

1998 Grand Slam Part III:
Leadville (Colorado) Trail 100
by
Dot Helling

At 73 miles I decided to DNF. I knew beforehand that this event on August 19 would be the toughest in the Grand Slam series. In 1994 when I crossed the Leadville finish line, I said never again, as had my dear friend Errol Jones in 1993. Yet here we were facing it again, one of the Grand Slam's mandatory events.

The lowest altitude in the Leadville Trail 100 is at 9,200', with most of it run above 10,000', including two climbs over Hope Pass (12,600') and two climbs over Sugarloaf Mountain (11,200'). The other major difficult factor is the erratic mountain weather.

I arrived five days before the race. In the weeks before I was bothered by chest pain from an old lung injury which seemed to be managed by anti-inflammatories. I was also very sleep deprived and took the opportunity to catch up. I ran on Tuesday and Wednesday with Errol and Ann Trason (yes! the Ann Trason). We did sections of the course along Turquoise Lake and below Sugarloaf on Hagerman Road. We went easy and slow. I felt comfortable despite the thin air and was encouraged that it could possibly be a smooth event for me.

My family visited from Durango on Thursday and I was pleasantly distracted. Nevertheless, by Friday, I became very nervous and kept experiencing altitude synapses, also known as "senior moments".

We began at 4:00 a.m. on Saturday under clear and starry skies. The initial 13½ miles to the first aid station at May Queen were relaxed and on schedule. I chattered with friends and enjoyed the sunrise over Turquoise Lake. Then came our first big climb over Sugarloaf Mountain. My memories of the return trip over this mountain in 1993 as Errol's pacer and in 1994 when I ran it were gruesome, but this morning's climb was steady, beautiful and fairly comfortable. Nevertheless I felt unusually breathless at the top and this continued all the way down the mountain and into the next aid station at the Fish Hatchery (23.5 miles). Here I was met by my crew as the sun started to beat down on us. In retrospect I was probably overdressed at this point, but I enjoyed the heat in contrast with my memories of hypothermia in 1994.

From Fish Hatchery there is a several mile boring, flat stretch to the treeline before climbing through woods by Half Moon Creek. It's an approximate eight mile, 800' climb before descending into Twin Lakes, the next major aid station. I continued to feel breathless and my stomach began doing loops. Nothing edible appealed to me. I ran mostly alone in a section of

course which is a part of the Colorado Trail connecting Denver to Durango. It is a serene, woody section with soft footing.

At Twin Lakes the real work begins, the first climb over Hope Pass, five miles to the top, 2,200' ascent. The altitude was affecting me more than ever before as I steadily worked my way up to the aid station at $\pm 2,000'$. The weather cooperated as I climbed. At the "Hopeless" aid station volunteers had set up camp in an idyllic setting - colorful tents, with pack horses and llamas grazing. I downed some coke and a bagel slice with peanut butter. The last climb was narrow, tricky switchbacks with loose dirt and scree. Ann came over the top leading the women as the wind picked up and rain threatened. We exchanged encouraging words. I then put on my windbreaker and started the steep two mile descent to the Winfield Road. Two slippery switchbacks down I nearly slid into Kathy D'Onofrio-Wood, also from California, in 2nd place and looking strong. She and Ann were running among the top 20 men. They were all at least six miles ahead of me.

The Winfield side of Hope Pass is shorter and steeper than the Twin Lakes side. It drops 3,000' over just two miles to a road. The descent includes several more tricky sections of boulder and scree. When you reach the road you must run 2.3 dusty miles to the turnaround and then back the way you came. The Leadville 100 is an out and back course. While it's fun to see the other runners, it can be discouraging to have to retrace your steps.

As I ran the road to the turnaround one of my friends in the Grand Slam passed heading back to the trailhead. Janine looked great. We had leapfrogged until treeline that morning and now it was obvious she was having a great day. She eventually finished in 25:38 and won the masters women division.

