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LEADVILLE 100



MATT TRAPPE

The dazzle of the finish line, awaiting winner Thomas Lorblanchet

BOOM AND BUST

by Donald Buraglio

Boom and Bust. It's the classic tale of mining towns throughout the United States – and for those that are located in the Rocky Mountains, the highs seem loftier, and the lows even more depressing than the rest. Among those, few have seen as many ups and downs as Leadville, Colorado.

Like many other mining towns, Leadville reinvented itself in the last half of the 20th Century. However, it wasn't skiing or golf resorts or casinos that drove the turnaround – it was an ultramarathon. More specifically, it was the Leadville 100, otherwise known as the Race Across the Sky, which has attained mythic stature in its 30-year history.

Leadville is one of the oldest 100-milers in the world, and with an average elevation above 10,000 feet, is certainly one of the most challenging. And thanks to one modern-day cowboy, a handful of ancient natives, and a runaway national bestseller, the race has captivated ultrarunners like no other, and now draws more than a thousand hopefuls looking to test themselves in the Colorado mountains each summer.

Clearly, Leadville's fortunes have boomed thanks to ultrarunning (as well as mountain biking – more on that shortly), but a couple of years ago the race encountered a critical juncture that some lamented as the path to ruin. In 2010, Ken Chlouber and Merilee Maupin, the

co-founders and sole owners of Leadville for 28 years, sold the race to Life Time Fitness, a Minnesota-based company better known for its empire of health clubs than involvement in endurance sports. Or, to simplify the deal as many ultrarunners did afterward, often with alarm in their voices: Leadville has gone corporate.

Many in the ultrarunning community perceived an atrocity: a beloved Mom-and-Pop institution handed over to a faceless profit-driven corporate Goliath who couldn't possibly appreciate or love the race as much as the participants do. But is Leadville really all that different now from how it was back in the old days? Has Life Time changed the inherent nature of the event, or do they plan to do so in the future? And is corporate ownership inevitably a bad thing for the sport of ultrarunning?

The fate of the Leadville 100 could be an important predictor of what may be store for other ultramarathons across the country. It's a virtual certainty that Leadville won't be the last ultra that Life Time acquires; the company has steadily acquired major endurance events from triathlons to mountain bike festivals, and is "always looking for opportunities to expand our event portfolio," according to Kimo Seymour, Life Time's Vice President of Athletic Events. "100 mile events require athletes to commit to

being healthy in every facet of their lives, from nutrition to fitness to strength and their mental toughness. The Leadville Trail 100 exemplifies the core values of our company."

In a recent *Outside* magazine profile, Life Time CEO Bahram Akradi was straightforward about his intent to merge the indoor and outdoor sports arenas in hopes of growing the athletic events and tapping into a new stream of potential health club members. Life Time's goal is to expand its overall race revenue tenfold over the next several years, and is targeting other high-profile, highly coveted (but as of this writing, undisclosed) endurance events to help achieve it.

Now that a couple of years have passed, the initial questions surrounding the Leadville 100 deal are certainly worth examining further. But in order to better appreciate where Leadville is now and where it's heading in the future, it's critical to understand its past.

RACE HISTORY

The story has been told enough times to have the aura of folklore: a hardscrabble Leadville miner who spent the majority of his life turning big rocks into little ones suddenly found himself out of a job after the town's economic lifeline, the Climax molybdenum mine, closed its doors for good. The miner comes up with an



Along the high altitude allée



A crowd gathers at the Twin Lakes aid station



On toward Hope



The stream crossing this year was mild

idea for a race that's so preposterous nobody takes him seriously, and eventually sees it grow into one of the most iconic events in the world. That miner, Ken Chlouber, still recalls how bleak the outlook was back in the beginning.

"There were 5,000 people living in Leadville in 1982," he says, "and the mine employed 3,200 of them." Almost overnight, the highest incorporated town in North America also had the country's highest unemployment rate. Leadville had survived many cycles of boom and bust through gold and silver rushes during its 100-year history, but losing the molybdenum mine threatened to turn the community into a ghost town.

From the beginning, Chlouber envisioned the Leadville 100 for "one singular purpose: to support the economic vitality of this community." He wanted to create something that would highlight Leadville's two greatest assets – its history and its mountains – and bring some much-needed revenue into the community. He decided on a 100-mile event instead of something more manageable like a marathon for a fairly simple reason. "The key was to get people to come to town and stay overnight; with a 100-miler, they wouldn't have any other choice," he says.

During the progression from vision to reality, Chlouber had three non-negotiable criteria for the race:

- It had to start and end in Leadville.
- It had to have Leadville in the name to help promote the town.
- No money would be taken from the local business community to support it.

