

Family Man's Burden – My 2019 Cuyamaca 100k Race Report

How to write a race report without being indulgent, but without coming across as 'mailing it in'? That is my dilemma as I sit down and write to you today-- its a challenge putting thoughts to text only because then you are solidifying them and they thereby become more concrete and definitive. Its a judgment call where maybe you don't really want to pass judgment-- you just want to stay in your own floating ether. I've had mixed thoughts about this run since the finish-- for reasons we'll get into-- but at the end I can't but go ahead and (spoiler alert) and say it was really awesome. Almost obnoxiously, ultrarunning dictates: be axiomatically positive. So I will be axiomatically positive.

Writing this will just be an exercise in arriving at my foregone conclusion, dismissing the knee jerk conclusion, and an attempt to be more impressionistic with the whole thing rather than detailing a 'blow by blow' account.

A little background: while most of this year I have alternately wrestled with extreme FOMO and acquiescence to living with a little baby once again, the folly of my mania and the convenience of Ultrasignup have met all too often. A result of this was at one point being signed up for both the Los Pinos 50k and the Twin Peaks 50 Miler-- two races in the Saddleback Mountains between Orange and Riverside Counties, both boasting rather extreme elevation gain for their distances. Well, both burned in fires this summer and were cancelled-- I found myself ONLY looking forward to Javalina Jundred in Phoenix. Not that I am not looking forward to that, but I had had a reckoning with the original intent of all this nonsense of ultrarunning was an encounter with the mountains and the outdoors-- not jogging in circles. I started dreaming of the San Juans, of more mountain runs, etc.

Sometime in August, again sitting on ultrasignup, I said what the hell it can't hurt to add myself to the Cuyamaca 100k waitlist. The race was already full so it didn't matter-- I was way, way down it. This was sometime after the HURT lottery so I was feeling buttHURT and needed something more to look forward to. Rechecking the list in early September I noticed all of a sudden I had dropped more than 10 spots. Whoa could this happen I thought? I decided not to say anything to anyone in order not to get down about it if I didn't get in.

A few more weeks pass by-- I am creeping my way down. The second to last week of September I note my schedule is relatively free and decide if I'm doing JJ100 at the end of October, a big painful 'hell week' is due. I'd been running 40 and 30 somethings since early August when I did a week of 68 miles and had to rest for a bit after that, feeling burned out from successive heat waves. It was time. I told myself I would just abuse caffeine like mad and if the baby wanted to keep me up, so much the better for my training. And on September 22nd, I did it-- for the 2nd time ever, I finished 100 miles in a week without injury. That night, drinking a beer in my tv chair I looked down at my

phone -- 'Info @ Ultrasignup' required my response-- would I run the Cuyamaca 100K on 10/6? I had 48 hours to answer. It took me a minute to respond.

But I was exhausted, and zero-ed out the next week, save for a 5 mile tuneup. With this run in store, the rest of October could be 'tapering' and recovery! I had saved myself from doing another 80-100 mile week before JJ.

I work alternate Saturdays, so I spinned the whole situation to my wife like this-- October 6th I was supposed to work. I would just play hooky and run the race. I told my wife how I got in off the waitlist, how I really wanted to do it, and 'it would be like I'm at work that day anyway'. 'I will run it fast,' I said. 'I should be home around dinnertime!'.

The words of a manipulator. An ass writing a check...and that ass would not be able to cash that check.

I get ahead of myself. Cuyamaca is a WS qualifier, so I know fasties are gonna be running it. Buoyed by recent successes this year, pretty solid training and a newfound comfort actually *running* uphill like I've never been able to, I am pretty confident but know intellectually there is no competing for position at this one. I tell myself I will race the clock-- start time is at 6:30am-- in order to get home to the wife and the boys I tell myself I will run this thing....sub 12 hours. Run your own race they say. Go by feel Speedgoat says. Just have fun looking at your watch.