Errol on the other hand was not doing well. At the turnaround he was given oxygen. He sat a long time and was just moving out as I came in. I picked up my first pacer, Fred Riemer of Utah, and we headed back up the dusty road. Errol was sitting again at the trailhead trying to replenish. It worked! Not one-half mile on our climb back up to Hope Pass, Errol and his pacer went by us. Now I was slowing down and suffering serious intestinal problems. It took me two hours to climb back up the Pass, a mere two miles from the Winfield Road trailhead. It was agonizing. On top I could not eat or drink and my body temperature kept fluctuating from chilled to hot. As we ran back down to Twin Lakes, darkness set in. In 1993 and 1994 I had run this entire section in daylight and not encountered darkness until well beyond Twin Lakes. Fred and I both discouragingly pulled out our flashlights. We crossed the several streams and marsh and ran into Twin Lakes with just 45 minutes to spare before cutoff. My friend Susan Gimbel was there. She and Fred were sharing crewing and pacing duties and she planned to run to the finish with me from the Hatchery at 76.5 miles.

I changed all my clothes and forced down soup and saltines. As I climbed back out of Twin Lakes, I felt better. The dark sky was again full of stars and I even caught a shooting one which I took to be a good sign. The Colorado sky is an astrological wonder - all the constellations are definable and no artificial light dims the lustre. I considered how pleasant it would be to just lie down and study the sky all night.

From Twin Lakes back to Half Moon was again wooded with lots of ups and downs, more up than I recalled, and numerous obstacles, including log river crossings. These had seemed easy on the way out. My burst of energy disappeared on the first major climb. I labored for air and tried to settle my stomach. It was rebelling again from the food ingested at Twin Lakes. I stopped numerous times to catch my breath and try to reduce the discomfort in my belly. I removed my waist pack and carried it like a shoulder bag. Fred massaged my aching lower back and provided words of comfort and encouragement that we still had plenty of time. As on Hope Pass, I had to stop many times in the woods while Fred patiently waited.

One-half hour from the next cutoff we still had at least two miles to go and I was feeling worse. We exited the trail onto jeep road, mostly downhill, and I could barely run. At this point I was depleted - needed food and liquids in great quantities - yet was still nauseous and gassy. With fifteen minutes to go I got violently ill by the side of the road, reminiscent of my first beer drinking experience as a teenager. Ten minutes to go and we still could not see or hear the Half Moon aid station. Eight minutes to go and it was in sight. I ran through with four minutes to spare.

At Western States this year I fought back to keep within the medal cutoff but never was at risk of being pulled. This time concern was a first for me, to potentially get pulled from a race because time had run out. In addition to my physical problems it added a psychological stress which deeply cut into my ability to enjoy the event.

Fred tried to get me some black tea at Half Moon but the aid station was understaffed and under equipped. One of the repetitive problems at this event is the food - there is very little variety and little for vegetarians. All the soups are meat-based.

Fred caught up to me but only had a banana. It was two miles to treeline where we would see Susan and I asked him to run ahead and have her prepare some vegetarian Rahmen, thinking it would carry me to the Fish Hatchery where I might successfully load up. But over the two miles to treeline my body temperature dropped dramatically and I was on the edge of hypothermia. My greatest fear had been a repeat of the hypothermic conditions I had faced in 1994 climbing back over Sugarloaf.

By the time I reached Susan I was trembling. She knew my state without asking. I climbed into the warm car, wrapped myself in a blanket and took the hot soup. Susan knew, without my saying so, that I had decided not to go on. In the last miles, as I staggered along the roadway, I realized that the Grand Slam finish was not so important to me. I had completed Leadville before. My true motivation this year had been to experience the Grand Slam with my friends, which I was still doing. Taking a trophy was incidental. To push on in my condition, and constantly worried about cutoff times, would leave me in a wrecked state, physically and mentally. It was one of those ultrarunner moments - no event (to me) is worth jeopardizing your health and other major parts of your life. I had to be in court in two days and knew I would not perform my job well if I finished this race.

I stopped at 73 miles. I knew it was the right decision and I contentedly warmed up in the car as we drove to the Fish Hatchery to report I had dropped. On the way we passed Errol who was walking dejectedly with his pacer John Medinger. They were cold. Fred and Susan offered to crew them at the Hatchery and we pulled out our extra clothes. Errol and John were warmed and perked up by potato soup and went on. We ate pizza in the car and drove home to hot showers and bed. I slept like a rock under a bundle of covers for 2½ hours. I then woke everyone up to see Errol finish. It was 8:30 a.m. and there were no reports on him. The final cutoff was 10:00 a.m.

