

2021 Race Reflection

"Small wheel turn by the fire and rod, Big wheel turn by the grace of God, Every time that wheel goes round, bound to cover just a little more ground.

*Won't you try just a little bit harder? Couldn't you try just a little bit more?
Little bit harder, just little bit more, a little bit further than you've gone before"*

Pre-race, camped in the car at the lower campground at Temperance river State Park, site 53. Worked well, slept okay. Woke at 4:50 and got dressed and ready in the car. Left the campsite about 5:35. Made it to the bus lot at 5:50, perfect timing. Uneventful bus ride, not crowded. Ate the bagel I brought. Should've drank more water! Race start was the usual nervous energy, sucky part about taking the bus is that you arrive at Gooseberry 50 minutes before the race starts, which is a lot of time to sit and check out all the people who look super fit and wearing awesome gear, and wonder if you're in over your head. Had to keep reminding myself I've been plenty successful in the past, and that I'd likely finish ahead of most people there.

Based on the goal of trying to finish in 27 hours, I took the 4 miles of pavement that starts the race more aggressively than in the past, clocking 8:50-9:00 minute miles, versus the 10:00 minute miles I did the previous years. 4 minutes of time doesn't seem like much, but if it gets me ahead of the major conga lines that form up once the slower runners hit the trail at Split Rock it might be worth it. I was concerned that going a little faster on the pavement might prove costly, but it did seem to cut the conga line problem down, and I don't think it had any effect on the rest of the race. I could possibly even push a little faster next time. I arrived at Split Rock aid station at least 30 minutes faster than previous years, off to a good start anyway.

Split Rock to Beaver Bay was fairly uneventful, can't remember much for specifics and it's only been two days. I tried to keep up on food here, ate a bagel sandwich. It's a long section but not overly challenging, I just tried to stay smooth and not overdo it; my goal for the first half of the course was to try and stay on time without jeopardizing the rest of the race. Didn't really chat with too many people here, tried to keep to myself mostly.

Beaver Bay to split rock went well, but the heat definitely started to kick in here. I busted quickly through the BB aid station (no monster cookies, which was sad, but I did get a salted Carmel chocolate chip cookie which was yum) and probably passed 15 people as I expected. Ran the first section since I know after that it gets pretty technical. Rolled my ankle a bit right away but didn't turn into an issue, although the back of my right Achilles was getting stiff and swollen here which is odd. Didn't end up being a factor. Chatted with Gnarly Bandit Erika about how nasty Kettle was and about her Black Hills experience. Made sure I downed both bottles before Silver Bay. Cruised into the SB aid station feeling pretty good.

Cleared out my drop bag and got out of the aid station at SB quickly, and then immediately felt like crap. All of sudden my Achilles hurt, my groin hurt, it was hot as hell and I started worrying I was dehydrated. Not a great way to start one of the longest sections of the course. Since I was doing well time wise I figured it was good policy to dial it back and go easy here, which was a good call but I was still way low on water, and knew my two bottles weren't

going to be sufficient, but not much I could do about it at that point. I ended up running with Mark from Brooklyn Park from the Bean/Bear overlook to the aid station, he was also on the dial-it-back plan so we walked everything but the smooth gentle downhill. Got to the Tet aid station in pretty good shape; hot and a little dehydrated but overall feeling okay considering how the section started.

Pounded a full bottle of water plus some at the Tet aid station. Took a cup of noodles and headed down for my traditional 'baptism' - at the bottom of the stairs leading down to the Baptism river I stopped and washed off in the cold water, cleaned off the crusty layers of salt that had built up, and dunked the buff. Some guy ran past me and turned around 100 yards later to come back and get his own Baptism, a wise idea. Started up from the river nice and steady, started this section with Mark again, but felt like pushing a little harder so I could hit County 6 by 6:30, so ended up dropping him and pushing on. The Tet to Cty 6 section is one of the hardest on the course, being hot and a lot of vertical, so I followed the strategy of not doing harm here, and only pushed it enough to stay on pace. Got to Cty 6 at 6:33, so not bad. Felt dehydrated pulling into the aid station, other than that things felt pretty good still.

