

# Van Cortlandt Track Club newsletter

## Zion 100K

VCTC member Stephany Evans went to Utah to run a difficult 62+ miles surrounded by magnificent scenery

*By Stephany Evans*

*The* inaugural Zion 100Mile/100K was staged in 2011 by race director Matt Gunn. My friend Pam Reed ran that one and was instantly smitten by its spectacular beauty and runnable roads and trails, and began to try to convince me to come out to Virgin, Utah and run it with her. I kept telling her I wasn't ready for a race that length but she kept after me: "You don't have to run the 100 Mile – just run the 100K!" Right, Pam. "Just" the 100K. But after getting 50K and 50 Mile trail runs under my belt I decided to give the race a try.



I arrived Wednesday afternoon before Friday's race. As soon as Pam picked me up at the airport in St. George, we drove to the course where Pam was doing a volunteer gig in order to qualify for *Hard Rock* (another ridiculously difficult ultra). She'd been tasked with planting flags for a six-mile loop the 100-milers would be doing in the dark and, since she'd be one of them, we took a lot of care getting the course right even though both of us are challenged when it comes to maps and the one we were working from was not great. We got some much-needed help from some savvy mountain bikers who use the same trails and were very familiar. My hip was still bothering me quite a bit from my fall during the *Scotland 10K* the previous Saturday – jogging back and forth on a six-mile loop of what felt like hard-packed clay was doing it no favors. I was very concerned about even being able to race in two days.

But Pam had assured me that there were only a couple of places where "it gets a little technical" and for the most part the course was not super challenging. She'd forgotten to mention that Matt Gunn prided himself on each year taking out a little more road and putting in a little more trail to make the race more difficult. Friday morning, about 300 runners – the 100 milers and those running the 100K – all set out in the still dark chill at 6am, keen to get after it.

I'd been concerned about the possibility of 80+ degree heat as it's been in past years but temps that Friday were mid 40s to mid 70s (around 4pm). With weather no issue, Pam's advice was to take the early part of the race easy and put the hammer down in the last 10 miles. Unfortunately "taking it easy" proved not an option. After 2.5 miles we came to the first hard climb – clambering rocky switchbacks up to Smith Mesa and the first aid station (Flying Monkey). Just as the sun was coming up I came to a stop – bottleneck ahead. Below us – way below us – was a beautiful valley view and my first thought was that people were stopping to take photos of the sunrise over the valley. But then I discerned that in fact they were waiting for their turn on a rope. What?!! Nobody had told me I had to climb a rope, but there it was, a length of (continued next page)

about ten feet, to get from one section of passable path to another above us. I have zero experience with rope climbing and didn't want to get my start over a thousand foot drop to the beautiful valley, but quickly determined I'd do what was necessary, somehow. Just as quickly, however, with just four people between me and the rope, the rope came down. It didn't break, just came untied. The rest of us had to find some other way around, so there, not even four miles into the race, I was cautiously hauling myself over rocks and dirt that were not part of our path to get back on course, all at a very great height. Reaching the top we hit an aid station before doing a six-mile loop of the mesa top. By the time that was finished it was beginning to warm up so I dropped my sweatshirt, along with my headlamp, in my Flying Monkey drop bag and headed back down the way we'd come. By now someone had retied the rope, but there was no way in heck I was getting on that rope now – I scrambled back the way I'd come till I got to the lower, passable section. This part was super rocky and at one point I rolled a grapefruit-sized rock over my ankle, adding another injury to my hip, which I'd begun to feel by mile two.

Once down we headed east to Dalton Wash (Aid Station 2), before hitting four miles of fairly runnable dirt road, heading for another climb, up to the 7.5-mile Guacamole Trail on the next mesa. This mesa top was a mix of runnable dirt trails and a lot of "slick rock", which is like running on poured concrete only not smooth or level. Slick rock is dramatic looking (it's essentially petrified sand dunes that have been further shaped by wind) – hills, globes, melted ice cream and mushroom shapes – and loved by mountain bikers, but is really tough running. Early on I caught a toe on the rough surface and came down, skinning my knee. That was a good heads up that this stuff required more concentration than it looked like. I didn't stop to look at my knee, but it didn't seem too bad, and by this time I noticed that neither my hip nor my ankle were really bothering me so, onward! It was a challenging circuit – up, down, over, around – where course-marking flags could not be used, we had to keep a sharp eye out for small piles of rocks or white dots painted directly onto the stone to tell us which way to turn. At places the trail ran extremely close to the edge, which was frightening enough for someone with (continued page 3)

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a slight fear of heights. Add to that the bikers using the same trails. The bikers were very polite –each time I encountered one they held up and waited for me to pass, often offering words of encouragement. The problem was I kept picturing them on those perilous trails (there were no guard rails at all, anywhere); I prayed none would skid off.

