

Oregon runners: Koerner and L'Heureux win 22ND Annual Race.
by: Hal Winton and Ken Hamada

With moderate weather conditions the AC100 runners toed the line in Wrightwood with an unusually high level of excitement at 5 AM. There has not been any Santa Ana wind conditions so far this year and with moist ocean air moving up into our local mountains all summer the fire potential has been lower. A large fire in the forest above Sierra Madre below the AC100 course occurred in April but no fire has occurred since then.

The cancellation of the Western States Endurance Run (WSER) put entry pressure on the remaining hundred mile races for this year. AC100 was almost filled before the WSER cancellation. WSER cancellation quickly pushed the race over its limit and we closed this years race several months early. 135 runners started the race and 98 runners finished for a 72.6 % which is much higher than normal. The average is 64% finisher rate over the last twenty-two years.

The race finish area had to be moved from Johnson's Field which we used for over fifteen years. Johnson's Field was not available this year because of the heavy race vehicle traffic which the area was not designed to handle. We looked at some other limited options which had problems with finishing the race in a city park. Luckily we found a county park that did not have the same restrictions as the city park and we also have ample vehicle parking. Loma Alta Park in Altadena, has lots of shade trees, grassy areas, picnic tables, restrooms, parking for the HAM radio and kitchen crews. The county parks people were extremely receptive to the race and this should be our permanent home for our finish area for the long term.

All of us who have been involved with putting on 100 mile endurance races have had to shift gears and change plans to adapt to changing conditions including forest fires near the course as happened in 2002 which has now happened to WSER after 35 years.

We were blessed in several ways to finish the 2008 race without too many problems. Amazingly, the new finish line is within a hundred yards of the distance it was to the Johnson's Field finish line!

Everything was set and conditions were excellent for our 22nd annual race from Wrightwood, a skiing and resort town at 6,000 feet elevation, to our new finish line at Loma Alta Park in Altadena in the San Gabriel Valley.

We were expecting a very tight race between Jorge Pacheco (40) our Southern California champion, winning most of the local ultras that he enters and Hal Koerner (32) from Ashland Oregon (who ran the 2nd fastest time on the AC100 course two years ago) and subsequently won the WSER last year. Jorge's credits this year are extensive, having won 6 out of 7 races with the 2nd fastest time at the Badwater 135 and the Rocky Racoon 100 this year and winning the Mt. Disappointment 50 Miler in August .

Hal, with Jorge not far behind, went through half the race at a blistering pace, with Hal running a new "2nd fastest time" for the race. The pace they were running was so fast that Jorge appeared to be working harder then he usually does and he started to slow down after Shortcut Saddle (59 miles) and dropped out at Chantry Flats (75 miles). Jorge had developed an intestinal problems on the uphill section to Newcomb Saddle (68 miles). To Hal's credit, he kept up the pace, lowering his finish time from two years ago, with 18:29:26 winning the race and the Ram Award.

Jim O'brien's 17:35 record from 1989 still seems out of reach but some of the younger guys are raising the racing of 100's at a new level. The

record at the Hardrock 100 was lowered by an amazing 2 hours this year.

Oregon runners have done very well at AC100 in recent years. Another Oregon runner, Prudence L'Heureux who recently won the Where's Waldo 100K was pitted against local Ashley Nordell (a former resident of Oregon) who won here two years ago. Ashley placed 2nd last year against Suzanne Bon who set the new women's AC100 record in 2007.

Prudence led the way with a 20 or so minute lead in the first half of the race, finishing in 7th place overall with 22:13:10 just 13 minutes off Suzanne's record time.

We learned later that Ashley was dealing with intestinal problems also. She still went on to finish in 11th place overall with an excellent time of 22:55:45. This was our 2nd year to have two women finish under 24 hours along with 15 very strong men.

The AC100 course is very difficult to run under 24 hours.

Tamara Johnson from Pleasant Hill (43) finished in 28:28 winning the Cougar Award for the 1st 30+ runner and Linda Deweese (51) from Inyokern won the Rhino Award for the 1st 40+ runner.

Troy Howard (35) from Walnut Creek in the San. Francisco area finished in 2nd place for the 2nd year in a row with 19:25 and received the Cougar Award for the first 30+ runner,. Justin Angle (30) from Seattle was again a top finisher here in 3rd place with 20:08. Oswaldo Lopez, (36) from Madera did 20:38 winning the Horse Award for 1st 35+ runner.

Rod Bien (36) from Portland, Oregon and Guillermo Medina (33) from Santa Maria finished in 5th and 6th place. This was Guillermo's 9th straight finish, all under 24 hours, with a win here in 2005 and he will be ready for the Eagle Award next year for ten straight finishes.

In spite of an earlier sciatica problem Ruperto Romero from Huntington Park (45) came away again this year with his 2nd Rhino Award for the 1st 40+ runner. Scott Mills (57) from Oceanside (San Diego 100 Miler Race Director) was 9th overall and 1st over 45+ runner, winning the 8 Point Buck Award. Rock Horton (50) known for composing of songs for the Hardrock 100, from Salt Lake City in 10th place overall with 22:53 won the Buffalo Award for the 1st 50+ runner.