Above all else, the race's sole mission was to serve and support the community. Chlouber recruited a small band of like-minded partners – one of whom was a local travel agent named Merilee Maupin, who would become the race's first director and a 50/50 partner in managing the race with Chlouber over the next 28 years.

The first Leadville 100 took place in 1983 with 45 runners, and to many people's surprise (most

notably including the local medical community), nearly half of the runners actually finished. The event was televised in 1985, widening its exposure and drawing this strange new breed of extreme endurance athletes to the town in increasing numbers – all of whom were compelled to stay for a few nights, or even a few weeks, and pour some money into the local economy.

In the mid-1990s, the race expanded its profile with a couple of key milestones. The first was somewhat inadvertent, as Leadville became an experimental showcase for the reclusive Tarahumara Indians, and turned into the battleground for one of the most epic footraces of all time: the showdown between the Tarahumara and American ultrarunning legend Ann Trason that would be chronicled many years later by Christopher McDougall in *Born to Run*.

The other development was definitely intentional. In 1994, Chlouber was persuaded to create a mountain bike event similar to the 100-mile footrace. Understanding the surging popularity of mountain biking, and knowing that drawing more 25- to 45-year-old men with disposable income was a great thing for the community, the Leadville 100 MTB race was born. From a race development standpoint, Leadville had achieved liftoff. Over the next 15 years, more events were added – the Leadville Race Series now boasts nine distinct races – with each one bearing the Leadville name and supporting the Leadville community.

Every step of the way, the mission of the race remained the same, but the scope now allowed Chlouber to effect changes he hadn't imagined. He established a nonprofit called the Leadville 100 Legacy Fund that has directed hundreds of thousands of dollars to Lake County needs such as community park development, creation of recreational trails, youth baseball and basketball league sponsorship, annual Christmas gifts for at-risk children, and scholarships for graduating high school seniors. The local impact is critical to Chlouber. "These races are extremely personal

to me," he says, largely due to the remarkable bond that exists between race and community.

MAKING THE DEAL

It was the MTB race that first attracted someone who would become a prominent player in the Leadville story. Bahram Akradi, CEO of Life Time Fitness, competed in the 2008 event and gradually developed a friendship with Chlouber. Akradi's commitment to the race series grew more each year; he returned to Leadville to compete in both the running and biking events, and Life Time became a first-tier sponsor of the series. In 2011, Akradi went all-in, entering the notorious Leadman competition which requires participation in five series events including the 100-mile MTB race and 100-mile run. (He missed the finish line cutoff of the run, but "unofficially" completed the course in 30 hours and 45 minutes.)

By the time Akradi attempted to run Leadville, his company had already assumed ownership of the race. The deal went down in 2010, but not before Ken Chlouber had declined other offers. He had been contemplating a succession plan for quite a while by that point, "especially when all my birthdays began starting with 7s." His goal was to hand the race over to an organization that would sustain the original mission. He knew his and Merilee's time at the helm was coming to a close; the question he asked himself was, "Do we pick and shape the change that's coming, or just let it happen after we're gone?"

Chlouber also wanted "the grit, guts, and determination of Leadville to carry on with whoever continued in my place." In other words, it was never about the money – and he became adept at identifying when potential suitors were only focused on dollar signs. They turned down a sizeable offer from a group Chlouber only identifies as, "A venture capital organization that had great plans to expand the races, increase attendance, and make a ton of money." He mentioned this offer to his friend Bahram Akradi, and shortly afterward conversations be-

gan in earnest for turning the Leadville series over to Life Time Fitness.

The two men had become close friends by then, and Chlouber is "totally convinced it's not a money thing" for Life Time. "Bahram truly wants to be involved in the Leadville community," he says. Considering that Life Time is a billion-dollar company and that the entire Leadville Race Series budget is less than a frac-

tion of one percent of the company's revenue, Chlouber makes a valid point. More important to him, though, is the character of the man in charge. "I couldn't have picked anybody better to turn the race over to," he states. "He has the same mindset as the miners in this area had 150 years ago." Coming from a Leadville resident, there's no higher praise than that.

THE NEW BOSS: SAME AS THE OLD BOSS

Asked what his role with the Leadville 100 is now, Chlouber replies, "I'm involved in any way I want to be." It's exactly the kind of succession plan he dreamed of: the race remains in the hands of Leadville residents, with funding and logistical support provided by the corporation. The cowboy doesn't have any plans to ride into the sunset; speaking about his and Maupin's con-

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Traditional prayer flags greet runners atop Hope Pass

tinued involvement, Chlouber states, "I don't see us ever being away from the race at all."

Maupin is now officially the Race Director Emeritus, and presides over race weekend as usual, greeting runners at the Friday pre-race briefing, sending them off at the start, and placing medals around their necks at the finish. Chlouber planned to be at this year's pre-race meeting as well, but missed it while tending to a brother who passed away just before race day. (Keeping the pre-race pep talk tradition in the family, Ken's son Cole delivered a rousing speech to the packed house on Friday.) Chlouber made it back for the end of the race, and offered a heartfelt apology at the awards ceremony for his temporary absence.