As I finished the circuit and was passing back through the Guacamole aid station I saw Mary Croft just coming in to start the circuit. Mary (seventy-something) is a good friend of Pam's and a terrific runner. I'd met her crewing for Pam a number of years ago when Pam set an American women's record (490 miles) in the Sri Chinmoy 6-day run. Mary had also been with Pam and me in 2012 when we all ran a very hot *Boston Marathon*. Mary told me she'd had a fall and she looked a bit worse off than I was from my own tumble. We wished each other luck and I headed down the hill to pass through the Dalton Wash aid station again (about mile 30) before crossing the highway and making my way across a few miles of desert to the toughest climb of the race.

I'd brought my cell phone to take photos with, which seemed a good idea until I dropped it and smashed the glass front on a rock. Before that happened, I heard it *ping* with a text message and pulled the phone from my vest pocket.

Bette Clark: *Greetings from Paris! Just one more shout out to you to have a great race! You must be ready for an early start – and it's 9:30pm here – going to try to get a good night's sleep tonight because I probably won't the next night!*

Me (a bit more terse in the midst of things): *I'm over half way I think – have a great race.*

Bette: *Oh my – thought you started tomorrow! Well even more best wishes of a strong second half!!*

The climb to Gooseberry mesa (Goosebump aid station) is a "Cemetery Hill" that goes on and on, 1500 feet of altitude gain in less than a mile. Sections of it were fairly straight forward trail, but much of it was loose rocks and dirt, or deep ruts that kept one climbing from side to side of the path looking for some flat spot to put a foot. Impossible to run, I couldn't even walk it in one go. I had to stop from time to time to catch my breath, turning to face down the hill to even out the strain in my leg muscles. I was not the only one. It really felt like an accomplishment to reach the top and look down onto a mesa that had been at eye level across the valley at the middle of the climb but now looked like an aerial view of an Aztec city.

Mid-way through the circuit of this mesa (more slick rock along with some woodsy trails) was a quarter mile out-and-back from a small aid station. We had to check

in then make our way to Gooseberry Point, a rock cliff overlook from which you could see many miles in every direction. Even with the crazy height making me nervous it was not to be missed. There was a small set-up with metal hole punches (star-shaped and heart-shaped) and a sign that instructed runners to punch their own bib before returning to the aid station to show proof that we'd made it out to the point. From there we finished the circuit – a lot (continued page 5)

## PLEASE RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP FOR 2015

(if you haven't done so yet)

Single membership- \$25

Family membership-\$35

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Only members in good standing will be allowed to continue in the membership list on the website, and on the VCTC Facebook page.

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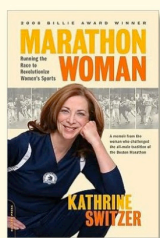
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**Inspiring Reads for Runners**

Kick Off Your Trainers and Enjoy!

**Kathrine Switzer**

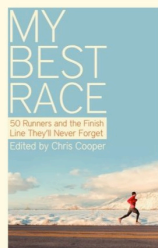
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of path running extremely close to the edge – back to the Goosebump aid station where I got my second drop bag and did a costume change. I stripped off the white sleeves that had been keeping my arms from burning and changed out of my sweaty short sleeve VCTC shirt into a fresh long sleeve for the cooling temps – and picked up my second head lamp. At the aid station I ran into Laura, one of two Canadian women I'd been trading back and forth with throughout the day. They were younger and faster than me, but one of them, Cindy, was having stomach issues and I had not seen them in a couple of hours. Laura told me that Cindy had finally given up and dropped. Now Laura was fueling up on some noodle soup, which she tried to get me to have some of. I declined, telling her that I was concerned about losing light. I knew she could catch up with me when she was finished there and I would much rather go without eating than fall to my death in the dark.