Ray Sanchez, Lee McKinley, Jai Ralls, Juan Sanchez, Brent Teal and Rob McNair all finished under 24 hours and received the Sterling Silver Belt Buckles. All finishers received an engraved plaque with their: name, finish time and the year of the race engraved at the finish line prior to the award ceremony.

The four runners who earned the 2nd Sunrise bronze buckles were Adelberto Mendoza, Tracy Moore, Mark Flores and David Ruvacalba. Scott Sullivan received the prestigious Eagle Award for ten straight AC100 finishes.

There were 12 women finishers this year, three of which were over 50 years of age. Jussi Hamalainen and Garry Curry completed their 22nd consecutive race this year. Mike Palmer from Berkeley finished his 11th AC100 this year. Eric Kajiwara now has 9 finishes this year and is a candidate for Elk Award (for ten finishes no time limit) next year. Elaina McMahan after a 10 year hiatus was back to finish her 7th AC100.

A story could be told about every one of the amazing people who choose to run in the many (now up to 40 or 50) one hundred mile endurance races spread across the country. Space doesn't allow us to cover discussion of every runner but we know that you all lead fascinating lives. Runners like Wayne Miles and Many Garcia who continue to battle cancer and struggle to get through difficult mountain trail hundreds. These are real heroes of our sport. Catra Corbett does so many ultra's, including five John Muir Trail runs. Similarly Chrissy Weiss (of Dirty Girl Gaiters) does it all including Badwater and though she did not finish this years race. She paid for the dazzling AC100 poster sized maps given to all finishers this year. Thanks also to Kristen and Ken Farley for producing and providing these outstanding

3D maps of the AC100 course.

Another female run hero is HwaJa Andrade at (67) who does her darnedest to make the cutoffs couldn't make it this year but said she feels good about being here and just doing her best each time. Earlier this year she received the "Spirit of Avalon 50 Mile Benefit Run" award for her grit and determination. She cried a lot receiving that award. The Spirit award was created to recognize Avalon 50 runners and supporters who are like Susie Fienstein. When the doctors told her she would die soon of cancer, Susie went on to complete a long list of races over several succeeding years before the cancer took her life. The cancer survivors and those who do battle with the odds against them, are also the real heroes of our sport.

All the numerous support people again made the race a success by being there for the runners needs and safety. One runner sprained a thumb and another dislocated a finger. Tom and Patty Dwyer (our Medical Directors) treated runner's injuries, sprains, scrapes and hydration problems. We have a very large number of HAM radio operators spread out over the course who keep tabs of our runners for the entire race and see that all are accounted for. In an emergency, Search and Rescue gets called by the radio people if a runner is down on the course.

Andy Morehead starts the runner's off in Wrightwood and checks them in again in the finish area. Leonard Klenk and his kitchen crew provide food for runners, crew and volunteers day and night for three days.

District Ranger Mike McIntyre indicated that he will attend our AC100 runner's briefing in Wrightwood next year (a first for us to have a district ranger come there). He has offered to help to us any way that he can. A real breath of fresh air for us after many years of putting on the race with little or no support from the Forestry Service. With USFS budget and staffing cuts it is difficult for the officers to be help to us.

The AC100 runners have been credited by our local district forest service officers with over 1,000 hours of volunteer trail work this year. We are now one of the largest group of volunteers that perform trail maintenance in the Angeles National Forest. We are slowly getting recognition for the work that we do to maintain the trails in the forest, the trails we run on. The USFS no longer has the budget to maintain the trails in the condition we require to put on the race and they are aware of the effort we put forward and are trying to help us.

Highway 2 between Vincent Gap to Islip Saddle will be open this winter so you will be able to drive from Wrightwood to Islip Saddle for next years race

Next years race will be more web-based. You will enter the race through the AC100 website/credit cards and get a email acknowledging your entry. We will no longer maintain hard copies of application but all the data will go into a large data base that can be transferred to Access or Excel. The Dear Runner letter and Run Brochure will be a downloadable PDF file on the website. All 2008 results (including this article) will be on the website as we have been doing for several years.

2008 race splits are of course on the website. Without the race splits, it is very difficult to know in detail what happened on race day. A few words on the splits. Previously, it use to take several people a week to pull this data together. This year the race splits were on the website the day after the race, before the official results were posted! A lot of credit for developing the software to make that happen belongs of HAM and JPL engineer Gerry Walsh.

He also developed a web-based tool to keep track of the runners progress shown live on our AC100 website during the race. Using this feature, an out-of-state runner's family and friend can keep track of their runner as if they were at the race. Gerry, who volunteers as a HAM at Newcomb Saddle, teamed up with fellow HAM Tom O'Hara, who is at Chantry Flats setting up a "closed circuit TV" between Newcomb Saddle and Chantry Flats. To read about their projects and a new "leader board" that was set up at Chantry Flats, go to 2008 Results on the website and look for the article under Chantry Flats. We will be posting pictures and article related to the 2008 race on the website as they become available.