Pounded more water at the aid station and took down a little food, took some broth and noodles to go. Was excited knowing that from the top of Section 13 climb on the course gets a lot 'easier' for a while. Was also happy to be out of Cty 6 well before sunset. Survived Section 13 no problem, and managed to get a good chunk of the way to Finland before needing the headlamp. Started leapfrogging a young gal named Maddie and her brother pacer for a bit here. Not much going on in this section, I ran whatever I could since the temperature had dropped a bit, but was still a few quarts low. Took a leak at about 8pm, first time since 10am so that's a bad sign. Pulled into Finland feeling low on energy and dry.

Actually sat down for about 5 minutes at the Finland aid station, had a great cup of mashed potatoes and some bacon, tried to get as much fluid in as I could but stomach wasn't feeling great. Left the aid station walking, hoping I would digest for about 30 minutes and then start running again, but my gut was not happy this whole section so I had to walk it which was a bummer, this is a good section to make time on. Section was otherwise uneventful, my energy was good and my head was good but stomach was not. Rolled into Sonju feeling pretty poop.

Sat down for 5 minutes at Sonju, ate a pancake and some bacon. It was really cold leaving Sonju which felt great, suddenly felt good again so I started running where possible on this section, although the terrain here sucks making it difficult to run much, but I made good time getting to Crosby. Took a pee at midnight, still not often enough but an improvement over the 10 hours between my previous times. Thought about running the gravel road up to the Crosby-Manitou aid station but hit the uphill and figured it was better to walk it in.

At the CM station I sat down for a few minutes, ate another pancake and bacon and took some noodles and broth for the road. I stuck to the usual hike/eat/digest through the Manitou River gorge. My headlamp kicked down from Medium to low power at the river bridge which sucked. I switched over to my backup batteries, but I expected my primary battery to last much longer, so I spent the rest of the night worrying about when my headlamp would turn to worthless mode. It turned out to be a bit of a blessing in disguise; I figured I should run as much as I can now before my headlight went down and pushed a little harder through the rest of the night. Thankfully my light lasted and it never became an issue. After crossing the Manitou gorge I felt pretty good and managed to run quite a bit heading towards sugarloaf, which was the plan.

I feel like the Manitou Gorge is the last crux of the run; I feel like if I can push through that I'm going to finish for sure. I power hiked the last mile and a half or so to the AS since it's a long gradual uphill, but I feel like overall I made good time in this section.

I hate the Sugarloaf aid station so I didn't spend much time there. I tried to eat some hash browns but they wouldn't go down. I took some bacon for the road and headed out. I somehow managed to inhale some powdered bacon crumbs, which caused a gnarly bout of coughing, to the point where I thought I was going to pull some stomach muscles. It was probably the most painful part of the whole ordeal, and I was terrified that bacon crumbs were going to lead to my first DNF. Thankfully it passed and I was able to plow on ahead to Cramer Road, running as much as I could. It was exciting getting to Cramer Road in the dark, I knew that was the earliest I'd rolled in there. I checked my watch heading into the aid station. I knew 27 hours had long ceased being realistic, but I did some rough ultra math and realized I would need to keep the foot on the gas the rest of the way in if I was even going to keep it under 30 hours.

I sped through the aid station with a little bit of broth to go. I remembered that most of the stretch up to and along the Cross River is pretty runnable, so with 'The Wheel' blazing in my head I powered on, running when it was comfortable, and trying to do the 40/40 rule when it wasn't. I was peeing about every two hours now, which is what I typically aim for. I made some good company at the end of the cross river, I can't remember the dude and his pacer's name but we worked through the end of the section together. We bombed the downhill into the AS, where I grabbed a pancake and bacon and blazed in and out.