As we watched and waited at the finish line, we received reports on many friends who had finished or dropped and their stories of struggle. Ann had won the women's race and finished 9th overall. Kathy was 2nd and had moved up to just 40 minutes behind Ann after having dropped back several places during later stages of the race. My friend Julie who had won last year finished in 5th place and under 25 hours, for a gold buckle.

In the men's division Steve Petersen of Colorado won for the 3rd time in a row in just over 18 hours. Ann's time was 20:58, more than 2 hours slower than the course record she set in 1994, but just as great an accomplishment given her participation in the Grand Slam. She has now won all three Grand Slam events in the women's division and placed in the overall top ten in each.

Just after 9:30 a.m. we spotted Errol, walking slowly. He finished in 29:40 and would only utter the word nightmare over and over again. Happily he is still in the Slam rankings, his all encompassing goal.

Fred, Susan and I went for a large breakfast. I savored and kept down every forkful. We then went to the awards ceremony. I was satisfied to feel genuinely happy for my friends who finished and okay about my decision. I had only dropped out of two ultras prior to this, both for good reasons, and not since 1993 at Western States. I have completed ten 100-mile races.

As it turned out, I suffered from altitude sickness due primarily to my pre-existing lung problem. In 1995 I punctured my left lung in a mountain bike crash. The resulting pneumothorax, the surgical tube and five fractured ribs over the years had created adhesions. These caused my chest pain at Rainier and my breathing was labored at Leadville due to restricted lung capacity, particularly with extreme exercise at altitude. This was the first time I'd raced this high since the bike accident.

And I am not yet out of the Grand Slam experience. This was a great training run! If all checks out medically, I will be off to the fourth and final event in two and a half weeks, the Wasatch Front 100 miler in Utah. It is also at altitude but not higher than 10,480' and as low as 5,000'. It, too, is a tough and rocky course but the weather is more dependable and the event allows six additional hours for completion. Errol and Ann and many of my other friends will be there. If I can't run the event as a full competitor, I will be Errol's pacer for the last 50 miles and I will revel in Ann and Errol's receiving the Eagle trophy for finishing the Slam. Wasatch is on September 12. Keep posted.

News Flash!

CVR finishes 35th of 150 teams in the Lake Winnepesaukee Relay!
This years' CVR team, an all-men edition, averaged a 7:00 mile pace to finish 16th of 56 in the open men division.

See the next issue, coming soon, for the full story.

Also in the next issue--

- The 4th and final installment from Dot Helling's Grand Slam summer (a happy ending)
- Results from the Northfield 5K with Bob Murphy's statistics on new age group records
- The story of Leaf Peepers 1998

A Summer of Fun

by John Martin

Training for an Ironman distance triathlon (2.4mi.swim,112mi.bike,26.2mi.run) is exhausting. The training consumes most, if not all, of one's non-work time and at times seems to overlap all aspects of your immediate life. Having taken a six year break from this mega-distance race it was not particularly easy to slip back in to the work/train,work/train, work/train some more mind set. In late 1997 Dot and I committed to an Ironman distance race in Santa Rosa,Ca.

The race, one of only five Ironman distance races in North America, is named the Vineman as the race venue is in the vineyard district just north of San Francisco. The race description of a flat bike and run was discovered to be fraudulent. The bike was anything but flat, no big climbs but constant rolling hills and the run would test any easterner that thinks Vermont is hilly. One race descriptor that was accurate was heat. The weekend before the race temperatures soared over 100 degrees. The day before the race it cooled to the low 70s however race day temperatures at 9:30 a.m. were in the low 90s and climbed to the mid to high 90s later during the day.

The heat took its toll on both of us but we both finished despite Dot's first bike crash. Dot finished in a little over 12 hours and I dragged in with a 14 hour finish. We both recorded our second slowest times at that distance but given the conditions we were each pleased with the results and memories. My finisher medal looks just like the guy's who won!

Both being in great shape and hating to waste all that training on just one race the Esprit Triathlon in nearby Montreal beckoned. Doing two Ironman races in 34 days sounds like fun, we both did Esprit before and both had good races so that decision was pretty easy.

