

# 2007 Rocky Raccoon DNF Report

by Dale Perry

\*\* Ferris Bueller: This is my ninth sick day this semester. It's getting pretty tough coming up with new illnesses. If I go for ten, I'm probably gonna have to barf up a lung. So, I better make this one count. -- Ferris Bueller's Day Off \*\*

Coming into this year's race I was not totally fit and well: I still had lingering issues with my upper respiratory system (Bronchitis back in November, a Pleurisy attack mid-January) so I wasn't sure how things would go this year. I was hoping for warm weather and sunny skies. I got half of that. I wasn't sure how well recovered I was after Across The Years as well, but figured I'd be okay. I wasn't, really.

Flew out to Houston with Colorado running buddy and two-time Hardrock finisher Scott Olmer. We did the usual pre-race thing by showing up, picking up our race packets, hanging around and jawboning with friends, then took off for better dinner than the pre-race pasta feed. Not slighting Sammy's cooking at all, but after you do a number of these things and it's always a pre-race pasta feed it gets old. We did scout out the park for the "perfect" parking space for our crew car, and found out the parking slots have changed dramatically over the last year. We ended up finding a spot behind the closed gate (drove around it) and parked the car just a few yards off the newly paved trail that takes us in to the lodge for a turnaround.

Went back to the hotel to shit, shower and tape the feet. Tried to relax, watching TV, drinking a Guinness (my pre-race ritual). Scott went out to do a Trailer Trash Wal-Mart (TM) run with Nattu, who flew in separately. Scott came back, with beer, then went outside to smoke a cigar (HIS pre-race ritual). I did my usual last minute gear check and put out my running clothes and pack ready for the morning.

Got up at 4 AM, had a banana and an Ensure, and was ready to go. Both Scott and I went out to the car, boy was it cold! Nattu would meet us later, as he had more race primping to do. Scott and I got to the park and got our parking spot. Sweet! Now all we had to do was wait.

\*\* Monk: And the Lord spoke, saying, "First shalt thou take out the Holy Pin. Then, shalt thou count to three, no more, no less. Three shalt be the number thou shalt count, and the number of the counting shalt be three. Four shalt thou not count, neither count thou two, excepting that thou then proceed to three. Five is right out! Once the number three, being the third number be reached, then lobbest thou thy Holy Hand Grenade of Antioch towards thou foe, who, being naughty in my sight, shall snuff it.

-- Monty Python and the Holy Grail \*\*

Soon we were all gathering in the aid station tent (with heat) like moths to a flame. Tracy Thomas was there and asked me if I brought my massage therapist from Across The Years with me. Little did I know I might need her later. Then the dreaded "Race begins in two minutes" was heard and we all mingled out into the cold empty darkness waiting for the word to "GO!". My race plan was simple: go out easy (really easy) the first two loops then pick up the pace a bit for the end. I usually do the first loop in 3:20 or so, and figured a 3:50 - 4:00 time would be appropriate. The thinking here is go slow early to go fast later.

The previous week the park had seen some decent rain, and we were warned there were soggy parts and puddles to get through.

\*\* Newscaster: I'm not wearing any pants. Film at eleven. -- Kentucky Fried Movie \*\*

Started off with shorts and three layers of upper garments: two short sleeved and a long sleeved. Wool hat, and gloves. And my big yellow jacket. I started towards the back of the running pack, hoping to not get sucked into the initial race frenzy and go faster than planned. Ended up running with good friend Anne Watts the first 2 miles until Amy's Crossing, which this year was a boggy mess that forced everyone to veer left of the trail to make the left hand turn up the road to aid station 1. By then, I was running with Scott Snyder, another Colorado runner and we had a nice conversation for most of loop 1 (at least to Farside aid station). Got to aid station 1 in 53 minutes, about 2 minutes slower than planned, but so far so good. So far the trails were in decent shape, the road was a bit boggy in places but nothing you couldn't easily avoid. Hit the Dam Road Aid station 30 minutes later and headed up to Farside aid at 9.9 miles. Not long after the "big" climb we were greeted with the only huge water puddle of the course, which covered the whole road left to right. There was a fallen log off to the right that I would walk on and criss-cross over to the lesser wet sections. Not a big deal. As I told some people during the race, I'd rather run in mud and water than the usual 3 feet of snow and ice we've had to deal with the last several months in Colorado.