I somehow had it in mind that the next aid station was fairly close so after cautiously wending my way back down that long, steep, difficult trail I hurried along, trying to make as good time as I could, given that my quads were in a lot of pain from the climbs and steep descents, and the impact of running miles on rock. I expected every minute to see

Laura coming quickly from behind but as I passed the point where I'd expected to hit the aid station and still hadn't seen either the station or Laura I started to get a little nervous. As readers of this newsletter may remember, I've missed course markers before and I was praying that I hadn't, but was in so much discomfort that I made up my mind if I had missed one and if adding miles to this run would be necessary to correct that then this would be my first DNF. I simply couldn't face doing more miles than those I knew were still in front of me. Finally I heard a call behind me and turned to see Laura coming – I was never so happy to see a fellow runner on the course, confirmation that I hadn't missed a flag. She told me she'd had to take a time out to throw up her noodles half way down the long descent. I gave her a ginger candy I had in my Spi-belt, and we were off to see the Wizard, she with more spring in her step than I had, in spite of being sick, and finally Virgin Mesa aid station (mile 55) was in our sights.

Laura was willing to stay with me, but it was now 8:30, full dark, and getting cold. I knew she was much faster and not feeling well so I told her to just get on home and I'd be right behind her. In truth, I was exhausted and emotional, and didn't want her to see me cry!

After refilling my water bottles an aid worker led me a short distance to where the trail picked up again and for the next two and a half hours (7.5 miles) I was completely alone in the dark, rapidly cooling desert. My headlamp illuminated the path, the same packed clay with occasional jutting rock of the path Pam and I had marked a couple days before. Much of it was rolling hills, but at one point I saw that I was again moving along within a foot or two of the edge of a sheer drop. I could no longer run – my night vision isn't good and even with the headlamp I didn't trust that I could gauge the terrain well enough not to trip; I was just walking as fast as I could because I was more than ready to be done.

Finally I saw headlights and knew the road (and the finish line) was not too far off, but then the path wound around the opposite direction. This happened a number of times – switchbacks bringing me incrementally closer to the road each time in a horribly teasing manner. But eventually there was pavement and less than a mile after that I was turning onto the side road where I knew the finish to be. I staggered shivering through the finishers' arch to a handful of cheering, clapping race workers at 11:01PM after 17 hours of running (10<sup>th</sup> woman over all; first AG). (continued page 6)

One of the crew gave me an extra coat and pulled me over to the fire, handing me a Coke “for calories.” Laura had finished an hour before. I checked on Mary and Pam. Mary had dropped soon after I’d seen her at mile 30, Pam was still on the course. I got in the truck and headed back to our hotel for a hot soak and a few hours’ sleep before coming back for Pam next morning as she finished her 100-mile run in 25 hours. Unfortunately, in spite of our really nice accommodations, I couldn’t seem to calm myself and sleep proved impossible due to a combination of extremely uncomfortable legs and the fact that every time I closed my eyes I’d see an image of a runner/myself/a bicycle sliding over a high cliff. At least once I even screamed a little out loud.

The day after the race, my quads were killing me and seemingly out of nowhere I had a cough like I was hacking up a lung. I was told this is common with ultra runners in the west – something about the altitude and sucking in super dry air for hours on end. In spite of the late-mile pain, I was happy with my race. My shoes were ruined from the rough rocks and red dirt – I left them in Utah. The Nathan vest I’d gotten just two weeks before ended up being perfect for my hydration – light, well-balanced, and holds twenty ounces of water, which was plenty, given

the distance between aid stations. I started my morning with black coffee & honey, a banana, and two pieces of whole grain bread that I literally brought from home, experience having taught me you can’t count on finding good bread in remote locations. I ate that toasted with almond butter. During the race I mostly used *Gu* and *Hammer Endurolite*. At one station I had a quarter of a PB&J, at another I had a 2-inch section of banana. I also had a couple cups of mandarin oranges that were at a few of the aid stations. At every single station I asked for ginger – one of the smartest things I think I did as it kept my stomach easy.

I’d totally recommend this race to anyone who likes ultras – it’s tough and even a little scary, but the views are magnificent! There’s a 50K also, if someone wants a taste without the whole meal. Since I really can’t do justice to the terrain, I’m pasting a few links to videos posted by other runners. These are all from the 100-mile race, but our course was identical and run simultaneously for the first 55 miles, after which the 100K runners peeled off and wound our way back to the finish. My favorite of these is the 2014 footage posted by Justin Gaerlan. I’ve watched it a few times and the ending always cracks me up.

