

The Blood Rock “50” Mile Oak Mountain Spa and Resort Run-on Race Report

I decide to do the Blood Rock 50-miler this year instead of the hundred for a couple of reasons and it's mainly because I want to *enjoy* this course for one dang time and I want to do it in the *daylight* and I want to do it *without puking* so I sign up and train for it and then I get my usual pre-race injury *what is it with me* a week before the race by stressing my knee playing soccer and it's super slow to heal and I can't even walk down the stairs without pain when the race is only two days out but when race day comes it's ok and it's a huge relief and I get there and all the usual suspects are present and I say hi to my friend who's now 77 years old doing the 25K and I ask him if he's going to win his age division and he says they don't have a division for his age and I laugh and I see Joe and Jay and talk with David the race director who just did Moab 240 and got pulled 20 miles from the finish *ugh* and David says he has changed the course because of me *uh-oh* and the gun goes off and we take off and as usual I am flooded with gratitude that I've made it to the **Starting line** and it's finally here so **I hang with Joe for about 4 miles and we're taking on the monster climbs of the back country and its raining and everything is slippery and muddy and foggy and fantastic and I'm being careful with the knee just in case and Joe is going super strong and finally I have to make the decision to let him go forward or I'm going to push harder than I should because I want to play this one very conservative because I only have one goal for this race and that is to *enjoy* it and nothing else matters and I'm committed to this plan and I'm doing it because I love this race and this course and I love experiencing *nature no matter what mood she is in* and really this is *what life is about* it's taking it in and making the most of it and going for broke and it's having these experiences that make me alive even though there are so many things to worry about but there are a lot of good things in life and this is one of them and the *rain* makes things more *significant* and it makes the commitment even greater and **we're climbing and dropping and hanging on to the ropes and missing the views because of the fog but the landscape has its own beauty right here and right now and is so unique with the thick gray fog and the various shades of browns and reds and what would you even call those leaves dark pink or tan or light brown I don't think there is a word for it but it's amazing and the trail has all this down and up and down again so much climbing so much dropping and the rocks and lots more rain and fog and leaves so****

essentially how hilarious that we are trying to run fast on a steep trail full of *wet camouflage rocks* I think *I might be addicted to nature* is there a word for that *I'm here for the scenery* I'm not trying to beat anybody out here but I do want to get more *joy* out of this trail than anybody else and now *I'm coming down the single track toward the North trailhead* and I pop in my Irish Celtic Orchestral Disco music and now I'm jamming out and loving it and they say a 100-miler is really an **eating** contest and a 200-miler is actually a **sleeping** contest well maybe a 50-miler is just a **dance** contest and *I would totally win* and I cruise back into the **Cabins** and I eat some vegetable soup and a quesadilla and change out everything I'm wearing and it feels so great to be dry for at least a couple of minutes so I put in some bagpipe music and keep on rolling and this is the **best day of my life again** and I can't believe David says he has adjusted the course to make the race **easier** this year *that's right, you heard correctly* and I'm wondering if he is getting soft or something either way he's got us doing the south loop twice instead of the back country twice whatever it's all the same to me still plenty of *rocks* and *climbing* either way I am 100% committed to not looking at my watch or caring about my time or mileage the entire time I'm out here although it would be nice to finish in the daylight but whatever I love being here I love doing this I hate that it takes time away from my family but *this stuff helps shape me, refine me, humble me* and it puts me back on track every couple months when I do something like this it just sets everything right and re-orient's my life and sets me on a better path I don't know why but I love it and *I love this part of the trail which is the first gravel road and it's so inviting and I fly down it with my arms in airplane mode* and I've gotta keep doing these things and what a great distance 50 miles is for an ultra and also it's my age right now so that's funny but 50 miles is just enough to get you in the groove and make you feel like you earned it but not enough to bring you to your knees and make you beg for mercy come to think of it a 50 has got all the good stuff of an ultra because it's just the first half of every hundred which is almost always a blast man *what a precious life this is* and now *I'm climbing the big one and cruising down the second fabulous road* and I can't get ahead of myself or will myself to other places in the race because we have to live in the *moment* and really what other choice do we have when you think about it you're going to be in the moment no matter what so you can either *feel* it and *enjoy* it or you can spend your life thinking about other moments good and bad and past and future and then all you've done is *missed* the one you're in and what a tragedy that is I say you might as well **accept your present** and *make the most of it* as *I cruise down the last bit of single track* I remember how fun that was racing Joe

