

Lake Tahoe: A First-timer's Report

by Tom Perry

Fred Coleman, 40, of Carmel Valley, California provided the outstanding performance of the sixth annual Lake Tahoe run, with a masters record of 10:01:24 for the 72 mile course. Overall winner Jim King, also of California, clocked the second fastest time ever run on the course, 9:27:48, only seven minutes off Robert Perez' record. Second place went to Rae Clark, who ran the course this year at a pace 1/12 of a second per mile faster than he did last year. All of the four female starters finished, led by San Francisco's Peggy Smith in 13:52:24. Though no record was set, the men's over 50 division was quite competitive, with Rob Volkenand finishing exactly two minutes behind Eugene Silver.

One runner who wasn't in the race to lead any divisions or set any records was Tom Perry, whose primary goal was finishing in good shape. He did that and more, running the sort of race that most middle-of-the-pack runners will envy. What follows is his personal report of this now classic west coast ultra.

The Pepsi of Reno Lake Tahoe 72 mile run takes runners completely around that large lake on the California-Nevada border, 6300 feet above sea level. Only 8 runners finished the inaugural event in 1976, but this year 106 runners gathered in the pre-dawn darkness in Tahoe City.

5:45 am. It's still dark as I await the start of the longest run I've ever attempted. It seems cold, but maybe it's just my nervousness - this race has me scared. My only prior ultra was a 50 miler at sea level, and in addition to the altitude this course has hills, heavy traffic and, I've been warned, severely crowned roads with no shoulders. I'm especially concerned about how my tender knees will cope with the canted surface and the long downhills.

Start. Race director Charlie Mersereau describes the course and gets a nervous laugh as he reminds us to stop after the first lap. The gun misfires and with a verbal "Bang!" we're off. Heavy oncoming traffic forces us into single file, as I try to relax and settle into an effortless pace. Five miles pass in 41 minutes, faster than I had planned. Time for my first feeding. For the rest of the race, my handlers will meet me every 2½ miles. They'll have drink (12 oz of defizzed Pepsi or ERG), food (bananas, M & M's, aplets and cotlets), other aid (aspirin, dry socks, sunscreen, etc.) and encouraging words. Their support and anticipation of my needs will

be instrumental to my successful completion of the run.

Tucson's Wally Shiel joins me for a walk interval as I drink. I learn that we both have the same game plan: to go easy in the early miles, take scheduled walks and walk any steep hills. We both feel the real race will begin after 50 miles.

10 miles, 1:18:36. The pace seems way too fast, and I'm relieved as my handler says that the car's odometer indicates only 9.6 miles. We are working a little harder now, and a few more runners slip by at each planned walk. At 16 miles we encounter the first big hill, and as it steepens we make a tactical decision to walk. It's hard to let the runners ahead of us go, but Wally's company makes the decision easier to stick to. Intellectually I know they will pay for working too hard in these early miles, but still it's hard to curb the competitive urges. In 1½ miles we reach the top of the 500 foot hill. In four miles there is a gentle half-mile climb which we run, pulling back runners who passed us earlier.

20 miles, 2:58:47, 36th. I'm satisfied with the time and feel very fresh. I'm pleased that a bathroom scale indicates no weight loss, but then I've had to urinate about once an hour. At 25 miles we encounter "Anywhere, USA," the gas stations, food stands, etc. of South Lake Tahoe. I find this section depressing; watching for cars at every driveway and hopping on and off the sidewalk seems to sap my energy. But it must be affecting others too, as more runners drift back to us.

30 miles, 4:24. The last ten miles were at an 8:30 pace, and we've each lost about a pound. We're in direct sun now and apply sunscreen as a precaution. We soon enter Nevada and run past the south shore casinos. The scenery improves and I feel somewhat euphoric. Surely I can continue this pace to the finish, after all, it's only 40 more miles. Some of the runners we pass are bare-chested, and beginning to burn.

At 40 miles (5:56) the effort begins to tell, but Wally and I are pleased to still be under 9 minute pace. We now face the crux of the run, a 3 mile, 700 foot climb, followed by an undulating eight mile descent back to the lake. We decide to alternately walk and run, but Wally seems to be going through a bad patch, and wants to walk. I stay with him, encouraging him, and we finally crest the hill, in 20th place. The big up is over and my confidence is now sky high.

