

The NUTSO (Newsletter for Ultra and Trail runners in Southern Ontario) – February 2006

Hello all, hope everything is going well. A strange winter to say the least. Great for road running but I haven't made up my mind about the trails. While there has been a minimal amount of snow and ice on the trails this has been replaced with a great deal of cold mud. There are a number of individuals to blame for this crazy weather – Paul for buying a new snow blower, John for buying some sensible winter boots and for the first time I bought a heavy duty winter jacket. Who knew? One thing's for sure, there is still a long way to go.

Anyway, the OUS/OTS season is quickly sneaking up on us and I have a couple of events to point out before our first race, Seaton Trail 26/52k on April 8.

First, come and join us at the Advil Outdoor Adventure Show from February 24-26 at the International Centre. There will be over 300 exhibits and displays on just about everything that you can do outdoors. We will be sharing a booth with the 5Peaks Adventure Series so drop by and say hello. I have received two-for-one coupons in PDF format so drop me an email at [sezelski@excite.com](mailto:sezelski@excite.com) if you would like to receive the coupon. Visit the show's website at [www.outdooradventureshow.ca/toronto/](http://www.outdooradventureshow.ca/toronto/) for details.

We will once again be having our booth at the Around the Bay races from March 24-26. This is the 112th annual running of the 30k and as with last year there will be a relay and walking events for the 30k and don't forget with the 5k event. This year the expo and the finish line will be in Copps Coliseum. Much better for spectators and those looking for friends and family at the end of the race. Hope to see you there.

Don't forget the fourth annual Spring Warm Up, once again starting at the High Park Curling Club on March 11. This year I am hoping to have a running related movie on the big screen TV (and there will be live curling, too!). While we would love to have you join us in the run, participation is not required to win the grand prize of free entry to most of the races. Be sure to send a cheque or register online so as to not miss out on this over \$450 opportunity.

As mentioned, our season opener will be the Seaton Trail 26/52k taking place on April 8. As you may know, Tony will be taking a break from race directing this year to focus on his family so be sure to check the website [www.ouser.org](http://www.ouser.org) for details on all the races.

Many thanks to everyone who submitted designs for the Ontario Trail Series logo and congratulations to Ricardo Santa. Ricardo will be running Seaton Trail compliments of the OUS/OTS.

Finally, I am pleased to announce that Diane Chesla will be taking over the newsletter for me. So please forward any race reports, running related issues or anything that you would like to share to her at [diane@dianechesla.com](mailto:diane@dianechesla.com).

As always, please let Diane know if you would prefer not to receive this newsletter (or even better – if you would like to be added). Thanks, Sharon

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**GET WELL SOON**

Get well wishes go out to Mitzi Paquette as she recovers first from appendicitis surgery and now from pneumonia. Hope all goes well and that we see you out and about again soon. Thanks to Tony for letting us know and he has given us an address if you would like to drop her a line:

Mitzi Paquette  
c/o Town of Whitby  
575 Rossland Rd E  
Whitby, ON L1N 2M8

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**GREEN POTAGE SOUP**

This is one of my favourites as it is easy to make, tastes delicious and it quite inexpensive. I use chopped frozen spinach to save time.

- 1 tablespoon unsalted butter
- 1 medium to large onion, thinly sliced
- 1 1/4 pounds (600 g) potatoes, peeled and cut into 1 inch cubes
- 5 cups stock or broth
- 1/2 medium head broccoli, stems cut into coins, tops cut into florets
- 1/2 pound (225 g) spinach, stemmed and washed well
- 4 teaspoons kosher salt or less if using commercial broth
- Freshly ground black pepper to taste.

In medium saucepan melt butter over medium heat. Stir in onion and cook, stirring occasionally for 5 to 7 minutes – until wilted and translucent.

Stir in potatoes and stock. Bring to a boil. Lower heat and simmer, uncovered for 10 minutes. Stir in broccoli and spinach. Cover. Simmer until potatoes and broccoli are completely tender, about 10 more minutes.

Puree through blender. Stir in salt and pepper to taste, heat through and enjoy.

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**RACES, RACES, RACES**

Mud Puppy Fun Runs

On February 11th come join us at the Greenwood Conservation Area for our Valentine Run, followed up with lunch and refreshments at our sponsor, Papp's Restaurant. There will be a \$5 donation for each participant on the day of the run, proceeds going to the Rouge Valley Naturalists. And while we're socializing at

Papp's, we'll be having a raffle, with the winner taking home a Love Basket to open up on Valentines Day.