through this section during a different race and I wonder how Joe is doing and I bet he's winning this dang thing what an animal so many great people out there across this earth and also so many people I know and love who can't be here anymore and it hurts my heart to know that **Will** and **Jim** and others have been pulled from the course of life and it hurts it hurts it hurts but makes me even more committed to making the most of the moments I have to work with because for some reason I'm still *living* and *breathing* and *running* and *working* and *caring* on this planet and I don't want to squander such a precious gift and so I run and *work* and *play* and *care* with *all I've got* and really **what an amazing experience it is to live and breathe just like this race** it's so amazing **turning back down into the leaf-covered single track with so many slippery camouflage obstacles making it *hard on the body but so good for the soul*** come to think of it they should call this race the Early December Oak Mountain Spa and Resort Retreat even though it doesn't have the massages and the yoga but it does have all the introspection and rejuvenation one could ask for and this is *my kind of spa* at least that's what I'm thinking as **I jog through the last bit of roller coaster single track and into Terrace Drive** and feeling great but a little gassed so I tank up on some grilled cheese and hash browns and a pickle and some M&M's and a Stroop waffle or whatever those things are called and some Ginger Ale and I eat it while I'm walking to continue progress and it's just like a **Thanksgiving meal** because it's so amazing and delicious and **now I'm taking the snaky bike trail and heading into the power line climb which I always love** and enjoy and I have so many good memories of this course along with the painful ones like I remember puking over there and that's where I curled into a ball and this is where I started crying last year and this is probably where I lost my *mind* and now this is like a museum tour of the history of my **pain** I'm thinking as **I cruise through the bike trails and head toward the neighborhood** that this race is as good for the *mental* growth as much as the *physical* we really need to get over the stigma and reluctance of working on our brains and hearts just like I know I have a long list to work on and now **I'm focusing on my stride as I cruise through all this amazing scenery through all this beautiful single track** and I'm thinking about **Tahoe** because I love thinking about that experience and keeping it close to my *heart* and being happy about it instead of just missing it I need to keep that spirit alive and keep on *treasure hunting* like I am today I think I'm going to be *smiling* all day today and I keep plugging in my music and it gives me such a boost and I have such a weird mix now on my play list with flute and bagpipes and banjo and rock and folk and bluegrass techno-orchestra and it blows my mind that a bunch of noises put together in a certain way can so

drastically rock my world and get me grooving and now I'm running and I'm trying to resist the idea of writing about this race but I know I never can resist and then of course it hits me and I have my revelation about the write up and I love it I'm going to write the whole thing as one long **run-on** sentence because that's the way this whole thing feels and probably it will be un-readable and I don't care I love it and maybe it will be a better representation of how the race can ebb and flow and roll along and come a little closer to representing how an ULTRA really is which is *a long and slow and streaming grind with lots of little memorable moments that somehow all blend together into one incredible string of good and bad and amazing* and for now I keep on running and **the trail keeps on snaking and keeps on climbing and I know this part well and I reach the top and hit the neighborhood pavement and now I'm staring at houses** and thinking about rooflines and looking for new designs for the new neighborhood we're going to build and new layouts and places to sneak in stairways and the roof span and rafter spacing for the stained glass window shop for the harmonica guy how great is it to keep my brain fresh and stretch it all the time instead of falling into atrophy I know it's not practical to try to do everything at once but it's amazing how many things your brain can be working on while your body is somewhat limited in time and space like **climbing up the power line trail which is very manageable and I make it to the top and run the road and then the course goes straight instead of right for quite a while and it keeps going farther and farther away from the aid station** and I'm starting to question David's course changes or at least question the claim that these changes have made it *easier* but I guess I should have known as I hit the top of Peavine falls and start hearing the *rushing* water and it gives *me a rush* and I'm climbing over all these wet and treacherous rocks and I like to whine about this section but deep down I really love it how it's so dang **rugged and beautiful** and I know David is trying to trick me but I know how this torture chamber works how he maybe changes a few screws or dials from year to year but the principle is still the same to make everything as hard as possible and to break the runner's will but you're not going to get me this time David because I've got a trick of my own because I'm getting *half* the distance and twice the *joy* this time just like *double money, half price* and now for some reason it's just now hitting me that all my business in all my side work has somehow accidentally turned into a pretty successful business without even really trying when that's not a simple accomplishment and it's pretty great and amazing and fulfilling my dream of becoming an artist even though it's construction art it's art with a purpose but also killing me even though I've got customers and cool projects and all I can eat but I