2015: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w3c74ggpbk0>

2014: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RmoDV3Am3b4>  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ami\\_nfCIKK8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ami_nfCIKK8)

Save the date:  
 Monday,  
 September 7,  
 2015

We need  
 volunteers for  
 the VCTC  
 10K in Van  
 Cortlandt  
 Park.

Please contact  
 Bobby Asher  
 to sign up.

## Runs With Bears

*by Alix Cotumaccio  
(written in third person)*

*When* she arrived at the campsite, she was greeted with jubilation and joyful hugs. She didn't understand what all the fuss was about, since she had only gone on a half hour run. It turns out that during that short amount of time her life could have been changed forever.

While hiking in Glacier National Park with Climate Ride, the group that organized the outing, Alix decided she needed to get a few runs in. She was in the middle of marathon training after all. After a relatively short day of hiking, the group planned to rest at a nearby lake before heading back to the campground in the vans. Since the lake was at the end of a long, quiet road that the group would have to drive back down to get to the campground, Alix thought it would be a perfect time to take a quick run. She arranged with one of the guides to get picked up along the road as they drove back out. The guide figured it would be 20-30 minutes before they left; "perfect", Alix thought and hit the road running.

A little over a mile into the run, as the road narrowed and she could no longer see the lake and chalet behind her, it dawned

on Alix that she was in the middle of nowhere—on a road to a National Park in Montana where Grizzly and Black Bears are numerous. She tried to comfort herself with the thought that she was on a road where there were cars passing every few minutes. But, she couldn't forget that just that morning she and her friends had seen two black bears roaming along the side of this same road. The guide had told them that certain bears had become accustomed to hanging out near roads where there is an abundant food source (berries and road kill, not humans). As her heart began beating faster, she picked up the pace hoping she could make it quickly to a little bridge further on where, on their way in, there had been a bunch of people taking pictures and resting. She figured if she made it to there and was surrounded by people she would be safe. Until then, she calmed her nerves by telling herself it was okay, because if any of the drivers of the cars coming towards her had seen a bear they surely would stop to let her know.

Two miles in she still hadn't seen the bridge, and she realized she hadn't seen a car in a long time. Every noise in the forest around her started sounding like a bear! She laughed to herself, as she remembered how much she enjoyed hearing animals in the woods as she ran back in

New York. There, if you heard something rustling it was sure to be a squirrel, chipmunk or maybe, if you were lucky, a deer: animals she longed to hear and see now! Ahh, she finally heard a car coming from behind. She checked over her shoulder and was sad to see it was a sedan, not the van she needed to pick her up. Alix focused her eyes straight ahead. "If I just keep going, and a bear is in the woods it surely won't be bothered by me or chase me, right." Her thoughts bounced around trying to land on anything she had learned about bears in the past week. Why hadn't she asked to borrow the pepper spray for the run!?

At about three miles, she saw the bridge. Should she stop? There were some people on the bridge and others in the pull-off on the side. But, what if she stops, and the van passes without seeing her because she isn't running on the road? Alix realized she didn't know where the campground was or what its name was. She didn't have a number for the guides or a phone to call with. She thought, "its safer to keep running on the road and be visible when the van passes."

Just beyond the bridge another vehicle was coming up behind her. She turned and saw a van. Her shoulders began to loosen up. She saw the Glacier Guides logo on the van; "yes!"

she thought it was the group she was hiking with and she was ready to be picked up. She couldn't believe it, but the van wasn't slowing down! It passed her and kept going. Alix ran after it waving her hands in the air. Had they not seen her? She started to freak out. But, quickly remembered there were two vans of hikers with Glacier Guides at the lake. Could that have been the other group? What color was her van, blue or grey? The one that just passed was grey. Hers must be blue. "Oh, please let it be blue!" She continued running, fighting the bear thoughts and the deserted-in-the-middle-of-a-national-park thoughts as best she could.