By now I was in my 8/2 mode, or 4/1 as terrain permitted, and felt good with the pace. Scott Snyder was behind me a bit, but this was okay since I was kinda pushing it a bit to keep up with him and felt less stressed to keep up his pace versus mine. Got to Farside, grabbed some sandwiches and refilled my bottles and headed back out. I at least wanted to minimize aid station time to the bare essentials. Got to the Dam Road aid station in about the same time it took to leave it, about 30 minutes, still on schedule. I figured on 50 minutes to the next aid station (the old 174 called 134 now). It was nice to know the roots were still here on this, my least favorite

section of the whole course. Soon I was at the long alligator bridges marking the end of the roots and the start of the bogs.

\*\* Bart: Hey Charlie. What is it, that's not exactly water, and it ain't exactly earth?

Bart and Charlie: Quicksand!! -- Blazing Saddles \*\*

Yep, the bogs were here, and quite muddy. Luckily, you could get around them fairly easily without having to loose your shoes or add mud to your socks. I was actually quite surprised with all this as I expected much worse than this. Soon, I heard the raucous cries of aid station volunteers as I made my way into the aid station site, marking a little over 3 miles to end loop 1. I looked at my watch, and I got here in 3:23, so a 3:45-3:50 time for loop 1 looked good. Grabbed more eats and headed out.

Again, this part went well and reasonably quick. Got to the Interpretive Center which marks 1 mile to go and a sharp right turn. Soon I was at the car, changed clothes (put on 3 layers again), dropped off the wool hat for a baseball hat, but kept the gloves. Ditched the jacket. Grabbed an Ensure and went to the turnaround station. Got clocked in there at 3:55. Right on target! Got back to the car and refilled my bottles and pack and headed out for loop 2.

\*\* Dr. Charles Dutton: Sweat is a safeguard against some kinds of bacteria, and carelessness. -- Andromeda Strain \*\*

I was feeling great, having changed from the cold, sweaty clothes to nice dry ones. It was starting to warm up, especially with the sun coming out and I was soon sweating again. Yippee. Anyway, I made my way along the path to the Interpretive Center turn onto trails, walking some of the hills, but mainly jogging the rest, seeing the usual runners as we both made our way to and from the turnaround area.

Turned onto the trail and made my way to aid station 1, still feeling fine, although the legs were starting to stiffen up a bit. Now that it wasn't dark, I could see all the water and mud that was mostly hidden in the dark on the first time through here. Got to aid 1 in 50 minutes, so right on target, grabbed a sandwich wedge or two, and walked out up the hill before the downhill to Amy's Boggy Crossing. I ended up doing 4/1's through here to try to slow me down and keep me on plan. It took me 34 minutes to get to the Dam Road aid station, right on target as planned. Grabbed more food stuffed two sandwich wedges down my bog, grabbed another to carry and went out. It took me about the same time to get to Farside (35 minutes) and again stopped to refill my bottle and grab food. For me, it's easier to leave Farside than getting to it. The hills are gradually down (a few uphill segments, especially leaving the aid station) on the way back, with a

nice downhill stretch just before the high bridge. I pretty much settled into finding my way around the boggy sections and huge water puddle without getting too wet or muddy. Got back to Dam Road aid in 36 minutes. Took a few seconds to refill the bottle, grab some more PB&J wedges, as it would take me about an hour to get to the next aid station.

About halfway through the next section, I noticed my legs (quads) were starting to ache more. I reminded myself to take a few seconds at the car to down some aspirin. This section was a bit more mucky after the dam crossing to where you start the run through the rooty trails, then settles down to just rooty and rolling terrain. I always rejoice when I come to the top of the hill where the wooden bench sits off your left, marking the descent and short distance to the alligator bridges. Just before the long bridge, you have to get through the snaky switchback trails, which can be maddening as you look behind or ahead and see someone just ahead/behind but they are actually a bit away since it snakes and winds so much. At night this is really weird since you can see the flashlights just ahead or behind you, but they are a bit further away than it seems.

After the bridges is the mile of muck and mire, but by now the side tracks around them are well marked and easy to get around the really bad spots. I finally got to the last aid station in 54 minutes, which surprisingly, was right on my target split! Here I just grabbed a quick bite and headed out, as I still had one bottle full. There is a bit of a hill to climb, so I just walked it eating my sandwich. Soon it levels off and you can make up good time again. After 3/4 mile there is a sharp turn to the right which is impossible to miss due to Joe's marking. Then it's more windy and snaky trails for about a mile until the interpretive center building. For the devious there are lots of shortcut trails along this section that can shortcut you back to the lodge trail, but these sections are marked. Got to the interpretive building and made a sharp right turn onto the rolling hard-paced trail to the lodge. It took me 37 minutes to get to the turnaround, a bit slower, bringing me in for this loop in 4:09, still on target. Before getting the lodge to check in/out, I grabbed an Ensure to guzzle while making my way there.