just don't have the time man it's all about time I need to clone myself but who cares about that now because **now I'm at the base of the waterfall and I love this scene so so much it's one of the greatest spots in the park so I keep on rock hopping and admire the scenery and cross the river twice and up the steep climb onto the wide path that takes forever but eventually leads us into the Pavilion** that is the wonderful **Peavine aid station** and I love these guys so I stop and chat a little bit and do another grilled cheese and watermelon *hallelujah* and **I'm off again and winding down the roller coasters to the creek crossing** and I'm just *living* and *being* right *here* right *now* I think I truly have **transcended time and space** and I'm choosing to dwell in a no-frustration zone all day today so only joyful thoughts allowed in fact I predict it and insist on it I'm so happy **I'm letting slope determine the pace and this climb up the back side of Peavine Falls good night that thing goes on forever and the slope is definitely setting my pace if you can call it that** and yes I have transcended time and space but apparently David Tosch is now *bending* time and space and so I'm thinking it's a good thing I transcended it a few minutes ago my gosh that climb just couldn't quit it sure is lucky I'm committed to having a good attitude because otherwise this could get ugly quick and **now I'm stepping over all the endless rocks that make up the ridge trail and I pass a couple people doing a different distance and then a lady comes toward me going the opposite direction and says it's only 3.7 miles back to the cabins and I hate when people tell me distances when I don't want to know and could it really still be that far my goodness all I can do is buckle in and ride it in and so I do I ride the train through misty wet foggy reds and browns I ride and ride and ride and finally land at **Cabin-ville** and hallelujah for a little *break* and change of shirt and try to eat but it won't go down so easy and I can't believe I've got a whole another south loop to go and it's already afternoon and I'm very surprised how *whooped* I feel but there's nothing else gonna fix it besides picking **up** the boot straps and buckling **down** and getting it **done** and so I do **I head back out around the lake and through the gradual roller-coasters** and put my music back in and settle in and remind myself that time and space do not exist and that helps a lot except that quad on the right is having trouble escaping reality by getting stiff poor guy he's probably been trying to protect the tender knee regardless this is not a good sign and the daylight is already waning and I still have a long way to go so so much for finishing in the daylight oh well let's just knock this thing out good night am I *bonking* on a 50 miler absolutely not I insist on staying above water there's no way I'm *bonking* how about we say I'm *lulling* just going through a little lull that**