Out of nowhere came a honk! Alix jumped. She was so focused on her thoughts she hadn't heard the van creeping up behind her. But, there it was; a blue van with the Glacier Guides logo on it slowing down and pulling over. What sweet relief, thought Alix. She certainly hadn't expected such a stressful run when she set out thirty minutes earlier. As she climbed into the van she tried to look cool and collected, letting her friends know what a fun run she had had. But, that didn't last long.

The grey van that had passed Alix pulled into the campground just before the blue van she was in. As she climbed out of the van hikers from the other van came running up to her, hugged her

and tried to relate their tale through shouts and laughter. It turns out that just a few minutes after the grey van passed Alix, they saw a large brown bear crossing the road. They knew Alix was running, and hoped the bear would keep going off into the woods. But a few of them started worrying that she would cross paths with it. They were beyond happy when they saw her, and since they were on a Blackfoot tribal reservation, they dubbed her 'Runs with Bears.'#

## How Not to Handle Adversity During a Race

by Mandi Susman

I wasn't really sure how I would do in the Scotland Race but considering the hundreds of miles I had logged since January, through the brutal winter, I assumed I would do well. Scotland wasn't my goal race, I had the NJ Marathon in my sights, but Scotland was a points race and I felt obligated to see if I could help the team (and when else would I get the chance to run in my racing kilt!).

I really didn't put a lot of thought into the race, I wasn't even sure if I was going to be in town for it, but I signed up, and even ironed my kilt the night

before. We arrived early enough to take lots of team photos, and even do a short warm up and then it was time to head to the corrals. I didn't pay much attention to the corral, other than making sure I went to the right one. Ariel Cruz and I had briefly talked about pacing each other again because it worked so well for the *Ted Corbitt* 15K last fall. But he was in the 3,000 and I was in the 4,000 corral so we went our separate ways. I even told Ariel that I would try and catch up with him.

The race was packed, really, really packed. It was a points race after all and there were lots of teams there. The weather was good, especially after the terrible winter we had been through so I was pretty excited to see what I could do.

And then the race started. It took me 4 minutes to cross the starting line after the gun went off. Stephany Evans and I were immediately struggling to come to a jog with so many people ahead of us, most of them at a jog as well. I started passing race walkers and others who clearly had no business being in a corral ahead of me because they were running 1-2 minutes per mile slower than my race pace and I started in the right corral. I started looking at bib numbers and noticed how many people had bib numbers higher than mine, people I was passing. I know this happens in races all the



time, but NYRR had been better about making sure people were starting in the right order in the past and it seemed that the standards had been relaxed for this race. Not sure why they didn't think it was important for a club points race, but this was the hand I was dealt.

So, I had a choice: go with the flow until the crowd broke up and try and make up the time in the second half of the race, or run like a maniac, bobbing and weaving between all the slow people, cursing under my breath at them and getting more and more agitated.

Writing this today, a couple weeks later, the choice seems obvious, but that day I just had too much pent up, I guess and I couldn't be patient and wait for the crowd to break up. I spent so much energy trying to advance through the crowd. My goal was to maintain a sub-8 minute mile for as long as I could. I made it to the first mile basically on pace at just over 8 minutes, pretty good considering the somewhat restricted access I had experienced.

My legs were tired already, but considering how many miles had I been putting in marathon training, that was to be expected. I pushed through mile 2 and up Harlem Hill to reach the 3 mile mark at about 24 minutes, maybe a few seconds behind, so my goal was in reach, I just had to make up a few seconds per mile on the

back end of the race. Like many of you, I've run so many races in Central Park I can't even count them, so I knew exactly what was coming. The problem was that I was exhausted. I was exhausted from lateral movements that are not natural to running and I was exhausted from being pissed off about all the people I had to pass. I think I passed about 10 speed walkers... There's nothing wrong with speed walking, it's a great sport, but if you know you're going to walk a race, why do you start at the front? I just couldn't let it go even though I knew that all these negative thoughts and extra energy was having a negative impact on my race. By mile 4 my goal was just to finish. I slowed down, even walked at a couple of the water stops, and basically gave up. I finished with a not-terrible time, but it certainly wasn't what I was capable of achieving that day and that made me even more upset.

My two lessons are this: 1: despite hearing Coach Ken say it over and over again, I felt it necessary to expend too much energy dodging slower runners rather than being patient and going around when opportunities presented themselves and 2: when I realized my mistake, rather than taking a minute to collect myself and get my head straight, I wallowed in my negativity and let it get the best of me.

