

## Teary Eyed on the PCT

This race report starts 18 years ago when Erik ran his first race. It was one month before his second birthday and we ran/walked the mile at the now defunct Soap Creek Run. As the years have passed by we have run many miles together, and have run many of the same races but have each run our own race and had not run together.

Erik completed his third ultra at this years Mac 50K, he had a good race and was excited about upping the distance and attempting a 50 miler. The PCT50 seemed a good fit; three hour drive to the start, all trails, and was to be held 4 days before his 20<sup>th</sup> birthday. It fit my training schedule and I had DNF on the course the previous year to revenge. A quick trip on-line and with in minutes we were both entered.



Erik finished up his sophomore year of college. We went on a fun trip with some of the Corvallis crew to pace and crew at the Bighorn 100, where we both got slightly injured. Three weeks after Bighorn with only one aborted long run under our belts we journeyed to Ashland for the SOB50K. We both were slightly disappointed in our performances, but covered the distance and came out of the weekend relatively injury free.

On the Friday before the PCT, Erik got home from his summer job about 2 pm, we ate some dinner and headed up to the Mt Hood to try and find a camping spot. We hooked up with Craig and April, found a parking spot and set up our tents as darkness settled over the mountain.

Erik and I had talked about strategy and decided to go out very conservatively and see how the day unfolded.

The early dawn of race morning was surprisingly cool and we joked that in a few hours we would be longing for some of this coolness. We picked up our packets, ate our breakfast, pinned on the numbers and made one last visit to the loo.

A few quick words by the RD and the race started. Every one took off the opposite way that we had the year before (guess I should have paid attention to the race briefing). We settled into the back of the middle and trotted up the road. I was watching the leaders' race out of sight when they all stopped and turned around. We had all missed the first turn, this was soon corrected and we settled into a comfortable pace with a small group. We ran past the lake, past some quiet tents and soon came upon the first aid station manned



by the McKenzie crew. A few quick words with Brad and Mark and we were on our way. Craig came into the aid station a few seconds after us and we left together.

We peppered Craig with questions on his Western States experience and enjoyed the views as we passed through the Hwy 58 aid station and headed onwards to Frog Lake. The early starters and fast people were coming back as we got to the top of the ridge. We dropped into the Frog Lake aid station, refilled our bladders, drank some water, grabbed some food and headed back to the start/finish. The trip back was uneventful. We kept a good steady pace and started passing a few people. We had to step off the trail four or five times to let horses go by and every time Erik commented on how large an animal they were. About a half mile from the start/finish we were at a switch back section and I could see April below us. We arrived at the aid station just as April was leaving, she wanted to get out of sight before Craig arrived, but she didn't quite make it. We refilled our bladders, drank some cold water, and ate a little food. I grabbed the drop bag and pulled out a sandwich and off we went. We were trying to follow one of Sander's rules of grabbing a bunch of food and leave the aid station walking and eating.

A few steps on the pavement and then a left turn on to a connecting trail that would take us back to the PCT. Craig caught us again and went by; we passed April and began the first long climb of the day. It was starting to get warm, but we were mostly in the shade so it wasn't too bad. After what seemed like a very long 4.5 miles we arrived at the Red Wolf Pass aid station. We had carried an extra bottle for this next section, so we quickly filled it with ice and water and headed down the trail. A few minutes later I needed to visit the forest, so I told Erik to keep going and I would try and catch him.



When I got back on the trail, April was going by so I wished her well and took off in pursuit of Erik. This section was downhill and extremely runnable. I pushed pretty hard and started catching some people who we had passed earlier and had went by me when I was in the woods. After a couple of miles of downhill the trail turned up for the 3 mile climb to the aid station. As I started climbing I could see Erik ahead of me and closed the gap to him. As soon as I connected he upped the pace and we started cranking up the hill. (The Wednesday night power hikes really do pay off). We arrived at the 40 mile aid station, refilled the bladders with ice and water, and filled the water bottles with ice and water. Erik ate some food; my stomach was starting to get wonky so I partook in the amber elixir. There were a lot of people at this aid station, a big group left just as we arrived and there were still people standing around. Erik grabbed a bag of chips and we left the aid station walking and eating. He finished the chips and started running. This was a really fun, downhill drop and all I was trying to do was stay in contact with Erik. We caught the group that left before us and soon bottomed out. As we started to cross the bridge, Erik hopped down to the water and

soaked his hat and I followed suit. We soon caught Craig, again, and climbed through some exposed section.

The ice water was soon gone and we crested out. Erik began running again and we were soon at the last aid station. We put the bottles back in the packs, drank some cold water and a couple of swigs of Coke and headed out for the final stretch. It was flat for awhile and then pointed down again. Erik picked up the pace and away we went. I was doing all I could do to stay with him and really think that this was the hardest I have every run at this point in a race. I got a little teary eyed in this section, knowing we were going to finish and having the opportunity to share this journey with Erik. The trail flattened out a bit and Erik thankfully backed off the pace. We passed a couple of horseman and they said about 1.5 miles to the camp ground. Erik and I both thought (or hoped) they were wrong and we soon turned onto the link trail that said ½ mile to the Forest Headquarters. Almost there!! A quick power hike up to the road, across the road and we were at the finish line. 9:45:23, a PR for both of us.

It was a special day for me and a neat way to celebrate Erik's 20<sup>th</sup> birthday.

The Details:

3-Vespa packs

2- Mojo bars

1-Clif Blok (margarita)

2- mini Clif Bars

3-Ginger cookies (one of the aid station had these and they really hit the spot)

½ PBJ Sandwich

2- handfuls of Pretzels

2- handfuls of Chips

~ 4 liters of water

Pictures from PCT50 courtesy of Craig Smith.