the act, and would help me run with some of the finishers up that last hill. He also helped me pick up course markings the next day.

Speaking of rescuing runners, I had to rescue two from the edge of heat stroke. But I had help. Jesse Walden, D.C., was giving "active release" massage at the main aid



Jesse Walden, DC. Photo by Dick Ross

station to any (sweaty & muddy) runners that needed or wanted it. He had also provided this service at our Red Bridge Ramble run back in March. In fact, he was working on me at the time (between runners coming in), when I received a phone call from Stacy Amos that Shane Jones was “down on the course,” and was somewhere around the “Mile 5” marker on the White Trail. Jesse heard this and asked if he could go with me to help. We both hopped in my Honda Element and headed to an area that we could get near that course area in a speedy fashion.

We started running down the trail, but soon realized when we came to a mileage marker that we were going the wrong way. We headed in the other direction, and cruised right along. Jesse is a decent runner, but had never run on rocky trails before. He commented, “much more of this, and you may be carrying me out of here.”

We started running down the trail, but soon realized when we came to a



Duke Stamper, winner of marathon in the K-9 Division, receives his medal while his training buddy James looks on. A Dick Ross photo.

We found Shane laying on the ground and in a bad way. Sarah Sinning was with him, and had been making sure he wasn't left alone. We got him up and moving (with some help), and got him out of there. Some electrolytes, air conditioning, cold packs and lots of water helped get him going in the right direction (physically).

Soon after that episode, we got a call for another “runner down.” This was a potentially serious situation, also. The poor guy had cramps and “Charlie-horses” so bad that he was in terrible pain and couldn't even walk. With some help from a relative of his that was pacing him, we got him out of there and back to the main aid station. His wife was a Registered Nurse, and she went to work on him. With some electrolytes and water, we got him to start recovering

within 30-minutes.

Well, that's the long-winded version of my Race Director story, and I'm sticking to it. I love to run in these races myself, but it is so darn rewarding to see a race from "the other side" also, especially a race that came together so beautifully.

Once again, we also had some wonderful designs come to fruition for our shirt, medals, and the 100-K buckles. These were designed by Jason Crosby (<http://jasoncrosbyillustration.com>). The Park's staff was very helpful. And there were many folks involved with the setup, logistics, marking, and de-constructing of this race. Good things just don't happen by themselves.

Until our next race...keep your powder dry and your shoes dirty.

Happy trails,
Ben Holmes

For more photos, results, and race reports, go to: <http://www.psychowyc.com/id1.html>



Mike Swords (left) runs a really decent time for his first marathon.

Pat Patrick (right) enjoys his 100-K.

Bottom left: Ken Saveth takes a cold drink of water from Randy Albrecht at the KUS aid station.

Bottom right: Matt Becker and Jim Davis at the KUS aid station.

All photos on this page by Dick Ross.