While my performance wasn't what I was hoping for, and I didn't even score for my age group, I still managed to learn some lessons that I will carry with me in future races. Keep your cool, trust your training and don't let the turkeys get you down!#

## Bobby's Boston

by Bobby Asher

*We* all have our good days and bad days. Boston was a good day. I stood on the slightly downhill starting corral of Main Street in Hopkinton with memories of the past year swimming in my head. The hospital visit after my 2014 Boston (see "Bobby's Comeback....Almost" from April/May 2014) remained with me all year. An injury flare-up during the fall of 2014 caused me to run the Philadelphia Marathon as a "workout", walking the last 3 miles for a 3:21 finish time.

Well that all changed with the support of my training partners Kyle Hall and Laura Rodriguez and coaches Ernie Rivas and Ken Rolston.

The word "coach" has taken on a lot of meanings the past decade: anything from someone at NYRR who gets paid to write basic training plans for 20 thousand people on average, to

someone who micro-tailors a plan specific to an individual while maintaining verbal communication and mentoring throughout the 5-month training cycle. The latter is Coach Ernie Rivas, a type of coach I haven't had for over 7 years. He's a master of the sport and relays his knowledge as such.



This cycle was about getting me back in form. After a few years of dabbling with different plans, we ramped up the mileage up. I peaked at 107 miles and my average pace was 8:45/mile for training runs. Every week I'd check in with Coach by phone and I gave him full access to my Garmin account so that we could track my progress and be [literally] on the same page throughout the training cycle. With the temperatures plunging into sub-10 degrees fairly often and rarely warmer than 20 degrees for my 3-hour runs on weekends, the "easy pace" wasn't always so easy. But every week as I recapped the tough training, he'd provide positive

feedback on the toughness which all of cold workouts in snow, ice, twice a day were developing.

Coach Ken keeps on eye on things, both mentally and physically, closer to home than the 3000 miles away where Ernie is based.

I have to say that Ken's method of using a wisecrack to get one out of a slump never fails. The best example of this method was posting a "Blazing Saddles" clip of "I'm Tired" sung by Madeline Kahn on my Facebook page during a tough week. Thanks Coach Ken! That woke me up!

Throughout the training, I was dreaming of sub-2:30. That was the ultimate goal. But as the training progressed and the winter storms made training paces and workouts more difficult, we adjusted the goal to simply attempting a personal record (i.e. under 2:38.35).

Back to the Start Line. I wasn't feeling as well as I had hoped I would, partly because of the aches in my legs and back, and partly because of the 41 degree drizzle that disallowed any heat to stay in my legs. I used two space blanket ponchos (making myself resemble a Star Wars character) to stay warm. I was nervous not only for myself, but for all of my VCTC teammates who had been training so hard and hoping for the best conditions....now it was

time go! "Runners to your mark!!!"

I stayed out of trouble and drafted behind other runners as much as possible, at a pace that I was positive I could sustain for 26.2 miles, 6:05-5:55 per mile. All along the course I had nervous flashbacks from 2014 (the barrier at Mile 5 where I couldn't stretch the tight muscles, Mile 15 where the real pain started). None of that was happening this year.

I hit the 16<sup>th</sup> mile on pace for sub-2:40...good enough. I then clicked off Mile 16-22 (i.e. the Heartbreak Hills) the fastest of all the stretches. As I saw the VCTC group at Mile 21, I was first greeted by Maryann and Dominic Lombardo, lifetime members of VCTC who are the epitome of great supporters. I gave them a thumbs up. Then I saw the rest of the group as the course started a descent into Brighton, past Boston College. I saw Coach Ken, Coach Ernie, and all my teammates. I stayed composed and gave two thumbs up. Then, it hit me that I was FINALLY feeling GOOD running marathon, and HEALED....I smiled, turned around, and gave the group a fist pump and surged down the hill (a 5:30 mile)...OOF!!! Shouldn't have surged. I started hitting the wall a bit and had to settle for a 6-minute mile average and a 6:30 26<sup>th</sup> Mile. I think I closed the last 400 meters

in about 80 seconds. 2:39.01, my fastest Boston Marathon. YES!