As well, we're looking forward to running off that St. Patrick's Day hangover with a 24k run through Seaton Trail on March 18th. Again, we'll be requesting a \$5 donation to the Rouge Valley Naturalists on the day of the run and we'll be heading back to Papp's again were we'll be having a raffle for a one night stay at our sponsor's Comfort Inn in Pickering, only minutes away from the race start.

If you're interested, go to our web site [www.mudpuppies.ca](http://www.mudpuppies.ca) to find out more information and click on the 'join us for a casual run' icon to let us know that you'll be joining us.

And guys remember to wear your sexiest red dress for the Valentine Run.

Happy snowy trails, Gord

#### Achilles Track Club St. Patrick's Day 5k

Be sure to mark this one on your calendar. A nice cool down from the Warm Up the day before and hopefully there will be some Lucky Charms in your future.

Contact: Brian McLean at telephone: 416-485-6451 or email: [bmclean@idirect.com](mailto:bmclean@idirect.com)

#### Trail Running Workshop

Derrick Spafford will once again be hosting a workshop in the Kingston area. It is tentatively scheduled for June so check [www.healthandadventure.com](http://www.healthandadventure.com) for details.

#### Brooks In Like A Lion

Paula Burchat would like to announce a new event in Ottawa, Canada this winter. The Brooks In Like A Lion 24/12 Hour Races on March 11-12, 2006 at the new Dome Louis-Riel. The facility features a certified 400m Mondo track. It is Canada's newest national training centre.

This is the first ever ultra held on a 400m indoor track. According to the IAU, any records set will be compared to outdoor 400m track ultras as it does not fit the indoor criteria of a 235m distance.

There will be overall prizes for the winners in both events as well as age group awards. All entrants registered by February 15, 2006 will receive a Brooks long-sleeve technical running shirt. The race has the generous support of Brooks, Hammer Gel, Bushtukah Outdoor Gear, Montgomery Massage Therapy and the National Capital Runners' Association. The races will be chip timed by Sportstats and there will be two aid stations at either end of the track.

Race proceeds will go to support the Ottawa Lions Track Club.

For more information, please visit [www.ncra-ottawa.com](http://www.ncra-ottawa.com). Online registration is free of charge.

Enjoy, Paula Burchat, RD

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## **RATS RACE REPORT**

Gary participated in this multi-day event last year and it sounds like he had a great time. This report may be a bit long but it is a good read and worth every line.

### **Desert R.A.T.S September 2005**

The Desert R.A.T.S is the only race of its kind in continental North America. A 148 mile 6 day stage race along the Kokopelli Trail that starts outside of Fruita, Colorado and ends in Moab, Utah. For anyone considering what one of the international multi-day races are like, R.A.T.S provides the perfect challenge in our backyard making it very affordable.

Unlike the events that it is tailored after, R.A.T.S is a supported race. This means that all you need to carry for the stage is mandatory gear, nourishment and enough water to get you between the aid stations and water drops. The temperatures can be as high as 101F with the lows getting to around 35F at night and the humidity hovers around 20% during the day. At the end of the stage the Sherri Griffith Expedition river cooks have dinner on the go and snacks ready. The food is hearty and nourishing, the water cold and inviting with no shortage of either.

**Day 1;** was 20 miles and I was very worried about my pack. It seems that I was the only one carrying 5L of water! This of course translates to a lot of weight and I was beside myself that I would run out of water before or after the water drop. The altitude didn't bother me as much as I thought it would, actually I was too worried with keeping up with the back of the pack. But the scenery alone made up for any worries that I had, each turn, each step provided what I would call an IMAX view, just incredible.

The pack broke up eventually and each of us, with exception of the front group, had time to run to ourselves and contemplate the run. For the most part the trail paralleled the Colorado River and then "climbed" away towards the campsite. Eventually I could just make out the blue tents of the campsite, the road dipped and almost instantaneously the camp was at my feet.

With the exception of one person who made a slight wrong turn we all made it to the finish line within 6 hours. Feet in good shape, spirits in good shape and the sunset was magnificent.

**Day 2;** today the course is 40 miles in 11 hours, basically be at the finish line by sunset or else. We started off; heart rate monitors being switched on and a gentle pace down the road. Like the day before I carried my 5L of water, again terrified that I would run out of water before a drop or aid station. With this section fate or circumstances had brought 3 of us together running, Jim from Florida, Eric from Ohio and myself. Our paces were similar and we found comfort in each others company as we all had our little doubts about the time and distance.