Ok, finally to the start line-- the start is at this 'outdoor camp' in Cuyamaca. I get there about 5am, when check in first happens. I am pretty bad whenever possible at just being super early for these things anymore, especially if its just me running. I am paranoid about parking, but also having time to poo vexes me. I guess these are first world problems. Its pretty cold so once I am checked in I go to sit in my car and listen to music. I close my eyes. I'm nervous but not that nervous. I wish I was a little more excited but at times I get this ambivalence once I actually have to leave my wife and the boys. Why am I sitting out in the woods like a weirdo and not in my comfy comfy bed? And these type of thoughts. I wish I was normal and have normal hobbies and could just drink margaritas and not be a crazy person. I know all of that is just the vanity of the ultrarunner, telling yourself how not normal you are again and again. Put it aside, etc and just run.

Off we go-- the race is three different loops-- a big one of about 50k, another of only 12 miles, and the 3rd 18 miles. the 50k, involving my beloved Cuyamaca Peak, is the crux, right? Get that done and then just do the other two loops...

LOOP 1 : Wherein He Doth Crush It

'Respect the distance' you'll hear said. Fair to say through planning and execution I did not respect the distance. A 100K is not just a 50 miler plus 12 miles, which is what I kept

telling myself to mentally feel charged. The 100k feels like the rarest of distances in ultra-- I'll try to share more thoughts by the end.

ANYWAY, so the conga line begins on the single track. We are just trudging along like idiots in the dawn light. I deliberately positioned myself pretty up front, but more like the 'front middle' I would say. Its hard at ultras cause they don't (thankfully) have corrals. Talk about preemptive psychological humiliation before a run even starts. Fuck corrals.

We are just trudging along like idiots as the forest wakes up. People are not that chatty. This will be the theme of the back front, or front middle I occupy most of the day. People are not much for talking. All I want to do is chat, especially once I have ultra brain, so maybe I belong more in the back middle or just back...

'LET'S GET THIS HUMAN CENTIPEDE MOVING, OR GET YOUR ASS OUT OF THE WAY!!'

I hadn't seen him, but immediately I know who this is. Won't say who but some can guess. Like 5 guys ahead of me. Several sort of uneasily look around at this breach of ultra decorum. Whoa? Someone being...negative and aggressive? I am just laughing because it is so hilarious.

I tell myself, 'Some people give off more heat than light' and if _____ is dark fire I would like to be a brilliant angel of cold light but know that I am not. I have plenty of my own heat to deal with. People move out of the way and the line is really moving now. I say to the couple of guys ahead of me 'We were all thinking it, he just decided to actually say it!' This gets a few laughs. Later, I deliberately run past this guy saying to myself I'll stay ahead of you as I can't decide all day if his comment is truly dickish or just plain hilarious.

On to fire road where I talk with a San Diego ultrarunner who's pretty nice. I met him at Lost Boys where he was still on the waitlist for Western States. A theme with waitlists I am noticing is one should stay on them and good things happen. We talk for a bit and I tell him I'm planning on sub 12 which he whistles and says well I won't be running with you. This make me unsure like a pilot flying over the ocean hearing from a mechanic there won't be enough gas in the plane for the trip or something. But we both agree the weather is completely in our favor this year-- its a beautiful day and probably one of the coolest Cuyamaca 100ks there's ever been...

I do speed ahead of him thinking I need to move it and then we drop to the first aid station-- plenty of front runners come roaring back down the dog leg giving me idea just how far back I am. I count well over 10 but its not too much. I already need to pee and ask if there's a bathroom but a guy says theres not. I think I eat a single potato and an orange slice. I climb up the next trail, a decent grind, and not much happens-- just the forgettable miles of 10-14 or so. I do remember the real climb starts at around mile 15-- up the peak from a campground. I recall observing all the families camping and thinking

why can't I be doing that. Once the baby is old enough really looking forward to just basic car camping....

I am hurting already in my tailbone. I feel like its early for that sort of thing. Plus all morning I don't feel very 'amped' for this whole thing. I had been trying to get into a real enthusiastic headspace the days before the run but I think feeling my wires crossed leaving the family alone at home made me hesitant. I joke about 'animal spirits' but I do genuinely you can really help your run whipping yourself into a bit of frenzy before these things...even if you get a bit deluded. You have to maintain a line of ferocity and staying grounded....let me know if you figure out how to do it cause I haven't yet...

I decide to dope up. Vitamin I and my 'special yellow pills'. Two Ibu profen and the caffeine pills (3) I get from Utah. These will get me to the peak...but man they take a while to work. It feels like a whole hour until they really kick in. But once they do...