The walk to baggage was a combination of glory, exhaustion and shivering in cold rain and wind. After changing in a porta-john (where were the changing tents???), I went to the Dunkin Donuts on Boylston and Tremont for a much needed large coffee and a cronut (crossaint donut as Dunkin calls it ;) ). As I sipped my coffee, I was greeted by teammate Marcos Duarte, who informed me of his successful PR that day of 2:40.25 and Laura Rodriguez's 2:55.30!!! WHOA!!! What a day for all!!

As an added bonus for the day, my dad, 12 hours removed from a flight from Phoenix, called to inform me that he had just arrived in Beantown. The morning finished with lunch with my teammates, coaches, and the man who inspired me to be runner (thanks Dad!). My [full] Boston experience was capped off by heading to a rainy Fenway Park for the Mile 27 Marathon Post-Party for some free beer, a hotdog, chicken figures and kettle corn.

To sum it up, I'm back, feeling strong and Boston was AWESOME. Taking into account the conditions, my final semester of grad school and the trauma of last year, it couldn't have been a better experience. I could not have done it without my coaches, teammates, family and friends. GO VCTC. ###

## What Doesn't Kill You Makes You Stronger

### 24 hour race at 3 Day At The Fair by NJ Trail Series, May 16-17, 2015

*by Elena Makovskaya*

8:40am on Sunday, May 17, 2015, 23:40 into a 24hr race. I am in no rush as it is my 120th mile and all I want is just get to finish line and stop. No intentions to run another loop. 1st male runner, Aaron Mulder, runs by me asking if I want to run the last loop together. I reply: "No way, I am done after this one." He asks few more times to make sure and after few more "no", takes off.

I get myself to the finish at 8:45am and see Howard yelling at me and pointing at his watch: "It is a 24hr race, not 23:45!!! Go run another loop! You have 15 minutes to do it!" I clearly understood I had no other option. None. And the 2nd thing I realized, I needed to hurry up! I cursed at myself for taking my time on the previous loop... I started running uphill, really little hill that felt like a mountain by then. My blisters exploded. Again... for the 5th time since it started raining heavily at 6pm last night... I scream but choose to ignore the pain coming out from the bottoms of both of my feet. Aaron sees me at the turnaround point and gets super

excited that I changed my mind and joined him! I reply I was forced to do it and my crew sent me out again... Aaron makes a comment about what a wonderful crew I have (I really do not agree with him on that at THAT time!) Denis runs by me too, I think... This last loop was mainly in the fog for me as I kept looking at my watch trying not to be late but I do remember Aaron giving me the inside space on the loop (Thank You!) Finally we both see the finish line and cross it together! My 1st question to Howard is: "Can I now stop??"

Lots of other things happened in these 24hrs (good, bad and VERY ugly!) but these last 15 min made me realize once again that we are capable of so much more than what we think. And I later thanked my crew for that one again!

I don't write many race reports, but I feel the need for this one, as there are few very important things I learned. To date, I ran 4 races of 100 miles and longer (2 100s and 2 24hrs). In one of them I learned precisely nothing, as it was too damn perfect (Jackpot 100, 17:33, where NOTHING went wrong). In my 1st 100-miler, VT100 in 2013, I learned a ton about chafing (how bad it can get and that it can and should be prevented!) and nutrition late in the race (dizzy=hungry). In NC24 I learned, I should stay away from solid food when it is

hot out and I can also run pretty far on just coke and I can make final push even when it seems impossible. But I think I learned the most out of this one. I am just going to list all the things I learned in the order of importance here. Those who know me, know that my entire life is all about lists, spreadsheets, bullet points, etc. So, here it is:

1) **WET FEET** early in the race = disaster waiting to happen. Feet disaster! Blister disaster! It was pouring rain at 6pm, 9hrs into the race with 15 more to go and the skin started coming off my feet. We changed shoes and socks few times but it was too late and I did not have my DryMax socks either (and only brought one pair of extra shoes). Lesson: do not get your feet wet, but if it happens anyway (pouring rain!) get them dry as soon as possible. Bring few pairs of socks and shoes! Bring a medical kit to deal with issues early. Those blisters were affecting my pace, my gait and everything for the rest of the race (more than half!). Really long freaking time to be so miserable.

