



Brazos Bend 100 Race Report

USATF 100 Mile Trail Championships

12/07/2019

Third Overall in 13 hours 29 minutes



Training and Preparation:

I came into this race ready to compete, feeling strong and both mentally and physically fresh, as it had been almost eight months since my last ultra. This is my eighth hundred miler and preparing for it went as good as expected. It can be tough at times to balance everything in life; with family and children, full time job in sales, and coaching with [Vantage Point Endurance](#). I make it a point to get the training done in the early hours of the day so it doesn't interfere with work and family. The competitive drive I have is in my DNA and it's a challenge to not go all in. I may not have had as much structure to the actual workouts as in the past, but I listened closely to my body and trained according to how I felt. If I was tired, I didn't force it and sometimes finished workouts later, and if I was feeling good, I pushed it and also left a little in the tank for the next one.

This training block I added more strength work with heavier weights for about three months, and I felt a noticeable difference in workouts and also recovery time. My sponsor **Klean Athlete** (discount code below) added some new products this year to their already amazing arsenal of supplements that I've been taking. I've been using the [Essential Aminos +HMB](#), [Chocolate flavored Isolate](#), [Collagen + Vitamin C](#), and [SR Beta-Alanine](#) to assist in better quality workouts and also maintaining and building muscle. I visually notice the difference with muscle mass when I take the Amino Acids and Isolate on a regular basis. They have been a huge supporter since I began ultra-running, and have allowed me to remain healthy and strong year after year. Another bonus is that I rarely get sick and during the month of November I was able to stay clear from all the illnesses going around in our house. My kids caught a little bit of everything; Stomach Bug, Strep throat, Sinus Infection, Ear Infection, and Pink Eye. The other key to not getting sick is making sure I'm resting which means I aim for at least seven hours of sleep per night, and cat naps during the weekend when bulk of training is done.

Thoughts Going into Race:

This is my fourth time running the Brazos Bend 100 and fourth time running a USATF 100-mile Championship race. I've learned a lot from these past experiences and have a good amount of confidence things will go well as long as I avoid repeating past mistakes and remain patient throughout the day. One thing I love about this distance is that anything can happen in 100 miles, and it's not over until it's over.

The Championship race attracts faster runners from across the country and the energy always leads to a blazing fast start. I knew Patrick Reagan was going to be tough to beat as he is an incredibly talented runner and has had a solid year in 2019. The only thing I was hoping would play to my advantage is the amount of racing he has done this year and maybe the fatigue he is carrying. You cannot count him out as he is an experienced runner with the ability to pull off a record-breaking performance. There were a few other guys I had done homework on and knew could be at the front based on training runs or past race results. I also had my sights on these guys as being contenders, but feel I have an edge with my endurance.

Hours Before Race:

I stayed about 35 minutes from the park at a different hotel than what I'm used to. After work on Friday I went to the hotel I've been at for the last few years thinking I booked a room. Two months prior I was online to book one night and must not have confirmed the payment. They had no records and they were completely sold out. Luckily there was a Hampton Inn across the street and I was able to get a room. To me it was more comical than stressful, and I don't let things like that get to my head. I don't get nervous about races anymore, and focus on being quiet and poised beforehand which allows me to save energy for the race. My crew and I had dinner at Bullritos and it was good to catch up with these guys. Kyle Rodemacher is from Austin, TX and always up for an adventure and crewing at races. Anders Mavis is from Denver, CO and in town to support me which was great to have his energy and positive vibes. Mark Heider from my neck of the woods has been a great training partner and super strong runner. I'm trying hard to get him to sign up for one of these.