Next Up .... Things get better before they get worse. Heard that one before?

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\*\* Sgt A. Apone: All right sweethearts, you heard the man and you know the drill: assholes and elbows! -- Aliens \*\*

\*\* Ty Webb: You take drugs, Danny?

Danny Noonan: Every day. -- Caddyshack \*\*

Okay, time to get serious now. I went purposefully slow the first two loops to allow me to at least maintain the pace if not go a little faster. We'll see if this works out. First off, I needed to spend a few minutes at the car to change clothes, refill my bottles, pack and put on the mp3 player. Took some aspirin to take away the quad issue, and grabbed a Payday candy bar to munch at while I walk away. I decided to keep on a long-sleeved shirt on as the high overcast skies were keeping things a bit chilled. I took off the gloves and changed my hat. I took an extra salt cap as it was almost time to do it anyway and walked out eating my Payday. Soon, I was running again.

It wasn't long before I caught up with Phil Rosenstein, whom I met at Across The Years a month earlier. We stayed together until halfway to the jeep road up to aid station 1, where I caught up with Scott Olmer. I ended up getting ahead of Scott eventually after a brief conversation as I was trying to pick up the pace effort a bit and wanted to do my own pace. It wasn't long until Scott was a bit behind me. So far, so good. Got to aid 1 in 57 minutes, but due to the fact I spent some time at the car prepping for this loop, not bad, but slower than planned overall. I was wanting to get to 50 miles in slightly under 10 hours, and it would be close. I think listening to the mp3 helped, as I was able to pick up the effort a bit and felt great and strong as I kept catching up to people and passing them. It took me 34 minutes (again) to get to Dam Road. I grabbed a sandwich and kept going. Soon, I caught up to Matt Watts just before the high bridge marking the sharp but short ascent up to Farside.

I eventually caught up with fellow SLUG Ben Holmes about 1/2 mile from Farside. Feeling cocky I mentioned something to the effect of trying to get around his fat ass or something. Looked at my watch and it was 10:03, so 10 hours for 50 miles wasn't happening.

\*\* Ted Striker: What a pissar. -- Airplane \*\*

Got to Farside in 35 minutes, grabbed another bite to eat and headed out. At the top of the climb I estimate 50 miles, and my watch read "10:15:37". Slower by about 20 minutes than planned, but still on a good pace. Not sure if my PR was going to happen but it was still too early to tell. Got back to Dam Road aid in 37 minutes. Stopped to fill my bottle and grab some more food and headed out. I was still feeling pretty well here and was still managing to catch up and pass some people in the next section. Again, I started noticing my quads were hurting again, so I made yet another mental note to take more meds at the car. It took me an hour to get to the next aid station, a bit slower than I wanted, and despite my level of effort on this 3rd loop, I was hoping for faster times, but it wasn't happening. I got back to the car 39 minutes later, and stopped briefly there for an Ensure and checked into the lodge for loop 3 completion.

\*\* Hedley Lamarr: Gentlemen, please. Rest your sphincters. -- Blazing Saddles \*\*

Went back to the car, and decided I better put on some running pants and put on a warm hat, as night was about to fall and it was getting noticeably colder. Grabbed my jacket, and decided to take a short break and sit down on the back of the car and ate some food and drank down another Ensure. Sucked down more aspirin, refilled my bottles and pack, and decided to leave. Made sure I brought along my bigger Gerber flashlight and left feeling a bit tired and stiff.

I guess I spent more time at the car than I realized, cause I got to aid 1 in 1:16! I also noticed I was breathing with more difficulty. Not a good sign. I did manage to pick up the pace (or so it seemed at the time) on the downhill jeep road from aid 1, and actually felt good moving though the single track trail off the road leading to Dam Road. Unfortunately, it took me 45 minutes this time, 10 minutes off and slower.

\*\* Newscaster: Rams plagued by fumbles as earthquakes rock Los Angeles. Film at eleven. -- Kentucky Fried Movie \*\*

I found myself breathing even harder and walking more and more than I liked at this point. Even though, in spite of all this, the splits between Dam Road-Farside-Dam Road were 45 minutes-47 minutes-46 minutes, so pretty even as before, just slower. I wasn't feeling like bonking, and had enough energy to run, but the breathing was getting more and more difficult as the loop progressed. It was also getting more cold outside, but I had enough clothes on to keep me toasty warm.