At this point when I can 'jump in the tunnel' or 'be the wolf' whatever you want to call it, a bit of flow, I typically get earworms, albeit nothing I can remember now played in my head. I do remember a bit of jukebox was kicking on and off all day. I do plenty of power hiking, passing some people, leaving that front middle and (I think) really getting up into that 'back front' group of folks. After a bit I am running and really leapfrogging some people. After training for so long it feels so good to be running uphill. This is the third time this year I have summited Cuyamaca in an ultra, fourth time including a training run, and every time it was power hiking and feeling the grade just really slow me down. Not this time. This time I am finally owning this trail and fittingly on the third and final way up...

I probably should have had a little more wisdom not busting it out but it feels good to really, really be running. Not to mention while so much training this summer relied very much on a heavy diet of starbucks, red bulls and little yellow pills I had been worried my *good* running was all dependent on caffeine. I had deliberately tried to step back and curtail my ingestion of it for the past two weeks as much as the baby would allow. I think even a week break really lets me feel the roar though and I am at the peak in a refreshingly short amount of time, stuff my face and start charging down-- and this time, unlike the Peak 50k where it was hot-- I tell myself I am going to divebomb this shit like it should be divebombed and not worry it will turn my stomach...because the weather is so cool-- like high of 65 cool-- that won't happen, right?

So I am divebombing Conejos, a great trail on the other side of Cuyamaca that's pretty technical. Its like our 'wee Highline' out here. Lots of rocks. You get to dance. I am dancing the shit out of this trail and now I am passing new people, not just leapfrogging the same faces. This feels good. I pass Sean Nakamura and say hi but can tell he doesn't know who I am, just says 'Good to see you' in a way I can tell he doesn't know who the fuck I am. I careen past these two skinny ultra hipster stereotypes in their 20s or early 30s-- they look like deer-- they say my 'technical flannel' is awesome. I just say thanks cause for some reason I'm all insecure about it like they're making fun of me. I

just think to myself 'Krupicka lives' and more people should just wear flannel or other dumb stuff instead of all the gear whatever. I am wearing my zane grey shirt, Pit vipers, Mas korima hat and my flannel tied around my waist. I deliberately want to look different than the hipster deer or the goatee dads...but whatever. That's more heat than light.

Get to the bottom aid station. I can feel one of hamstrings twitching which has never happened but the drop down was some serious pounding. I take a shot of pickle juice which is excellent and a couple of salt pills...this is in addition to a couple of salt pills from up top I've already took. Something about me and salt....I thought I'd been sweating enough but what the hell do I know. Run by feel Speedgoat says. in due time I will be drinking dumbfuck juice...its one big shit sandwich and we all have to take a bite sometimes. you get the point.

4 more miles to the end of Loop 1. Really, great steady pace. I am behind one of the hipsters for a bit who says he thought the climb up Cuyamaca 'would be steeper' but he's from Tahoe so...I say well that's a humblebrag pretty much giving him shit. I am cussing a lot as I talk to people which kinda just happens anymore. its expressive and feels good. but maybe its offputting to people. Still this guy is not too much into talking I think just in general and I tell myself well that's the back front or front middle for you or whatever. Either that or I am insecure and just thinking he doesn't want to talk to me.

anyway-- Loop 1 is done. in at the 'base camp/start finish'. I chug a coconut water from my dropbag because of twitching in my legs and eat a bunch but already I can feel a bit of the stomach turning on me. This is becoming normal and in a way is a good thing because I tell myself it means you are pushing yourself hard. still it is early, i'm only halfway-- I can't but feel elated when I look at the clock and realize I've just PR'ed the living shit out of my 50k time-- 5 hours 30 minutes.

The race website will produce splits in due time so I'll see if that is true but that is what i remember. I was happy but I should've been worried. Why am I PR'ing my 50k time in the middle of a 100k? Respect the distance they say. I am basically pissing on the distance's face and laughing with this.

