

The Bishop High Sierra Ultras Race Director needed help! The usual gang of suspects was rounded up and put to work again to help present the 15th annual 50 mile, 50k and 20 mile Fun Run.

A small army of volunteers helped stuff runner's goody bags and prepare bibs with helpful comments, tied new trail marking ribbons, marked trail, bought and distributed aid station supplies, collected t-shirts, scrounged raffle and door prizes, checked in runners on Friday night and then again on Saturday morning, transported race supplies and equipment to the Millpond start line, set up a Ham Radio network, set up a PA system for the RD, cooked food for finishers, transformed a few boxes of groceries and supplies into inviting oases, gave post-race massages, timed and entered runner's times in the computer, matted photos for prizes and generally made themselves useful.

The weather, which the RD was assured she deserved, was record breakingly hot. Temperatures of over 95 degrees, very early in the season, caused many to regret that fast start and hard push up the first big 4 mile hill. In fact, Race medic, Dr Carolyn Tiernan, recommended several runners visit the Emergency Room for IV fluids and assessment. To their credit, 8 runners took her advice, and were treated at Northern Inyo Hospital for dehydration and heat exhaustion.

Many stories surfaced during the day – the pot of soup destined for Bishop Creek Lodge, at 30 miles into the race, somehow ended up at the finish line instead. The CDF Camp aid station radioed one hour into the race that they had already run out of water, a first indeed. Water containers were quickly found, filled and transported by a cheerful Salvation Army officer. The Junction Aid Station found its' resident rattlesnakes were waiting for them again. They also had to fend off the depredations of a hungry Ham Radio Operator who arrived unprepared for a long day in the heat. The Buttermilk Road Aid Station kept in reserve a can or two of beer for Gabor K. Unfortunately, the stash was discovered by an aid station helper, and quickly decimated – Gabor was out of luck! Edison Loop Aid Station staff remembered the rock salt this year, and presented runners with hand cranked homemade ice cream....fortunately some was brought down for the RD's approval and taste test. The Overlook Aid Station, staffed by the RD's son and grandchildren, cooked pierogies and pot stickers. With the oil forgotten, the pot-stickers lived up to their reputation.

The runners began trickling, then flooding, into the finish line area shortly before 9:00 a.m. Twenty mile Fun Runners were followed by the 50k field, and then all eyes scoured the landscape for the first returning 50 mile runners. Great excitement prevailed as it was determined a newcomer to the race was racing to the finish line, followed closely by perennial winner, and record holder, Jeff Kozac. To loud cheers, Jasper Halekas finished in 7:24:29, followed by Jeff in 7:27:00. The race record of 7:29:00 had been broken by both of them. Four time winner, Phill Kiddoo, followed closely in 7:38:46. In a display of great sportsmanship typical of Bishop Ultras, Jeff graciously presented Jasper with the winners' award, a handsome framed scenic photograph of the Sierra Nevada race backdrop. Newcomer to Bishop 50 mile race, Jennifer Henderson, posted 11:09:18 to win the ladies event. Lisa Rogers, and three time winner Elaina McMahon completed the trio in sub 12 hour times.

Twenty mile Fun Runner, Dr Clark, the oldest male entrant, arrived at the start line two hours late, but was assured he could still enter the event. He had been called into surgery just before leaving for the start line at 5:00 a.m. His watch was zeroed, and he set off, hiking and running strongly. His 7 hour finish was duly recorded, and after a short rest he was again paged to return to surgery! The surgery crew could not believe he had been out on the trail for that long.

The Salvation Army set up its' field kitchen and canteen, and cooks busily prepared hot and cold food for runners. Massage therapists worked for over 12 hours on tired and hurting bodies. Race times were entered into the computer quickly and accurately. The famous cold shower was welcomed by many tired, dirty and hot runners. "Downer" runners were triaged by the doctor or RD, and families were advised about their runner's care that evening.

Awards for all three races were distributed and eagerly accepted. The race tradition of handmade pottery finisher's medals continued. Age group winners received the now famous coffee mug; second and third place runners were awarded matted scenic photographs of the course.

As the day wore on, most runners were accounted for. Those who had dropped from the race kindly presented themselves to the RD, thus being actually inspected for damage. Two runners who were 45 minutes late for the 5:45 p.m. cutoff at Buttermilk Road were asked not to continue, and after a short phone discussion with the RD, graciously agreed to a ride from aid station staff.

By 8:00 p.m. most of the race equipment, food and drinks were being packed up. A small box of snacks and drinks were made ready for the last few runners, and the RD waited in the dark as the official clock was turned off, packed up and transported back to Bishop. With a flashlight, clipboard and hand timer, she waited, alone, for the last five runners to show up, almost two hours after the official 14 hour cutoff. Finally, Leigh Corbin, Vicki De Vita and George Velasco arrived, and waited with the RD for the final runners, Bryan and Carolyn. A few snacks and drinks were handed around, goodbyes said, and all left the Millpond under the light of a full moon.

Next year, on May 16, we will inaugurate the first Bishop High Sierra 100k. Demand for the longer distance is growing, and 100k races are filling quickly. Many runners plan a 100k event as a final long training run for the increasing number of trail 100 mile events. Bishop, with its high altitude, dryness, and exposure on long hills presents an ideal venue for such a distance. Plans are already being made, and a 12 mile extension of the course from the Tungsten City aid station has been inspected. Look for more information on the race webpage www.bhs50.com in the following months.

The race was financially successful again, with many wonderful donations from the race sponsors, community and runners. We hope to have a cumulative total donation of over \$70,000 to the Northern Inyo Hospital Foundation's equipment fund. May 16, 2009 will see us and our volunteers out on the course again for the 16th annual Bishop High Sierra Ultras – please join us.