sounds much better well I guess I have once again proven my skills as a master *under-estimator* I don't know why I'm so dumb always thinking things are going to be easier or faster or smoother than they really are or maybe it's just me over-estimating my own abilities either way it gets exhausting but it doesn't matter because I'm still enjoying all of this even with the slowness and soreness and forever-ness because I'm glad there is some *grind* involved I guess it wouldn't be the same without it and I just need to keep chilling out so **I keep on trucking up the gradual roller-coasters and past the benches and the picnic tables** and I plug a podcast in my ears and listen to a true story about a gang of clowns and firefighters and cops who start a brawl in a brothel and end up almost killing each other now that's a great distraction and before I know it **I'm trucking it down the first gravel road and I love this section so much and have to run it strong no matter how I feel and then I hit the hard left and hop the tree and now I know I'm starting up the long climb between the gravel roads** and run into a guy who's doing the 100 and he's on the *struggle bus* so I hang with him and we talk for a minute and he's really grateful to see another human and I offer him some advice and water and a salt pill and a gu and I stay with him for the entire climb and it's fun to be a support for somebody and not worry about my own pace and **we get to the top** and he thanks me and says now he's going to finish because of me and that seems a little extreme but I've been in his shoes before and I know how much it means to have a little human interaction and to get a little dose of rational thought and optimism when you're drowning and I ask him if he still needs a buddy for a while but he says he's got it from here and I'm glad to hear it because I'm ready to go so **I push hard down the second gravel road which takes me down the single track and past the red light and I come into Terrace Drive** and they have put out lights like a landing strip and there's a lady wearing a flight suit and I'm feeling pretty ok but I can't eat anything and I lie in a lawn chair for exactly 6 minutes with my eyes closed but definitely not sleeping because the music is so loud but maybe it helps to hold still for a minute and try to settle my stomach and slow my breathing down but I can't believe it's getting dark and I still have a long way to go but I'm not going to be able to alter the rotation of the planet so I put on my headlamp and **bust out into the race track and I'm still running a pretty good pace and I get to the paved road in the neighborhood** and I'm feeling pretty gassed and my stomach is 100% toast and I would puke if I could and oh how quickly I have found myself *falling off of the Joy train and landing squarely on the Struggle bus* oh well at least I've been here before and I know how it works when you just have to try to smile and get *comfortable* with being *uncomfortable* and ride it out so

I crawl up the power line and up to the Christmas star all lit up at the top and I can run some of the road at the top of the hill but not all of it and I just keep telling myself I'm definitely not bonking but the *lull* is getting ever stronger man even a 50 can kick your butt on this course feels a lot like a 100 I'm still positive but definitely whooped and not as many *jokes* and *dancing* anymore but I still refuse to look at the time or the mileage but I know neither one of them are going to be encouraging I feel a little bad that I've stopped recording my thoughts on video but it always gets tougher at night and later in the race to make the effort so I guess I'll just have to remember all of this ok no problem so I wrap around the bike trail and end up above the waterfall and I start to hear the *rushing* water and it gives me a huge boost again and I pass a guy doing the 50K and I want to swim in the waterfall pool but don't want to get my clothes wet so I don't exactly need an audience for this as I climb over all the slippery rocks and arrive at the waterfall pool and take my shoes off and roll up my shorts and I walk into the freezing water and kneel down so I can do some shock therapy to the quads and it feels amazing and I gear up again and cross the river and I climb up to **Peavine Falls** Pavilion and try to puke and go to the bathroom sleep at the same time and it's not easy and the aid station is blaring 80's hits and one of the volunteers is dressed like Madonna and I love these guys I ask for a cot and a guy has a sleeping bag I lie in it for 11 minutes with Bon Jovi rocking my dreams and I put some watermelon in my pocket and try to sip some soup and I take off into the darkness I kneel down and try to puke a couple of times with no success I wonder if I will be able to fulfill my goal of keeping all of my **stomach acid** in my body this time around because it seems to be more and more unlikely as I book down to the creek and trudge up the long, long climb up the backside of Peavine and surprisingly it's not that bad because I have expected the worst and the ridge is just as rocky as it was last time but darker now and I feel pretty sick but I'm used to it instead of trying to puke again I take a big drink of water to see if that will do the trick but it stays down so I open a strawberry banana gu and try to eat it even though it sounds repulsive and somehow it doesn't trigger the hurls so I guess I'm getting a couple of calories well that's encouraging c'mon brother let's take this to the house just think how great that smoothie will taste and how that hot bath will feel I try listening to the Moth to distract myself I'm not running much but hiking at a good stiff pace oh my gosh how does this one stretch feel like 30 miles I don't understand it how on earth do I receive so many inspiring thoughts in the first half of a race when I don't really need them and now in the final stretches I got nothing I mean *where are the*