Loop 2: Wherein He Doth Burpeth and Farteth

Loop 2. Loop 2 is short and I want to just get it done and over with. How long can 12 miles take? It has a long grind I have to power walk up on to the mesa where there's a big plain of beautiful grass-- its one of the most photogenic places in the park, extremely terence malick. Up the grind my stomach is just getting worse. I am starting to burp and fart quite a bit. People are starting to leapfrog me now. Faces I didn't want to see again. This Brit who I passed early "Ooh Zane Grey guy! When I last saw you you were bombing down that mountain!" I say oh having stomach trouble now and he said sorry to hear that and kept right on going. I wouldn't see him again all day.

After a few miles, some more farting/burping and even heaving it starts to clear up and thankfully the trail is flat and down now into the aid station 8 miles into 12 so really getting there. I am running again and pass one guy. Definitely its that nether zone of the ultra where you are like where the fuck is everyone am I ahead/behind/lost/did everyone die. Typically this time of day it would be hot and I would be talking to myself but today its just nice. Plus I love this area of the park, near Oakzanita Peak which was one of the first San Diego hikes I ever did moving here and realized how much I enjoyed getting out on top of a mountain. This was like 2013 or so.

In and out of the aid station. I compliment them because they started their signs waaaay back on the trail making you think it was gonna be there, and unlike say at Old Pueblo where that toyed with me this time it did keep me motivated to just get there. As I head out the captain tells me you can take stuff with you like cups and stuff because they have a garbage bag 1/4 mile out! I say that is so thoughtful and take a cup of ginger ale with me...it would've been thoughtful but of course I missed it and had to carry a damn dixie cup 4 miles....

other than that a little more trouble doing the last 4 but nothing too bad. Thankfully a lot of the trail is dust and powder now so you can shuffle really efficiently and just move according to muscle memory. In at the start/finish again, 44 miles and the clock says 8 and change. I'm like damn if this was a 50 I'd been in such good shape.

Dropbag again. I drink some powerade, reload my belt with snacks and need to lube up and put on some icy hot. wait Trevor lube up your balls and seat *before* you put Icy Hot on your hands I tell myself. I'm proud of myself for being of enough sound mind at that point to specifically think that in that moment. lots of nut butter, then on goes the icy hot...feels amazing. I am headed out finally in the north direction on Loop 3.

Loop 3: Wherein Our Hero is Banished to the Land of Wind & Ghosts

The fireroad out to the PCT out of the camp is immensely runnable. It is not long out of the camp again though, probably thanks to salt but I think I'm also just crashing/redlining at this point, I just cannot run very much. I run some then walk. I take a shit behind a tree for the first time. Its nasty af. A runner and his pacer get behind me, talk to me for a bit then i realize due to my ultrabrain I get the sense I'm just butting into their conversation and they drop back. Again I feel all insecure and kinda dumb for not recognizing they maybe didn't want to talk much. I'm ok for a bit but eventually am walking/hiking and they pass me. I leapfrog with this other dude who I can tell is not an English speaker, he's walking too and not looking great. Bouts of improvement and then feeling shitty again. Like a car lurching out of gas, coasting a bit, then seizing up....

If you look at the map, I'm almost finally at 'Sunrise'. 6.8 miles that feel way longer than that. The pct out there is beautiful but can be....monochromatic. You go around a bend and there's just another bend of scrub. The dropoff is cool though and you have a view

of distant mountains and cliffs. The weather is coming in and there's clouds now, the temps are dropping, the wind is picking up...its like 4:30 or later I think.

i think I'm ok and tell the aid station people my stomach is bad, I just want ginger ale and banana. A couple of runners behind me, like unreformed Gen X-ers, make plenty of noise as I head out into the next section. They are completely weird and wooping, hollering, shouting to one another as they run/walk behind a 1/4 or 1/2 mile back of me-- much more refreshing than the hipster ultrarunners. These guys are pretty content to be ultrabrained and not be shy about it. Say dumb shit it doesn't matter. I kinda halfway look forward/dread them catching up to me but they don't as I lurch ahead/run/march/walk/stumble over increasingly turning weather-- from Sunrise to Pedro fages the wind is picking up, the clouds are just like 30 feet over head, the sun is cratering...I am looking at my watch saying ok if you can really really run or even just jog you could actually hit 12 hours on the dot....

at pedro fages i've been leaning into the wind for about 20 minutes. I am trying not to get psyched up about it. every minutes I look at my watch. probably stupidly, I decide not to take any food at the last aid station, thinking its only 6 miles and change to the end...my stomach wants nothing and I can't really chew anything anyway. this was probably a mistake and I should've tried to force something down. But even Tailwind was just disgusting to me at this point and I was convinced I'd overdone it with salts and didn't want to take in more. I would just drink water.

