

For those of you who know me or know of me you realize I am not from around these parts, I am from across the pond and referred to in some quarters as “the pasty Brit” “Sir Nigel” or “the caboose” phrases from Mr. Guzzi!!

Let me go back a couple of years when I was working a finish line for the Richmond Road Runners Club (Pony Pasture I think) and I started to talk to a man I now know as John Hurley, John proceeded to tell me that he & other like minded people ran 50K or more – whaaat!! That’s driving distance & that he drank soda while running, this just does not sound right, anyway I put that thought to the darkest part of my mind never thinking that one day I would do something like that.

My running at the time was spent really on my own 3-4 days a week running in the neighborhood where I live which became a little tedious so I started running with a couple of local groups Tue night work outs & Thursday’s both groups have different people turn up but the core group seemed to be the same, the groups are organized by Mark Guzzi – yep I’m sure most of you know him! With his infectious laugh you could not miss him as you would always hear him before you could see him.

On most well almost all of the group runs I was near the back hence the “caboose”

I heard stories from these people of running 50K 100K 100 milers up hill & down Dale - are they mad!! Well I must be as I just become one of them now.

Fast forward two years and I am travelling down to Holiday Lake for my first Ultra....Friday morning I was at home with too much time on my hands which led my mind to subconsciously think about the race or was it just a very long run? So off to the camp we went, we arrived late afternoon found our cabin (unheated) it was to be -5 (22f) that night, met up with a bunch of fellow Richmond runners & headed for check in to get our numbers.

I had heard a lot about David Horton & looked forward to meeting him & hearing his invaluable race info. In preparation for the race I read nearly all the “stories from around lake” from previous years to get a feel of what it may be like and I must say they did not disappoint!

Friday night pasta party – the food was superb especially the cheesecake, the comment I made to my friends was “its Friday night we are all drinking water!!! No beer or wine....

David Horton gave a very funny & informative speech for the group then had a separate meeting for the rookie’s newbie’s whatever we are called – two useful pieces of advise I took heed of – don’t tie your laces tight & whatever happens keep moving forward with purpose!!

Time for bed, I have never been in bed at 9.30!!! the night came & went with some light sleep but the 5.00 am alarm went & it was time for Tea (Annie the savior who brought the Kettle!) and breakfast. I checked I had all my gear, GU chomps, S Caps, Ibuprofen & made my way to the start, I stayed at the back (caboose remember) I didn’t hear the word “GO” but as I saw the headlamps starting to bob along the road it was go time, up the road & into the woods we went, my early thought was 50K++ what was I thinking but then thought no more & settled into a comfortable pace chatting with fellow runners as we moved along the sun came up revealing a beautiful day. The Aid stations came & went & I ate at every one of them & drank Coke Mountain Dew & Dr

Pepper – WHAT drinking soda on a race – well I will tell you that I did practice with Mountain Dew on a 35K a few weeks back & it seemed to give me a little boost – not sure if it was psychological or just Sugar!!

I finished the first loop had my Camelbak filled with a the help of the fantastic Aid station crew & set of for the return loop, I knew at this time I should make the second cut off at AS2 & therefore should finish in time to get my Pata-Gucci shirt. Between AS1 & AS2 I met up with John Hurley – what an inspiration that man is always offering words of encouragement – we exchanged words & then I carried on going forward.

Cow bells – I have never understood the ringing of cow bells at any race – aren't they meant for the cows wandering around the Alps aka the Sound of Music! I really don't like the sound of them well that was until I hit AS2 – what a welcome sound that knew I had made the second cut off!! The Aid station crews are fantastic, each & every station all the crew were full of encouragement what a testament to this race!

I filled up with Oreo's PB&J sandwich – I have never eaten PB&J before this race and would not start only if I am doing another Ultra. I had conversations with other runners as I came upon them & pushed further forward towards the finish line, AS3 came & went 4ish miles to go, I passed one chap asked if he was doing ok and he answered when will it end, I told him all we want to see is the "1 mile to go" mark & low & behold there it was – ok time to kick it up a gear & go for a fast downhill finish, I could see the clock now and David Horton with that big smile welcoming all the finishers – with a firm handshake from David Horton I had done it finished the infamous 50K++.

It did not sink in until Sunday how far I had ran, as I was giving my Daughter a driving lesson & she said "Dad we have driven 26 miles today, I turned round & told her now retrace that route we just did add 7 miles and that was what I ran at Holiday Lake.

Will there be another Ultra? Watch this space.

Nigel