epiphanies when we need them I guess we need to store them up for times like these and so **I make it to the ravine and through 4 more forevers to the hard right turn** I pass an old guy who's struggling more than me and I ask if he's okay and he concurs and I come to a guy going the opposite way and he says he's trying to check on the guy I just passed and then he tells me it's 2 more miles to the finish and I hate him for it he must be lying what a doofus but he means well but its super dark now and might be the middle of the night for all I know and I can't believe this has taken me so long and I guess **I got my money's worth** today because I got all the fun stuff and even some serious grind and that's not easy to do in only 50 miles I suppose the only way to have an *all smiles* race on this course is to bump down to the 25K but not this cowboy maybe when I'm 70 for now **I just keep following this meandering single track and a lot less rocks and elevation but still the endlessness** and I wouldn't say I'm *miserable* but I would say I am definitely experiencing a significant amount of *euphoria reduction* I wouldn't say I'm *under water* but I would say I'm for surely wading into it and it's getting pretty deep right now I really wouldn't mind being at the finish line originally I was worried that at the end of this race I would feel like it wasn't enough but now I can see that I'm good this was plenty of adventure for one day **the trail keeps zigging and zagging and I was just here a few hours ago but it just keeps changing and expanding** and now I'm trying to see where I can go in my mind so I start a new mantra that goes like *smoothie slushie tubby smoothie slushie tubby* and now my head lamp powers down and switches to a dimmer setting and I feel like it's symbolic of my own energy levels in fact this is getting pretty dang hard but I'm not getting frustrated I'm just ***swimming along in a curious state of mild discomfort*** in fact you know what this is this is **patience lessons** and it's something that's hard to have it when you're out of it I guess I should say well David you did it you win again I concede I don't know how you do it even in a 50 miler you've managed to use your dark magic to spoil my dreams and I guess that is your talent you are good at making things hard and we will still be friends but sheesh or maybe I'm just getting old because that is definitely really happening and I don't like it 50 years I've been upon this orb and I am definitely seeing the signs and feeling the pangs and I *object* I want at least another 50 years or even hundreds guaranteed along with steady muscle strength and great eyesight and I might as well add *flight* but ***at least I have today*** and ***I have this trail right here and now and all these trees and roots and rocks and dirt and darkneses*** and how amazing that my knee is functioning after all somehow I willed it to heal itself and somehow it

worked this time and I'm so grateful now my podcast switches over to a new one about the personal horrors of Vietnam and it's heart-wrenching and enthralling but not the kind of pick me up I need right now but it would take so much effort to pull out the phone and change it and I really should be puking **another left hand turn** and it can't be long now but this is dangerous thinking it's the longest 2 miles of my life as usual so it makes it really hard to believe this was only a 50 good night this has required a significant amount of **effort** feels a lot like a hundred and I should be taking one last look at **all these rocks and trees and leaves and darkness this is what makes it amazing and also crazy and now I finally see the signs and it's time to bring it home around the lake and up around the cabins and of course a little sprint into the **Finish line**** and there it goes and that's a wrap and now I get to *rest* thank goodness and finally the first time to really check the time and it's been 15 hours and 18 minutes since I started this morning and my GPS says 59 miles but who really knows how far it was and holy cow that took a lot out of me and I sit in a chair and stare at the dirt for a long time and I really can't eat anything but it's nice to be done and no longer moving turns out Joe finished over three hours ago and I can't believe it he was only 7 minutes behind first place and when the overall winner of a 50 miler comes in at 11 hours and 55 minutes then you know it was a spanker if you think about it this course has taken me almost twice as long as my fastest 50 miler how crazy is that I end up 5th place overall and 1st in the old man division with a *15 hour* finish I can't believe it I sit in my car and sleep against the steering wheel for a while and drive home and try to eat that slushie but the gut won't have it yet and I am incredibly sore and stiff and grateful and that was amazing I guess this whole thing *started like a party and finished like a chore* but I still love all of it even with that heavy tinge of discomfort it's still the **best early December Spa and Retreat** that Oak Mountain has to offer and *I wouldn't trade it for the world.*