Then the long downhill begins and my confidence is quickly shattered. My toes are hammering the front of my shoes. No real damage yet, but I clearly have a problem. Finally we reach our handlers and I change shoes. The relief is instantaneous. After a few more downhill miles, I know the roomier shoes have saved my toenails and my race.

50 miles, 7:31. I take some aspirin to reduce inflammation in my knees, but can't swallow it. A coughing spasm begins, and drinking doesn't seem to help. Will this be the end of my race? It slowly subsides though as I jog slowly, and soon Wally and I resume our regular pace. We're now 15th, and continually moving up. I'm concerned about Wally though, he seems to be tiring. After more than 50 miles together, I want us to finish together.

Despite our problems, by 60 miles we're back on 9 minute pace (8:59:24). My quads are sore but I still feel full of energy and eager to continue. As we start to run again after our 62½ mile feeding, Wally tells me to go on ahead. I feel sad to lose his companionship, but relieved that he told me not to wait for him.

Now, the race really begins. Less than ten miles to go, and I feel strong, surging ahead to catch a runner as he stops to meet his handler. Someone yells that I'm in fifth place. Could it be true? For the first time I notice the altitude; eight minute miles seem to take the effort of sub-seven's at sea level. One more hill, and then the 70 mile checkpoint (10:28). I concentrate on keeping my form as all systems are trying to shut down in anticipation of stopping. Just a few more yards. Drive with the arms; run through the finish. 10:45:15. I'm delighted to learn of my 5th place finish, and walk a little with my wife as I wait for my new friend Wally. Finally, he comes into sight, running strongly to the finish in 8th place.

My good place belies the fact that the top 4 runners were clearly in a class by themselves. Forty-four minutes separated me from fourth place. But my time was probably within the reach of many of the runners I passed. What was the difference? I think the following points were the key to my success in this race:

1. A very conservative approach in the early miles (the slowest 10 mile section was between miles 10 and 20).
2. Use of planned walks to forestall fatigue in the running muscles.
3. Heavy consumption of fluids and easy-to-digest carbohydrates during the race.
4. Pre-planning to handle all conceivable problems (weather

changes, sunburn, blisters, chafing, etc.) and experienced handlers who could anticipate most of my needs.

Next year I hope to train a little harder, use the same basic approach outlined above, and close the gap with the front runners. Other middle of the pack runners can do the same.

Pepsi of Reno Lake Tahoe 72 Miler

Tahoe City, Cal. Sept. 18, 1981

1. Jim King,24	9:27:48
2. Rae Clark,28	9:37:32
3. Jim Pellon,31	9:48:16
4. Fred Coleman,40	10:01:24
5. Tom Perry,36	10:45:15
6. Ronald Kovacs,42	10:54:48
7. David Nieman,31	11:03:43
8. Wally Shiel,29,AZ	11:06:18
9. Joe Williams,25	11:23:13
10. Dan Brannen,28,PA	11:38:41
11. John Bandur,43,WA	11:39:18
12. Joe Schieffer,30	11:41:53
13. David Innes,33	11:42:24
14. Mike Williams,29	11:43:29
15. Eugene Silver,50	11:47:17
16. Rob Volkenand,50,OR	11:49:17
17. Michael Schulz,33,NV	11:54:12
18. Monty Thompson,21	12:16:43
19. Boyd Hartley,36	12:16:59
20. David Hudson,33	12:17:36
21. Jeff Collins,27	12:29:25
22. Jack Healing,33,TX	12:32:37
Jack Sheridan,43,TX	12:32:37
24. Stuart Honse,39	12:37:01
25. Doug Towne,31	12:40:10
Steve Jaber,28	12:40:10
27. Tom Magrann,33	12:43:32
28. Elliot Eisenbud,38	12:47:54
29. Peter Richards,46,NM	12:48:21
30. Bob King,39	13:06:15
31. Edward Dux,34	13:08:52
32. Hans Albrecht,33,OR	13:12:44
33. Gerald Rockwell,33	13:18:40
34. Tom McManus,45	13:21:53
35. James Perry,42	13:23:15
36. Peter Coffin,36,UT	13:24:50
Robert Closson,43	13:24:50
38. Andy Jensen,27	13:28:50
39. Doug Rasmussen,26	13:30:10
40. Dick Forehand,35	13:33:20
41. Jack Resh,49	13:35:04
42. Juan Martinez,27,AZ	13:45:35
43. Gordon Hall,49	13:51:58
44. Larry Jackson,47	13:52:24
Peggy Smith,34	13:52:24
46. Delbert Pearce,48	14:01:45
47. John Jordan,36	14:01:58
48. Dale Schutte,47,AZ	14:10:06
49. James Honig,31	14:15:40
50. Ralph Duckett,37	14:20:53
51. Dean Jones,49,WA	14:23:08
Bill Keller,37	14:23:08
53. Dick Collins,48	14:31:10