Each bend the road or trail seemed to continue to stretch out. Just when you thought the end was near, the road stretched on. The good or bad aspect was Eric had a gps system so we knew the distance traveled, as I said good and bad. Even as the day stretched on and heat picked up the scenery remained incredible.

We were running on a plateau and a little section of desert like terrain so the scenery and trail were relatively flat, remember, relatively. We came upon a stream, the day before the water had overrun the banks due to a flash storm. A quick cross over and back on a long stretch of sandy trail.

Throughout the day were small climbs and descents but the big events were ahead of us! One of the interesting observations we made were the telephone lines running through the landscape. It seemed odd that in the middle of nowhere there would be telephone lines. Eventually we came upon the start of asphalt and we knew this time we were close. Actually we were about 10 miles from the end and the asphalt made it feel more like 100.

Coming onto the finish line, sitting in chairs looking refreshed, all they needed were cool drinks with umbrella's, were the lead runners. We had arrived in just over 10 hours, the cooks were busy preparing their usual sumptuous meal and I scuttled away to clean up and provide some TLC to my feet. One of my colleagues mentioned to bathe in the river just beyond the shrub line, but between my sore feet and the distance to the river I opted to bird bath it in the sunset.

**Day 3;** only 9 miles! A short section today, call it a rest day, call it saving some energy for the following day, and call it a pleasant run. We left the campsite and ran back up asphalt road and onto the trail. This section of the trail followed the Colorado River along the banks. The break between barren red rock and the green ribbon along the brown river was a contrast of life in this region. Again our trio from the day before joined up and had a pleasant conversational run going to the pickup point.

Only one person missed the trail and ran off through an irrigated farm field wondering if the local dogs would chase her. From the pickup point you could see the La Sal mountain range off in the distance. The campsite was beside the Colorado River and the Dewey Bridge. It would prove to be a welcoming and relaxing day, sit back read, a quick dip in the river and prepare for the 52 miles tomorrow.

**Day 4;** the expedition day, we are to run 52 miles in 19 hours. After breakfast we loaded into the trucks to head back to yesterdays pickup point which was the start for the run. The first section was a 10 mile loop from the pickup point back to Dewey Bridge.

The run was starting as it had in the past days, the fast pack off in the distance and as Austin would say the peloton coming up the rear! At one point there were four of us running together and as we headed downhill on a pleasant trail section we missed the unobvious trail marker. We had gone about 500m when we heard Austin yelling at us, we quickly stopped and looked back. There was Austin waving his arms yelling at us to come back.

By luck or fate, Austin had stopped at an opportune spot to take a picture of a road leading off into the distance, and then noticed at the turn to that road just in the gulley the trail marker! If it wasn't for Austin we would have ran an extra hour before we had figured we had made a wrong turn, if we were lucky! Austin was the man and we never let him forget that!

The first ten miles, brought us back to our campsite the night before. At the historic Dewey Bridge and the first aid/cp of the day. Behind the cp until the second cp were miles of road and trail, desert and rock and the sun was shining.

As we made our way to the next cp the walls of the canyon towered either side. Occasionally we were passed by a few jeeps and motorcycles as we made our way on the Kokopelli trail. The sun kept climbing the road became a trail and snaked its way up and down a narrow canyon. A particular downhill section consisted of softball to soccer ball sized rocks, dashing down trying to follow a path my one foot decided enough was enough. Laying in a crumpled fashion my co-runners came back to see if I was in one piece. Strangely enough, no physical bruises just one on the ego and I didn't have the "pleasure" of feeling the fall. Jim and Eric assured me what they saw was a classic and were surprised that I had not sustained any injuries. One hell of a place to break something, we were about 8 miles from the last cp and another 9 to the next!

We eventually made it to the second cp with 4 hours before the cutoff. The cp sat on a dusty red road (?) in a valley. Off in the distance we could see large irrigation sprinklers watering and all around the walls of the canyon, magnificent. The RD pointed out a section on top of the valley to show where we would see this position later in the run. Unfortunately it wouldn't be a straight line to that position and it turned out to be around 10:00 pm when we would get there, it was now 2:00pm.

Off we started heading towards the farm in the distance and then a left turn into another valley. We crested the road and looked down to see the trail in the distance; looking over our shoulder we saw the last view of the irrigated valley.