The morning of the race I woke up feeling good and well rested. That was probably the best night's sleep I've had before any race and will have to give credit to Klean Athlete's [Melatonin Liquid Spray](#). The forecast for the day was a little warmer than I typically prefer but I wasn't complaining as the humidity was low. The start would be in the low 50's and the high around low 70's. It was a comfortable temperature and didn't need to worry about dressing warm and wearing too much clothing. I wore a prototype of the **Ultimate Direction Hydro Skin Shorts** and went with a running singlet from **The Loop Running Company** based in Austin, TX. I wore my favorite trail socks for this course which is the **Drymax Crew Lite Trail Sock**. On the way to the park I had breakfast which was a bagel, UCAN energy drink, and a dose of [Klean SR Beta-Alanine](#). I put on some **Squirrels Nut Butter** which is the best product on the market for anti-chafing. I only applied once before the race and it lasted the entire day. I applied **AMP Human PR Lotion** all over my legs which is a buffering agent for lactic acid. Our bodies naturally produce bicarb, which is high pH, to neutralize acidity in a common acid-base reaction, and PR Lotion give your body more bicarb to clear more acid.

Start: 6 a.m. 0 – 16.67 miles

The first few miles were right at a 7-minute pace so it didn't take long for a group of five of us to form and separate from the main field. I knew it was going to be like this for at least 50 miles so I settled back and let a gap open up. I've been there and done that and had no desire to try and PR for 50 miles. Sam Skeels, another accomplished ultra-runner had a similar thinking as me so we held back and ran together. I usually go into these races with the mindset of running solo and don't typically talk or go out of my way to make conversation. I prefer to sit back and pay attention to others early on and just observe to see if I can pick up anything. I also listen to my body to get a sense for how I'm feeling. I could tell early on I felt very comfortable with the effort so I carried on conversation with Sam. I didn't realize it until then that Sam finished second in the 2015 USATF Championship race which was my first hundred miler. That was the year I finished third. We talked about some of our races the last few years and also about family and what we do. That made the first loop go by so fast that it felt like I had not even been running that long. We went through the first 16.67 miles in 1:58 and I enjoyed every minute.

Second Loop: 16.67 – 33.34

Sam and I ran together for another 10 miles chatting and enjoying the company. My handoffs with my crew were spot-on and I was in a groove. I prefer to run with the **Ultimate Direction** hand held bottle (favorite hand-held is [UD Clutch](#)), as we can quickly exchange bottles and I don't have to slow down. My crew was able to make it to most aid stations so I wouldn't have to stop at the actual aid stations to refill bottles. I would pick up a new bottle with either water, Tailwind, or UCAN, and each one would have a couple Huma gels for me to take every half hour. That's essentially my race nutrition which is 300-400 calories per hour.

During this lap I started to experience some discomfort with my left big toe, Achilles, and Knee cap. I've not experienced anything like this before so wasn't quite sure what was causing it. The shoes I wore were the new Pegasus Turbo and I had not had a chance to break them in. My right hamstring was also getting tight which has been a pain off and on this year. I used the foam roller at mile 21 (40 Acre Lake aid station) which I was hoping I could keep it from posing a problem later on. I told the crew I wanted to try a different shoe at the next aid station so to have it ready. That would be close to mile 25 and up until that point the effort felt very good. I changed into the Hoka Rincon which has been a good training shoe, but after running in the Nike Pegasus which has a new type of foam (ZoomX), I could tell a big difference in the energy return between the two. My pace started to slow from this point forward. The good thing is the pain with the toe, achilles, and knee cap went away instantly. I needed to run a more sustainable pace to make sure I was saving it for later so slowing down wasn't necessarily a concern at that point. Lap 2 was done in 2:05.

Third Loop: 33.34 – 50.01

The first half of this loop I was not able to hold onto the pace as my legs were getting tight and some discomfort was starting to come on. I lost touch with my natural gait and normal stride length. What felt like a mid- 7 minute mile was actually closer 8 to 9:30 minute pace. I was a little annoyed and had to start thinking about how to overcome this and not let it get to my head. The most frustrating thing is that I usually feel this way around mile 50-60. I knew that I could take some Aleve and it would most likely fix the problem, but that was much earlier than I've ever taken any in a race. I was more concerned with the risks of taking an Anti-Inflammatory drug this early on and the serious consequences that I could potentially face. I knew something had to change and even after taking it, I wouldn't notice any difference for at least 15 minutes.