2) **SHOES**. Specifying: shoes for super-extra-ultra long distances. 9 out of 10 people in this race were wearing HOKAs. I was in Asics. I do love my Asics, but there had

to be a reason why every other runner, except me, was wearing HOKAs. 22hrs into the race with 2hrs to go I was not running very much (none, in fact). All my lofty goals were slipping away. It was still doable to get to 120-125 but my feet were just killing me to run again. There were also few gravel sections on the race course and walking over those little stones felt like walking on razor blades no less! I was not going to stop moving forward but wanted to change into my flip-flops to finish my "death march" but be just a bit less miserable. When Howard and Denis heard that "bright idea", they pulled out HOKA shoes and convinced me to try them for just 1 loop. Only one. I seriously did not want to do it (I am super stubborn!!!). But, as I always do, I followed Howard's orders and changed into HOKAs. I started approaching the 1st gravel section and was cringing again waiting for the usual pain... To my surprise, I felt nothing! Zero. I could not believe it. I tried running again and it actually felt good! Even my blisters were not as painful. I started clicking miles. 120 and new PR at the very least was now very much in reach! Amazing shoes. And amazing how damn long it takes me to accept and adapt to something

new, even if the entire world around me is telling me something. Hell, until 2 years ago I was still doing my taxes on paper and I did not even have a smart phone! That tells you something. I really need to be more adaptive to new stuff. For real! And listen to others once in a while too. One thing I regret here is not changing into HOKAs many hours earlier. I would have run quite a few extra miles for sure!

3) **NUTRITION**. You simply cannot underestimate this in a long run. Especially 100 miles and longer. I did nail it this time by staying away from solid food to keep my stomach in a happy place and I did run my average goal 10-min pace for about 80-85 miles. But I did all of it on sugar only: gels, Gatorade and coke. I maxed out on sugar so much, later in the race, when I should have had some for extra energy I just could not even look at it any more. This made it very difficult for my crew to find things that they could successfully feed me with. I need to find a better balance between sugar and non-sweet stuff from the start and stay there!

There were few other minor things I learned (power of Russian Disco music from the 90s is one of them!), but those 3



above are the major ones, in my opinion and I am determined to digest them all in and fix things in my next very long run (VT100) and in my next 24hr (next year).

**Some numbers:** I ran a total of 121 miles over 23:55 (11:50 avg pace), that is 6 miles PR for me over last 24hr race and that is also 3 miles short of Belarus Female National Record in a 24hr run (I am VERY determined to get there next time!)

After this run, Belarus Athletic Federation contacted me about including my name in the official team to represent the country in all future world championship organized by IAU (International Association of Ultrarunners). Super stoked about this one!!!

Summer  
Series Season  
Party  
August 13,  
2015 8:30  
pm Van  
Cortlandt  
Golf House  
VCTC  
members:  
\$10  
Guests: \$30  
Kids under  
16: \$5  
Sign up with  
Maryann  
Khinda

## **CLUB NEWS**

**Membership:** *Please renew your membership which was due 1/1/15* (If you haven't already). Membership rates are: single-\$25; family-\$35. New members add \$15 to pay for team singlet; additional singlets cost \$15. Please send checks payable to VCTC to: VCTC P.O. Box 341, Bronx, N.Y. 10471. Applications are online at [www.vctc.org](http://www.vctc.org) Please e-mail Rick Bloomer or David King with any changes of address, phone, email and whether you would like to be added to the group email.

**Meetings/Workouts:** For 2014: Team meetings are held on the 2nd Saturday of the month at 10 a.m.

*Club workouts are Tuesdays at 7 p.m. at the Van Cortlandt Stadium track at 242nd St and Broadway, Thursday evening tempo runs meeting at 7 p.m. at the Tortoise and Hare Statue/X-country finish line, Saturdays at 8 a.m. (we meet at handball courts at 242nd St and Broadway)*

**Newsletter stories:** The newsletter is published bi-monthly. We welcome all contributions. Deadline for the May/June issue is April 25, 2015. Maximum length is 600 words. Please e-mail [kingkvd@optonline.net](mailto:kingkvd@optonline.net) and/or [ogard777@yahoo.com](mailto:ogard777@yahoo.com) and try to include a photo.

**Race times:** Remember to send race times to David King [kingkvd@optonline.net](mailto:kingkvd@optonline.net) . Please include name of race, date, location, finishing time, your name, age. Optional: place, age-group, personal best.

**Website:** Visit us on our website: [www.vctc.org](http://www.vctc.org)

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