The jaunt across this small valley was short lived and the trail/road started to climb. Eric had the gps system on, so we would ask what our elevation was. We started at about 4500ft in the valley and occasionally would be provided with a short piece of flat ground. It wasn't that it was a step grade, just a long one, a

very very long one. At one point during our travel up Austin had caught up to us, good to see him again. I was handing out Jolly Ranchers to all, but for some strange reason Austin declined – more on this later.

Our paced picked up and Austin dropped back, more incredible views, more pictures taken. We stopped briefly for a rest and to enjoy the view before the sun went down, it was about 8:00pm and the last of the sun was slipping below the horizon. We had about 30 minutes of useful light left so we hustled.

Now everyone knows that when the sun goes down in the desert it gets cold, and when you go up in elevation it gets cold. Well, we had done our research and had our mandatory gear, but.... We asked Eric what our elevation was at about 9:00pm; we felt pretty good, a little cool but otherwise in good shape. Just as he said “6200 ft”, the temperature dropped and we started shaking. Into the packs and on with the shells.

Lights on, shells on we were ready to move, but Jim was cursing a silent one. He had taken out his shell at the last aid station and left it by mistake, and it was getting colder. Not to worry though, being slightly worried about being cold in the high desert altitude at night I had packed an extra shell. Once again we started off, headlamps lighting up the trail and the coldness of the altitude and night being kept at bay, just.

At one point as we continued climbing and Eric had the unpleasant task of telling us the altitude when we asked we thought we saw the camp light. But we hadn't crested the peak or signed into the next cp! Sometimes lights or hallucinations can be wicked. As we continued gaining altitude one of the party started having a hard go of it, whether it was altitude, bonking, a combination or just fatigue our pace dropped. We dragged him between us to keep him from falling off the road into whatever was out there.

At one point we thought we heard something large pacing us in the bushes. The temperature was cold enough that you could see your breath and when we stopped to stretch briefly the cold came on quickly. We kept asking Eric about the altitude and at one point he said 7500 ft, which I think was the top and the road that never ended, started downhill! We were trotting down the side of a hill and over to our right we thought we could see a fire or light. Immediately we shrugged it off as a hallucination or something so far off in the distance it wouldn't be the cp.

During one of our walking breaks Jim said he could hear water falling. Now we thought these hallucinations are becoming very interesting indeed. But when we lifted the hats off our ears, you could hear water falling. That is when we came upon a bridge, we walked huddled together down the centre of the bridge and halfway across we stopped. How far down was it? We shuffled towards the side and realized that this wasn't a very long bridge but it was a very long drop. The clear night sky and with our lights off you could see the canyon open beyond. It was a very very long drop, but the site was incredible. Shivering we turned and started running up the road away from the bridge. As we crested the ridge the elusive cp appeared.

There snuggled against a fire, a fire! , were John, his fiancée and Reid. Knowing the utter danger of a fire when you are cold and need to keep going I stayed outside the influence of the heat. Gratefully I accepted a cup of hot chocolate and our group moved on. Surely we were at the top of the climb – as we left the CP the road, strangely enough climbed!

Eventually we crested and started our downhill, we had been taking breaks for the most part as Eric was having a rough go, and he couldn't walk or think clearly and wasn't really taking in any water. Jim and I put him between us to keep him from falling off of the road. Out of nowhere the pavement started and the downhill became more down, with each drop in elevation the temperature increased and our layers of clothing started coming off. Eric eventually recovered and was amazed how it all happened.

It seemed like hours since we had left the CP, we could see lights and a campfire off in the distance. But we had discounted anything unless we saw the signpost designating the campsite. At one point we stopped and attempted to figure out if we had overshot. Placing the logic of adventure racing, if you think you have gone far enough, you probably have not. We moved down the road, it was about 2 am it was warm, well warm compared to the heights behind us. Another 30 minutes and we came upon the signpost, down a dirt road and in the immediate distance was the campfire.

We arrived around 2:30 (?) in the morning and there snuggled in his sleeping bag by the fire was Reid, Cassidy was still up and brought us deliciously warm bowls of soup. The best soup I ever had.

All of the tents were up with our equipment inside. Morgan's (the leading runner) parents came in with the support staff and generously put up the tents! We tried to stay up to cheer Austin in as we had seen his headlamp between the trees, but exhaustion finally took hold and we stumbled off to bed. Austin came in 30 minutes behind us, everyone made the cutoff.

**Day 5;** rest day. Today is the rest day, recover, refresh and relax, tomorrow the final 26.2 miles to Moab! I tended my feet, it seems that my little toe has taken a real beating; a blister under the nail had to be dealt with. Otherwise, my feet have been very good to me.