As I'm approaching mile 40, I can hear screaming from a distance and lots of cheering. There was a group of running friends that came to the park to cheer me and a few others racing from our local run group on. It was exactly what I needed and came at the best time. The main group I run with is ZDT. The name is "Zero Dark Thirty" as we are up in the early morning hours to train. It definitely lifted my spirits and put a little extra pep in my step. I got through to the next aid station and took one Aleve hoping it would be enough to get back into a rhythm. I changed back into the Nike Pegasus Turbo because I wanted the cushion, and started feeling the same pain in my toe and kneecap as I did earlier. I got through that loop in 2:26.

Fourth Loop: 50.01 – 66.68

At this point in the race you can have a pacer, although they aren't allowed to run in front of you and set any pace. They're technically a "Safety Runner" and have to stay twenty feet behind the runner for anyone participating in the championship race. This is the first year USATF implemented the 20' distance rule. I wasn't too happy to hear that news, because I was looking forward to being able to chat with my pacers and carry on a conversation. I understand the rule and that they did not want anyone to have an advantage with this extra person on the course. Mark was the first pacer (safety runner) to go with me and it was good to have him out there. This course may not appeal to some trail runners because it's extremely flat, but there is so much more to it and it's deceptively tough. I strategically chose Mark as the first pacer as I was thinking I would be moving fast throughout this loop. I had plenty in the tank at this point, but still nursing my hamstring and IT band at the aid stations.

As we were heading out to start the lap my wife and kids just arrived at the park and were able to see me. It was great and another boost to my spirits. They were excited about this race as much as I was and had been telling me all throughout training, they wanted me to do well and that they wanted to cross the finish line with me again. Deep down inside I used that to stay motivated and determined in my preparation for this race.

It's about 12:30 p.m. and now in the 70's so I did begin to notice it getting warmer and started paying closer attention to hydration and also color of urine. I was in pretty good shape as urine had been clear for the first half of the day and I was only needing to go about every 20 miles. I began using an extra 10oz water bottle and able to carry it in my shorts which is what they are designed for. Check out [UD Hydro Skin Shorts](#). There are two pouches in the waste line that hold bottles. The aid stations had buckets with sponges in ice water so I also started using those at each station to squeeze water on my head and upper body. The humidity was low so I stayed dry and would catch a nice cool breeze every once in a while. We also started using a massage gun at the aid stations thanks to John Tortorici who brought his Theragun. It did the trick and was wonderful loosening up my muscles and getting them firing again.

As I was able to manage the warmer temps, I kept my focus on moving forward and not giving up too much time on the four guys ahead of me. I think first through third place was at least 30 minutes up and Sam was in fourth with about a 10 minute plus lead on me. Not overly concerned with any of this as there is plenty of miles remaining. I changed into the Nike Next % which I wasn't sure I should wear that early into the race, but I wanted to try something new and wasn't really excited about going back with Hoka. The Next % is a game changer as they are the hottest running shoe on the market due the recent record-breaking results with marathoners and other distances. There is a noticeable difference in the amount of cushion and assistance with toe-off that these shoes provide and are also super lightweight. We finished that loop in 2:27 and I'm starting to feel alive. It always helped running through the ZDT crowd and catching the excitement and craziness.

Fifth loop: 66.68 – 83.35

With two laps to go this is where things can and usually change in a race, and I'm happy I found a way to manage the discomfort of tight muscles. Tim Floyd who has crewed for me at Badwater and been to many other races showed up and offered some quick tips on breathing and how to approach this next section. I was now picking up Anders as my Safety Runner and we planned to focus on one segment at a time and getting from aid station to aid station. We are starting to chip away the miles and picking up the pace. Anders is cracking me up with his excitement over the alligator sightings, and conversations with people he met during the day. At the aid stations Kyle and Mark are keeping tabs with the front runners and giving me time splits and feedback on how they are looking. When crossing paths with these guys at the out and back sections, we all put on poker faces and try to look really good. The nice thing about the crew is they are able to watch them and their body language and can pick up on things. Anders did good challenging me to get through some of the harder sections mentally for me and I was able to stay on the gas for pretty much all of the lap. We saw Patrick coming in for the completion of his fifth

lap which was awesome to be able to witness the incredible race he was having. Not too far him was Ryan Montgomery who I did not know at the time and he looked solid all day. Third place was Lorin Wilson who had been running strong and trading the lead with Patrick for most of the day.

