

## The 100-Mile Trail Run -- with a Few Adjustments

H. Gordon Ainsleigh, DC, CCN

To the top of the Sierra Nevada Mountains, down to the Sacramento Valley, the trail that once tested the endurance of horses is now the Western States Endurance Run

With adjustments at the 48 and 62 mile marks, Dr. Gordon Ainsleigh, 49, was able to complete the grueling 100-mile trail run under the coveted 24-hour mark.

At five a.m. on Saturday, June 29, 1996, 374 runners started out from the bottom of Squaw Valley, California. For about an hour, they ascended ridge after ridge, until they were standing on the very crest of the Sierra Nevada Mountains. From there, they observed the tranquil bowl they had left four miles earlier, and the majesty of Lake Tahoe reflecting the sky at dawn. They turned their eyes westward, to the sea of ridges falling away in endless waves to the purple obscurity of the Sacramento Valley. Then, with no small amount of trepidation, they headed for that deep purple distance, knowing that they had only 96 miles to go.

This is the Western States Endurance Run, the "pearl of greatest price" in the world of the long distance trail runner. The origins of this event go back to 1955 and a 59-year-old lumberman and financier named Wendell Robie, who was very proud of his grey Arabian stallion, Bandos. In response to a put-down from a friend who said that Bandos couldn't compare with the truly great horses of yesteryear, a one-day test course was drawn on a map. It stretched from the Tahoe Basin to Wendell's home town of Auburn in the foothills just east of the Sacramento Valley -- 100 miles of mountain ridges and deep canyons. Wendell and Bandos not only finished within 24 hours, but even took four other horses and rider friends along with them.

The ride quickly snowballed into a yearly event -- the Western States Trail Ride, also known as the Tevis Cup Ride for its award to the champion -- that fired the imagination of riders around the world, and spawned the sport of endurance riding and countless similar horse events around the world.

Nineteen years later, in 1974, a local logger, woodcutter, horseman and marathoner, Gordy Ainsleigh, found himself with two horseback completions under his belt and no reliable horse. So he trained himself the same way he had trained his horses in previous years. Running alongside his horseback friends, he was able to get to Auburn on foot, about 17 minutes under the 24-hour limit. As with the trail ride, the trail run quickly grew into a yearly event, firing the imaginations of runners around the world, and spawning the sport of ultramarathon trail running and inspiring hundreds of similar events around the world.

The logger, woodcutter, horseman and marathoner of 1974 is now Dr. Gordon Ainsleigh, a practicing chiropractor in the Auburn area for 13 years, owner of the 1,000-mile buckle that goes with 10 successful finishes, the yearly organizer of the chiropractic staff doctors of the trail run, and the author of this report.

The trail conditions this year were quite good. It had rained enough to settle the dust, but not

enough to raise the creeks. The wind over the summit was not severely cold. There was very little snow to cross in the high country. Temperatures were in the medium range for this run: they never went beyond the mid-90s. A dazzling array of talent was on hand. In the women's division, six-time winner Ann Trason from Marin County had recently returned from setting a course record in South Africa's Comrades Marathon. Ann is the current world record holder at 50 miles, 100 kilometers, and 100 miles. As expected, she was never seriously challenged, beat all but two of the men, and finished almost three hours ahead of the nearest woman.

Three-time men's champion, Tim Tweitmeyer of Auburn, California, is known more for his steadiness than for blazing speed. There were five champions from other 100-mile runs who were clearly faster than Tim. At the halfway point, four runners of this elite group were ahead of Tim, the first two by almost an hour. But the pace they set in racing against each other proved too fast to maintain. In the last 30 miles, they all had to take extended rest stops. Three dragged themselves into the 85-mile check-point so exhausted that, even after resting, they were unable to go the last 15 miles. So Tim Tweitmeyer, as unswayed as ever by the pace of those around him, became the only man ever to have won this race four times; the first person to ever receive the "1500 MILES -- 15 DAYS" silver buckle for 15 trail runs, each accomplished in under 24 hours. The silver "100 MILES -- ONE DAY" buckles for finishers under 24 hours went to 75 runners; another 152 runners were awarded the gold-bronze "100 MILES -- 30 HOURS" buckles.

My own race was a showcase testimonial for the effectiveness of chiropractic. Since turning 40 nine years ago, I have only been able to get in under 24 hours once, in 1994. As I neared the mid-point of the course, I was feeling my dreams of another 24-hour finish being sucked away. My stomach was stalled from the effects of the heat, the pace, and some (in retrospect) unwise choices in food and fluids. Dehydration and hypoglycemia were becoming serious because the fluid I drank only made my stomach balloon more. None of it was getting into my blood. I came up the 800-foot climb into the Devil's Thumb check-point (48 miles) staggering a little and fading fast, already 10 minutes behind the 24-hour pace, and knowing that it usually take 1 1/2 to three hours of rest for a stalled stomach to start working again.

Dr. Paula Kash of Sacramento was there as usual, and I had enough sense to tell her what was wrong and throw myself on her table. She adjusted me, putting some extra oomph into the segments supplying nerves to the stomach and intestines. Then she did abdominal pressure point work to the anterior diaphragm, cardiac sphincter, pyloric sphincter, ileocecal valve and the psoas. It hurt, but 20 minutes after arriving at Devil's Thumb, I headed down the trail with my guts gurgling merrily along. After about 15 minutes of easy walking, I felt good enough to start running again.

With the cool of the evening and night, and another adjustment in Foresthill (62 miles) from Dr Keith Smith of Auburn, I was able to run quickly and consistently. At 90 miles I caught up to the 24-hour pace again, and crossed the finish line with 17 minutes and eight seconds to spare.

Next year's Western States 100 mile trail run will be on June 28th. You are invited to join us in treating some of the finest people and finest athletes in the world. There's nothing quite like coming up to person who is played out, devastated and exhausted, watching the dream of a lifetime tick slowly away as the minutes pass, being unable to go on. Then you step in, adjust the spine, do some pressure and reflex work, feed some salty soup, see the stress leave the body and the strength return, and in about 15 or 20 minutes hear, "You know, I feel better. I think I'll head on down the trail to the next stop."

And it's rewarding the next day to see those runners get the "pearl of greatest price," the 100-mile buckle.

Volunteer doctors must supply all their own transportation, provisions and equipment, be comfortable treating patients in field conditions without x-rays, and be cooperative with medical, podiatric and nursing staffs. Skillful adjusting, trigger-point and stretching techniques are core to this work, although ultrasound machines and vibrators (with long extension cords), also are useful for speeding relief of muscle spasms and fatigue in legs and hips.

If being a doctor on the 1997 version of this dust and dirt, guts and glory epic sounds interesting, give me a call: (916) 878-1901.

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