Everyone is up and about, being a small group we usually sit around the dining tables and drink Gatorade and talk about anything. Later in the day we were trucked down to a beach along the Colorado for a swim. Regardless, where we were the scenery is incredible, still!

As we sat around the dining table for supper, the sun beginning to disappear behind the La Salle Mountains, everyone paused to watch the change of scenery. Tomorrow we would cross over the La Salle's, it seemed like we would never reach these mountains. As the light began to fade, the campfire crackling in the background, the free range cattle started to come into camp. Now that was very subtle, one moment just us and our camp, the next all of these black cows wandering around!

Everyone was calling it an early night for tomorrow's final run. As we started to drift towards the tents, the full moon was coming over the horizon and casting a brilliant light. You could see the camp without any headlamp and the number of cows around us was steadily increasing.

**Day 6;** the beginning of the end of the journey. With the sound of the propane stove going on, knowing the call to coffee was soon to occur, the stirring of the runners started. The well heard sounds of muscle and bones cracking and snapping, the groans and moans of those who belonged to the cracking joined in. Another magnificent morning, the cows had left and breakfast was on.

After we had struck camp, the RD gave us our last briefing for the run. We were to cross over the lower portion of the La Salle Mountains, but to get to the top it was a 5 mile climb! As Morgan was the lead runner in time, he would get an 18 minute head start with the rest of us chasing him. In reality the only other runner that would come near to catching him was Davide from Italy.

Reid blew the start horn and we were off. The 5 mile climb was a pleasant, but slow grind up. About a third of the way up our little running group of 3 started to break up, we wished each a good run and you were alone. At one point, exactly 30 Hum Vee's passed by on their way to the daily cross country drive. Other than the convoy not another sign of civilization.

Eventually the CP! There sat Cassidy, waving me in, from this point on it was all downhill and gravity would be a welcome assistant for this half. The rough single track eventually lead onto a dirt double track well traveled. Still no sign of life, eventually a car passed by, what the hell would anyone be doing up here driving a car was beyond me.

The road wound its way down between steep canyon walls, no other runners in site. The company of my MP3 was welcomed today; the beat kept the feet churning and the mind free of discomfort. Eventually the parking lot was in site for the turn off to the second CP, the lot was full of mountain bikers preparing to ride down the Porcupine Trail. The designated sign for us pointed down Porcupine Trail which runs along the ridge providing an outstanding view of Negro Bill's Canyon.

As I started down the trail some of the runners started to come towards me, Matteo was first, followed by Marty, then Austin and Eric, I must have picked up some time. The CP was still a distance ahead, but it was good to see my running friends out here. I wasn't paying attention to time or distance but enjoying the scenery when John jumped out of the scrub line to indicate the CP. I chatted with him briefly before turning around and heading to the finish line.

Back on the main road coming out of Moab/Slick Rock (Sand Road), a nice wide double track easy footing no roots or rocks. Finally saw a rattle snake, the first and only live one, just ahead of me I noted it working its way across the road towards the shade of the scrub. The first sign post along the road noted the number 6, which was the number of miles to the front gate of the park, which meant only 5 miles to the finish line!

Some mountain bikers rode along side me asking me where I had started running from and were amazed at the journey. Actually they stated I was crazy (fill in the blanks), considering they had just road over the La Salle Mountains from Colorado and were planning on returning in a day, I was crazy? Morgan's parents drove past heading home, honking their horn giving encouragement.

The pavement starts or ends about a mile from the Slick Rock parking lot, my pace picked up and I reflected upon the past week of running along the Kokopelli Trail. The people that I had met, the scenery, the experience, incredible and then as I turned the corner at the bottom of the turn the finish line. There were all the other runners and their families cheering me in, there was my wife Sara, there was the finish line!

The finish was like the start so many days before, it just was, it seemed anticlimactic to me, and it almost seemed like a cheat that something was missing. But perhaps that is the magic of such an event, the subtle ending, the completion of such a task, knowing you have stepped outside of your comfort zone and accomplished something unique.

The Desert R.A.T.S is unique and the only race of its type in North America. The opportunity to run such a race in our backyard is ideal and the scenery the trail runs through is well IMAX material. This year Desert R.A.T.S is occurring in June, so it will be a little "warmer", if you are interested and I highly recommend the experience, go to [www.geminiadventures.com](http://www.geminiadventures.com).

Gary

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