The Esprit Triathlon is billed as a criterium triathlon. The swim is in the Olympic Basin, a 12 foot deep, 100 meter wide, 1 ½ mi. long pool originally designed as the venue for the olympic rowing events. Basically you swim to the end, turn and swim back. It's hard to get lost. The bike consists of 41 laps of the adjacent Formula I race car track. The track has may twist, turns, a hairpin corner and a very little hill that is about 2.75 mi. long.Each racer's bike is equipped with a transponder and your laps are recorded and displayed electronically.You can't get lost on this bike course and you don't get lonely either. The marathon is nine (9) laps of the Basin pool. Again, a transponder is attached to your shoe and each lap is verified electronically, as if you can't count to nine.

On race day it rained, rained and rained some more reminiscent of train, train, train some more. The rain began 10 min. before race start and halted briefly 10 minutes before I finished 11+hours later.This was a welcomed change from

the California heat.

Dot was fortunate enough to win the women's race. I placed 2nd in my age division (45-49) but was 1 3/4 hours behind the man who finished first in that division. He was 6th overall and came in under 10 hours. Rocket boosters wouldn't have helped my standing.

David Casey, CVR member, doing his first ultra-distance triathlon had a great day finishing in 11hours 5min. Dave and I were out of the bike to run transition at the same time but he managed to keep his legs running. He should be very pleased with his accomplishment.

Dot tells me no more long races for a couple of years but I'm like an eager child and I will work on changing her mind.

Race Roundup

Catching up on summer races. Here are just a few. Hope to have more soon in the next issue. Please send a note to the editor with out-of-state results or if we've missed you in a race.

<i>CVR Runner/friend</i>	<i>Class</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>Class place</i>	<i>Gender place</i>	<i>Overall place</i>
			<i>\total</i>	<i>\total</i>	<i>\total</i>

Covered Bridges Half-Marathon, Woodstock, VT, 5/10/98

Sorry we omitted these runners last time.

Nance Smith	F3039	1:53:10	102\251		955\1699
Jean Kissner	F3039	1:54:49	114\251		1026\1699
Paul Deluca	M3039	2:01:17	261\300		1259\1699

Cannonball Run, Morrisville, VT, 7/5/98

Marc Gilbertson ran away with this one (21:01)

Gordon MacFarland	M5059	23:18	1\9	4\32	4\48
Sue Barber	F4044	24:27	1\4	1\16	8\48
Carol Van Dyke	F4044	29:08	3\4	5\16	23\48

Vermont Sun Triathlon, Lake Dunmore, VT, 7/25/98

Swim 600 YDS, Bike 14M, Run 5K

Pat Miner	M4044	1:11:12	3\10	22\80	22\117
Linda Hallinger	F4549	1:19:56	1\2	17\37	63\117

Upoming events (for complete list visit our web site)

- Sunday, Sep. 27, 10 am, **Mad Dash 4-Mile / Kids' Fun Run**, Waitsfield, VT. Call 496-7907
- Saturday, Oct. 3, **Stark Mountain Hill Climb**, Mad River Glen, 2000' climb. *"The perfect tune-up for Leaf Peepers."*
- Sunday, Oct. 4, 11 am, **CVR Leaf Peepers Half Marathon-5K**, Waterbury, VT. Richard Cleveland, 485-8892
- Saturday, Oct. 10, 9 am, **GMAA Tudhope 10K**, Shelburne Beach, VT. Linda and Tom Rhoads, 865-0137
- Saturday, Oct. 17, 8:30 am, **GMAA Green Mountain Marathon / Half-Marathon**, South Hero, VT. Howard and Nan Atherton, 434-3228.
- Saturday, Oct. 17, 9:30 am, **Oxbow Community Spirit Fitness 5-Miler Walk/Run**, Lake Morey, Fairlee, VT. Carol Gilman 222-5214; Jenny Gilman 439-6416. *All proceeds from this event to benefit CVR member Dick Bushey who is recovering from a June automobile accident.*

****Volunteers still needed!** If you can help out with the Leaf Peepers Race on Oct. 4, please call Richard Cleveland at 485-8892.



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September 1998

Vol. 19, No. 8

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