I ate most of my pancake but almost puked trying to choke the last of it down, had one of those moments standing beside the Temperance River thinking that it was for sure coming up, and at least it was a scenic place to puke. And there was a guy with a camera right there, so it would've been epic. Thankfully it stayed down and I got the bacon down. I was able to run most of the south side and part of the north side of the river before starting the climb to Carlton Peak. Most of the climb isn't hard but it's a long gradual uphill, risky to run so I powerhiked as much as I could. There are a few runnable spots, but overall Carlton Peak is just a long slog with a steep climb at the end. I knew in order to keep under 30 I needed to push, and the backside of Carlton peak into the Sawbill aid station is the place to do it, I flew through the rest of the section running the whole way. At the aid station I hit some light food, can't recall what, but it wasn't much I was just trying to push.

I can never remember what the Sawbill to Oberg section is like, but I know I'm quickly into the 90 mile range. There are one or two decent climbs but a fair amount of runnable stuff. Lots of Marathoners started passing me here, but since I was running well it didn't tick me off like it usually does; trying to be seen running at the end of the 100 was good motivation. This section drags on, I passed one other 100 mile runner here but it was quiet otherwise. At the end of the section some people had hiked in about a half mile to cheer, so I thought the aid station was closer than it was which was obnoxious. I bombed down the hill into the aid station; faking strong legs seems to actually help them feel better. At the aid station I grabbed some mashed potatoes and bacon; sad there were no potstickers this year but oh well, the mash was good.

There's a big climb coming out of Oberg that I powered up. After that I had little recollection of this section, other than the big nasty climb in the middle, and the obnoxious never ending switchbacks when you feel like you should be done. The big climb was bigger than I

remembered, thankfully there is a big rock to rest on for a minute halfway up; some marathoners and I joked about it to help ease the pain. Once on top of the climb I managed to run quite a bit. I passed another hundred miler who's pacer (looked like his wife?) was crying and wondering when it was gonna stop, poor guy, she still had a ways to go. Not much I could say so I blazed by. Finally hit the final Mystery Mountain climb, which I powered up pretty quickly, but then had to try and keep my mental cool through the super annoying, long sets of switchbacks that seem like are unnecessary, especially since you're passed 100 miles at this point. Not much I can do about it other than committing to run the final road stretch into the finish line. I regretted this commitment as soon as I hit the road, but there were enough people on the road watching and cheering that I kept up running; after 103 miles, running for .3 is doable. It was great to hit the new finish area and see Mom there.

Overall it was a fun run. Other than the dehydration issue it went smoothly, and I feel like having the course knowledge has helped. I think if I keep up on water and follow the plan I used this year, 27 hours is attainable. Definitely need either an extra bottle or my bladder. More calories is also good, I carried enough but should force more Gu's down along the way. The addition of diaper cream took care of the bung chafing I've battled in every other 100 I've run, so that was \$5 well spent. One thing to keep in mind is that I walked almost all of the Silver Bay and Tettegouche sections, and would've been on 27 hours pace if I could've run more after Finland as planned. I'd still need to run a bit more, especially the Mt Trudee to Tet aid section. I was only 15 minutes behind my goal times when I hit the Finland aid.

What to take away from the splits:

1. Dehydration cost me big from Finland to CRM - need to drink more water during the day.
2. I need to run more on the Temp-Oberg section, specifically leading up to Carlton Peak
3. I really sucked the Sugarloaf to Cramer section - need more calories on the previous section
4. The faster start was the difference, due to the dehydration I really didn't improve times much elsewhere except for Oberg-Sawbill which I destroyed. Good running there.
5. I can push harder from Tet to Cty 6 if I'm drinking enough
6. I was super conservative this year on Silver to Tet, and had my fastest time yet. Carry more water and I can push harder here.
7. WTF else? Hard to see where I gain another 3 hours time going from 29:44 to 26:44, how do I pull that off? Dehydration maybe cost me 1 hour. Really need fitness to be pushing beyond a slow jog to an actual run.