When I got into Windmill aid station at mile 76 I changed socks to the [Drymax Extra Protection Hyper Thin](#) since I had been soaking myself with water at every aid station and wanted to make sure I had something dry as the sun was about to go down. I used the Theragun again to get into my hip flexors, glutes, and hamstring, and refueled with some coke. Sam had come through the aid station about a minute before me and I probably spent 1-2 minutes in there so knew he was up only a few minutes and maybe half a mile. Since this would be the section where I likely make a move, I made sure I left there feeling good and ready to pick it up. This is a long out and back section and within a mile I could see Sam. I made a move and held it for about a mile to make sure I put some time between us. We completed this loop in 2:19 and I'm feeling really good with the time we made up. I took a big swig of coke, hit the muscles with the Theragun, grabbed my head lamp and went off with Kyle. I didn't want to waste too much time here because I was concerned Sam might try to get back in this thing.

Final Loop: 83.35 – 100.02

Within a mile, on a little out and back trail, Kyle says he sees third place. It was two runners about 100 yards or less ahead and I didn't believe him at first as I didn't recognize Lorin. Last time I checked he was thirty minutes up so he must have really been suffering and spent a lot of time at the start/finish area. When we caught up to him, I could tell he was hurting and he said his legs were done. I wasn't speaking much at this point as I was trying to process everything, and Kyle encouraged them to keep going with 14 miles remaining. It looked like it helped him a little as you could see his body language improve. It was surreal to be in third that soon as these guys ran solid all day and I really wasn't expecting to make up 30 minutes in 16 miles. From that point I kept my foot on the gas, actually running scared that Sam was chasing me and going to make a move. After 40 Acre lake there is a section where you share the trail with runners going the opposite direction. It's about 1-1/2 miles around the lake so I knew Sam was within 10 minutes of me since I didn't cross paths with him.

With 10 miles to go I knew it would be tough for him or anyone to run 7-minute miles this late in the race so I kept the pace around 8 minutes and tried to stay as comfortable as I could. We kept grinding it out and by the time I made it to Windmill Aid Station there was 7 miles to go. This section used to be one of my least favorites on the course, but I now have grown to enjoy it because Kyle and I have had some strong finishes here. It's about three miles out and three miles back and I joke that it gets longer each loop. I've trained my mind to tune this out and really dig deep and leave it all out on this section of the course. I was now chasing time on the clock

and new every second counted and it could be additional time under my personal record. We blew through the last aid station without stopping and held on until the finish line. My two kids, Miles and Kaitlin, were waiting for me and we ran into the finish crossing the mat in 13:29:46.

I'm so happy and beyond pleased with this result. This is the best the hundred-mile distance has gone for me, and for the most part everything went right. Even if I did a few things different and didn't lose as much time in the middle I don't know if I could shave off thirty minutes to be in contention for second place, and certainly would have never ran what Patrick Reagan did. His 12:21 is one of the fastest 100-mile times ever. It feels very satisfying knowing I did my best finishing third to two incredible performances.

I'm very fortunate having an amazing support crew at these races. It takes everyone from the group being on the same page and working together. We nailed it and I'm so appreciative for having close friends that are there for you and love the sport as much as you do. My crew; Kyle Rodemacher, Anders Mavis, and Mark Heider did a phenomenal job taking care of me. Tim Floyd has invested a lot into me these last few years and a pleasure to work with on the mind and how to tap into flow state and elevate my game from a mental standpoint. My incredible wife completes me and is the glue that keeps things together and going with the family. She knows me best and can sense things that no one else can. It's always good to have her at my races. I love being able to share these experiences with my kids and that they have become my biggest fans. My Vantage Point Endurance Coaching partners Zach Miller and John Tortorici also invested time in this race. Zach was out doing the 100 along side his own athletes, and John was there supporting us all.

My Sponsors are the best of the best and without their support it would be very difficult to perform at this level year after year. Thank you to each of you!

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