Down the last fire road which leads straight into the camp-- an immensely runnable fireroad under other circumstances I would loved to just charge right down, I am just seizing up and walking pitifully. more people pass me. Its headlamp time. luckily I'd grabbed my knucklelights too as my headlamp was all fading from low battery. I can see the sunset lighting up Stonewall Peak from behind in the west-- it looks beautiful. It looks like a mystical mountain from 'the ninth gate' or some shit. Like beautiful but occult beautiful. Oh yeah thats why I do this shit I tell myself. All day I'd been fussing about time and forgot about the damn mountains I was in.

once dark falls, I feel a *real* downward turn. There's only miles left but I am just walking. i don't care who passes me. At one point I fake myself out thinking I missed a turn but some other runners re-assure we're fine. another guy passes me who says he doesn't feel well either and audibly farts as he talks to me. I can't see his face its so dark because the clouds are covering up the moon. This is the least awkward exchange i've had all day with this guy farting with me in the dark. Like two sets of floating cartoon eyes in the dark farting. he runs on. more people pass. The two eccentrics pass me by. The san diego ultrarunner I know passes me and I try to joke I'm not getting my sub 12. He laughs and moves on. I don't know why I'm so down but I just am.

I run the final few hundred yards. The race director shakes my hand, tells me where to get food, the medal doubles as a bottle opener which is cool. I tell him (weirdly) I told my

wife I would run sub 12 and be home by now. He just says Oh ok so you're just gonna take off, that's cool and I thank him. I collect my dropbag and get in my car. and i mean immediately. I don't sit around at all. which was a huge mistake but I am mainly just thinking of my wife and how much of a fuss bucket the baby is. His entire process of trying to get him down for the evening is like this 90 minute endeavor of feeding, rocking and cooing. its absurd. anyway but that's what I'm thinking about as I finish this thing in 13 hours 4 minutes.

as i drive home, its like the highway strip in Lost Highway. Just headlights in the dark and the highway strip. I am breathing very shallowly. I can't catch my breath. For some reason this doesn't alarm me. I keep taking very deliberate breaths to take in more air, drink a little water. Mostly I'm happy to be sitting in my warm prius and on the way home but something not's right. There's no elation or even relief its over. I've basically made this a 100k ultra plus a drive, then the finish in my head.

I get to the door. By this time I have tunnel vision and I step inside. The wife and the boys are there and they just watch me come in wheezing. I pull up a chair and my wife asks me if i'm ok. I had taken off my hat at the start of the drive but for some reason I feel like a hat is still on my head. Then I have the meta-thought about how bad this is and realize I'm about to faint-- I say to her 'I need to lay down right now' remembering my CPR class and lay on the ground. it takes a few minutes but the tunnel vision slips away. I am completely destroyed. I feel the worst i have ever felt finishing these things, and that's including my early ones and the 100 milers. My family, not used to ultra weirdness, is looking at me in fright and have no idea what's going on (well, the baby is smiling) . My butt is covered in poop. My stomach is completely shut down. I leave my shorts in the garage and put on a poncho for lack of thought of putting anything better on and lay down for a bit. The baby still hasn't gotten to sleep. I resolve to get up, drink some more water, finally get the in the shower and it helps. I put on sweat pants and a shirt and rock the baby to sleep, so I don't feel completely useless to my wife. I sit for a bit and after an hour decide to microwave a hot dog.

i say goodnight but right before i check my phone. 41st place. I nearly killed myself (figuratively) for 41st place. even by today on Monday I have a mix of feelings-- the upward surge, the huge crash not just in energy but emotion-- for a bit I think should I even run JJ? (don't worry already back on board for that). I am telling myself...perhaps I can run these things....slower...and just have more fun. Pain is pain but the stomach shit really takes the fun out of these. I am just being vain with dreams of competing for the most part. Besides, maybe in the middle middle, or the back middle, or the front back, or the back back, I can find more folks to talk to. People who don't mind the ultrabrain. Yes, maybe I need to run this shit slower next time. Now there's a humblebrag for ya!