

Viaduct Trail Ultra by Colin Saville



In 2007 I had entered the JFK 50 miler but had to withdraw because of my 'yoga' hip injury. Withdrawing, or even worse, DNF, have never been a consideration in my 30 odd years of running.

I needed a way to make up for it, and eventually complete my ultra milestone. So, when colleague Glenn Butcher mentioned he was doing his first 100miler, a race with a 50mile 'wimp' option, I did not need much arm twisting.

This Viaduct Trail Ultra, was technically in it's second year. Last year the two organizers did a reconnaissance run they count as the inaugural run. This year the run became a race...with interesting bridge crossings (described as the 'death bridge')

in other runner reports), ravines, rutted path, wash-aways and large bruising rail bed stones to add to the distance challenge.

The course was an old rail line about 40 miles north of Scranton, PA 12.5 miles each direction ...so out and back twice for me. It is a 'Fat Ass' run...meaning you provide everything you need... however the organizers did put out a water container ...fill your bottle as you pass the 6 mile mark. I reached the 6 mile mark ahead of that water stop being set up ... I drank my water by mile 4 so went over 8 miles without a drink....not good !!

As my training had not gone beyond my normal 25 miles per week limit, I was motivated to try the Galloway run / walk method as a survival strategy. This worked well – I ran the first 25 miles using 9min run/1min walk, then switched to 8min run/ 2min walk for second half. The most noticeable difference to running only, was that the walks allowed me to relax my shoulders....I felt none of the normal tension I typically feel between my shoulder blades near the end of races...also felt I could have done another 20 miles if needed. I kept good running form and was able to finish strong. I think I am sold on this Galloway method.

About half an hour after I finished, Glenn Butcher passed through the 50 mile checkpoint...he was upbeat and showed great courage heading out to do his second 50 miles, knowing that he would be doing this terrain in the dark (headlight/torch dependent) in bear country. Glenn was forced to abandon his race at mile 91 with a badly swollen foot....how many people can claim to running 91 miles on rough terrain? Glenn may not have completed his 100mile target, but I think he definitely proved he stands out from the vast majority of runners.

At the start of this report, I mentioned this ultra was a milestone for me...it was my 50th ultra. (28 running ultras, 12 kayak ultras, 10 ironman triathlon ultras). It has been eight years since my last ultra, and with recent injuries, I could not take for granted that I would survive. However, Mother Nature was kind – mid-70s race day, was a 10 degree drop from the days before the race. Other than two runners who did not appreciate my cheerful greetings, on the many times our paths crossed, the field of 26 runners, were obviously happy to be out there enjoying nature's beauty, and exchange cheerful greetings and encouragement along the way.

I enjoyed this latest ultra challenge more than I expected, and have an appetite for more.