54. John Buenfil,34	14:41:10
55. Edwin Garrigues,43	14:48:05
56. Gary Aglietti,37,NV	14:48:08
57. Dave Roadruck,36	15:15:50
58. Steve Galvan,43,NV	15:17:49
59. Robert Myers,53	15:17:51
60. Keith Pflieger,32	15:20:59
Ted Martinez,26	15:20:59
62. Gary Dow,36,UT	15:23:20
Paul Cushing,41,UT	15:23:20
64. Dennis Coffee,32	15:28:44
65. Raul Perez,40	15:44:01
66. John Squires,50	15:46:58
67. Michael Price,31,TX	15:51:20
68. Marilyn Deaton,34	15:55:00
69. Bill Beddor,53,MN	15:58:49
70. Carol La Plant,34	16:09:06
71. John Cover,50	16:10:18
72. Thomas Lowman,40	16:17:39
73. Gloria Bassler,45	16:25:06
74. Dave Witthaus,22	16:33:25
75. Leon Ransom,44	16:56:42
76. Joseph Campi,33	17:06:52
77. Michael Tselentis,54	17:14:25
78. Sherman Welpton,47	17:25:55
79. Steve Cole,67	17:26:45
106 starters	

Sierra Crest Endurance Challenge

Squaw Valley, Cal. Oct. 10, 1981

50 mi

1. Stuart Smith, 40	7:22
2. Mike Owen,28	8:19
3. Don Chorley,47	9:04
4. Michael Berg,27	9:45
5. Jeannie Wood,30	11:40
6. Millie Young,30	11:47
7. Melinda Creel,24	12:06
Steven Tech,25	12:06

75 mi

1. Dennis Coffee	18:29
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Because of an unexpected snowstorm, the run had to be moved from the treacherous Pacific Crest Trail to a hastily improvised loop on roads through Squaw Valley, Truckee and Tahoe City. Nonetheless, the runners experienced heavy rain, with snow as they climbed to the high point, 7200 foot Brockway Summit. Since this was labeled a Survival Run, the contestants were required to carry ten pounds of gear, including a sleeping bag, tube tent, food and first aid equipment. Amazingly, six of the nine finishers had never completed a 50 mile race before, much less one of this difficulty. One who had was Dennis Coffee, who was the only runner who elected to complete the 75 mile run. He finished at 3:30 in the morning in a heavy snowfall, with a frozen beard.

Charles Mersereau

Baker to Bellingham Race

Mt. Baker to Bellingham, Wash.
55 mi Aug. 1, 1981

1. Bill Iffrig	7:06:03
2. Ike Hessler	7:55:56
3. Ken Porter	7:58:05
4. Cecil Stearns	9:07:09
5. Stanley Nakashima	9:50:27
Gary Lerner	9:50:27
7. Margaret Hackett	10:15:50
8. Keo Lani	10:49:54

South Hell 50.7 Mile Race

Camarillo, Calif. Aug. 30, 1981

1. Jim Pellon	6:14:24
2. Bert Meyer,CT	7:17:30
3. Del Pearce	7:38:19
4. John Richards	7:40:00
5. Tommie Jackson	7:58:00
6. Boyd Hartley	8:06:27
7. Bob King	8:06:27
8. Bob Closson	8:29:32
9. Lee Freeman	8:46:44
10. Gary Rutenberg	8:52:00
11. Bob Hodson	9:32:30
12. Mark Birdsong	10:52:00
13. Leon Ransom	11:57:00
14 starters	

This race is run in conjunction with a 5-man relay, and Jim Pellon gave the top relay team a good race for the first half. Only one team beat him as he set a new course record. The weather was nearly ideal for the first five hours, with heavy overcast and spotty fog, but the day became a real scorcher later. We were expecting a hot spell, which frightened away most of the teams but seems to have encouraged the individual runners.

Connie Rodewald

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