

# Promise land # 2

by Frank Gonzales

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This race by far is the race of the season for me. It is special to me because last year it was my first ultra I have ever done, all of my family and friends came and camped, and I felt incredible coming into this one.

I really started to train for this one back in January. I started to run every Saturday with a crazy Man Named "The Runner". We ran in freezing temperatures and lots of snow for many of those runs and all "the runner" would say is that this training is good for you. So I followed him for miles and hours every Saturday. In March I even followed him to do 4 days on the AT averaging about 30-34 miles per day. I only got 108 miles out of the 168 we were supposed to do. He called me names but I just couldn't do all the miles. Also the Terrapin race was the next week. He kept telling me this was not going to help me for Terrapin, but it would help me for Promise land, and it did.

I have not gone into a race feeling so good from all the races I've done. Body felt good, mind felt good, I was definitely nervous because I knew in order for me to run in the top 10 I was going to have to run hard from the get go. My goal was to run out with the top 10-15 for the whole race and then do my normal kick at the end. Well the top 10-15 started off way too fast for me. I was 23<sup>rd</sup> going into AS#2. From that point I told myself I better step up my game a little. So I started to run faster up all the hills and especially down the hills. I still felt good, but started to feel an unusual burn under my armpits...yes I was chafing. Note to self ...do not wear a tank top without body glide. I made it to AS4 and I was now 13. That last section was a great one for me. I asked for some glide or Vaseline at the station, but no one had any, so the shirt came off (and so did the duct tape on the nipples, because that would look just dumb). Felt a little low point after that, but took some food down and kept a good pace. I passed 2 more people before AS5 and now was 11. For the next 5-6 miles did not see anyone. Hard to know how fast you're running when you're alone. I kept telling myself that everyone in front of me must be running faster so I should speed up. Finally saw 2 people coming back into AS 6 and they were a couple of minutes in front of me and finally got some Vaseline, 2 salt pills, Aleve, and refilled bottle. I had taken a gel 5 minutes before the Aid station and 5 minutes after. I knew I would be running low when the steep part came. Running low was an understatement. I felt as if I was power hiking the steep parts, but to my surprise here came the first place lady and another guy. So at the falls I took another gel and then hit the steps. My quads were cramping and I got nervous. I knew this is where the race is won or lost. The first place lady passed me as if I was standing still, and I knew this was the moment in the race that I had dreaded. I could either let her pass and then the other guy would pass also and then just hang on, or allow her momentum to pull me up the hill by following her every step.....so I pulled myself together and started to follow her every step. When she ran, I ran. When she power walked, I did. I never once looked up until we got to the top. She carried me past 2 guys and when we reached the top I was 10 overall and 9<sup>th</sup> male.

From that point on I knew it was all downhill and no matter how I felt I would run hard. I ended up passing one more guy and coming in 8<sup>th</sup> overall. WHAT a feeling!!!! I had shaved off 1 hr and 10 minutes and 40 pounds off last year's race. I could not believe how great I felt after and even today. I think I love sitting around eating, talking and watching the other runners come through as much if not more as running the race itself. Its exhilarating watching people succeed and make dreams come true. This year I was joined by friends and their families that have made this year even better than the last. Unfortunately this is only the beginning. The beast is calling our names and now it's time to get ready for 100 miles. I really cannot fathom what it's going to take to run 100 miles. I will let you know when it's done!