\*\* Gov. William J. Le Petomane: Holy underwear!! -- Blazing Saddles \*\*

It took me 1:12 to get to aid 174. Definitely slower and more labored. My quads were again screaming at me, breathing was really getting to be a problem, although I wasn't wheezing yet and not coughing up lung gunk, yet. Stopped to eat some food, refilled my bottle and walked out of there pondering some unpleasant thoughts.

\*\* Dr. Rumack: Elaine, you're a member of this crew. Can you face some unpleasant facts?

Elaine Dickinson: No. -- Airplane \*\*

As I made my way up the trail to the last mile turnoff, I wasn't sure what I was going to do. I tried to put positive thoughts in my head and told myself, when you get to the car, grab an Ensure, check in and out quickly, and change clothes, take aspirin and get back out. But the breathing and

cold air were wearing down on me. I had signed up for Coyote 4 Play just 3 weeks away, and was wondering if that would be in jeopardy as well. In the meantime, got to last mile turnoff and ambled my way back towards the lodge. When I got to the car I just kept on going, telling myself I'd refill bottles at the aid station and leave.

\*\* Newscaster: Moscow in flames, missiles headed toward New York. Film at eleven. -- Kentucky Fried Movie \*\*

Not sure what happened next, but I found myself sitting down next to the heater trying to not shiver. I looked at my watch and it took me 5:23 for this last loop! I asked for some hot food, hoping that would heat me up and get me back out. I downed some hot soup, meatloaf, whatever was available. I finally stood up after about 10 minutes, and I couldn't move. My legs had seized up on me and I could hardly walk. Shit. This is not looking good. I decided to walk around a bit and see if things would ease up. I started getting cold again and sat back down for more food. I sucked down about three cups of soda as well. Before I realized it, I was here for 30 minutes. Scott Olmer strolled in, and I told him it wasn't looking good for loop 5. He tried to talk me into leaving with him but my legs were so trashed it would have been a disservice to him having to wait for me to catch up. Then Katy Cotton came in, and told me to get off my ass and get moving. It didn't have much effect. It was at this time I decided to call it. I was more worried about the lungs and breathing than the legs, as I could take something for those.

Soon Ed Green and Michele Jensen arrived waiting for people to come in, and eventually Ed offered me a hot shower at the hotel. I went over to the time keepers and gave up my bib. It's official. Total running time of 18:06 for 80 miles. In hindsight, I could have gone back out and probably would have finished under 24 hours. But my decision to stop was good, and although it hurt a bit, I had nothing to prove here. I got my five-year jacket last year, I've had great times here in the past, this year wasn't going to be. But the breathing issue was the key here. I did the right thing because of it, and it didn't get any worse (but most likely would have gotten worse if I stayed out for another loop).

After Ed took me back to the hotel for a hot shower, we headed back to the Park since Michele was still there. I walked slowly back to the car, and pleaded on the mercy of a few kind people waiting nearby for their runner if they could reach down under the car to retrieve the key (I couldn't bend down). Got in the car, started it up and the heater. After 10 minutes I turned it off and went to sleep. I woke periodically to warm it back up. I got started by a knock on the window, it was Scott. He was finished (sub-24) and was pleased to see the car was nice and warm and crawled inside to sleep as well.

We both woke up around 6 AM, and Scott wanted a shower. So we drove over the the Park showers. On the way back to our parking spot, I spied Ben loading up his Bad Ben Mobile so we stopped a bit to chat. He was disappointed in his time, but glad to finish. We all agreed it was wicked cold this year and Scott said he did a negative split from loop 4 to loop 5 by 30 minutes just so he could get out of the cold!

\*\* Jack Butler: Wanna beer?

Ron Richardson: It's 7 o'clock in the morning.

Jack Butler: Scotch? -- Mr Mom \*\*

Got back to the parking spot and waited on Nattu and Anne Watts to finish. I asked Scott if it was Guinness time and he said "Absolutely!" Pretty soon we spied Nattu coming down the path so we got out to cheer and walked down to the finish line to congratulate. But before we could get far here comes Anne. More cheering and joking, and we made our way to the finish line to hug and congratulate all.

This year was bittersweet. It was encouraging to see that the go slow to go fast seems to work, but the environmental conditions this time precluded that to work like I wanted. I still feel I did the right thing in stopping when I did, and have no regrets. I stayed fueled, hydrated, and electrolyted to plan with no issues there, just like at Across The Years. It's just the cold that factored in. I'm ready for summer.

A big thanks as always goes to Joe Prusaitis and his gang of volunteers who make this race a real joy to run, participate in, and have fun. This is one of the best run events around. Even though I didn't get a finish in this year, I'll be back again and start working on my ten-year jacket.

Dale