The series is operated entirely by locals. As Maupin describes it, "Everybody who works for

the race is a bona fide Leadvilleite." Race Director Josh Colley worked in the county parks department before getting involved with the Leadville Series (another one who came via the MTB races) in 2002. Shannon Gipson, a local teacher, is the registration coordinator and the race's only other full-time employee. All of the key players who assemble throughout the year to organize, promote, and manage the event are Leadville residents – and most of them also participate in the series events when they're not required to work on race day.

Of course, this group still has the benefit of Ken and Merilee's expertise to draw upon whenever it's needed. RD Colley says that stepping into the role "was pretty painless, because all of Ken and Merilee's arrangements were solidly in place." In addition, Colley benefits from 30 to 40 so-called

"VIP volunteers" who return to Leadville every year to captain aid stations or direct other key support teams as race day gets closer. Leadville residents support the race in droves by catering to runners in town beforehand and volunteering on course during the event.

To its credit, Life Time Fitness recognizes the importance of local control, and they aren't in any hurry to see either of the race founders exit. Company VP Seymour states that "these are very special events, put on by special people, in a very special location. Ken and Merilee will be a part of the team until they decide they are done, but we will always have local race management. It's key to these events that we maintain that 'Leadville feel.'"

As to Life Time's contribution to the event, Maupin summarizes it this way: "We had taken

LEADVILLE TRAIL 100 | LEADVILLE, COLORADO | AUGUST 18 | ▲ 3.3

100 MILES

100 MILES							
1. Thomas Lorblanchet, 32, FRA	16:29:28	30. Ken Long, 34	22:43:17	60. Troy Frost, 46, MT	24:06:08	90. Alejandro Lopez Reyes, 43, MEX	25:42:51
2. Zeke Tiernan, 36	16:44:20	31. Eric Truhe, 37	22:47:10	61. Jacky Greenhill, 35	24:11:32	91. Emily Richards, 32, CA	25:46:13
3. Nick Clark, 38	17:11:16	32. Ryan Thompson, 31, SC	22:52:20	62. Sean Weststine, 36	24:15:37	92. Matt Scotton, 43, IA	25:52:42
4. Anton Krupicka, 29	17:21:59	33. Harsha Nagaraj, 38	22:58:19	63. John Fegyveresi, 35, PA	24:17:30	93. Tim Pacitto, 33, MI	25:53:15
5. Jay Aldous, 51, UT	17:28:39	34. Christopher Cappellini, 46, MA	23:07:42	64. Travis McIntosh, 36	24:21:59	94. Craig Wheeler, 50, KY	26:01:42
6. Andrew Catalano, 25, NJ	17:28:39	35. Robert Mueller, 25, UT	23:08:31	65. Jeremy Pennington, 36, IL	24:22:34	95. David Haase, 44, WI	26:03:41
7. Brandon Stapanowich, 27	19:32:22	36. Jeremy Suwinski, 33, UT	23:08:31	66. Kevin Koch, 37	24:23:12	96. Andy Wooten, 44	26:05:28
8. Tina Lewis, 39	19:33:45	37. Adrian Lazar Adler, 32, VI	23:09:51	67. Christopher Westerman, 32	24:26:23	97. Zachary Szablewski, 22, OH	26:05:50
9. Michael Arnstein, 35, NY	19:33:45	38. Kieran McCarthy, 34	23:13:15	68. Micky Gilbert, 41	24:32:40	98. Chad Brackelsberg, 39	26:12:11
10. Craig Howie, 35	19:50:11	39. Eric Pope, 49, NM	23:15:16	69. Lane Vogel, 35, FL	24:35:06	99. Shaheen Sattar, 28, TX	26:15:53
11. Tim Waggoner, 40	20:12:36	40. Woody Anderson, 37	23:18:09	70. Scott Bajer, 37, AZ	24:35:25	100. Paul Schoenlaub, 53, MO	26:16:52
12. Matthew Curtis, 36	20:17:15	41. Darcy Africa, 37	23:20:06	71. Ben Zeiger, 29	24:38:19	101. Jordan Wirths-Brock, 28	26:20:01
13. Troy Howard, 39	20:32:01	42. Jen Segger, 31, BC	23:26:02	72. Jason Lippman, 40, TX	24:41:45	102. Bret Crock, 54	26:27:41
14. Elizabeth Howard, 40, TX	20:44:08	43. Blake Benke, 35, CT	23:28:29	73. Donald Beuke, 36	24:43:25	103. Scott Swaney, 43	26:28:25
15. Ashley Nordell, 32, OR	20:47:58	44. Harry Harcrow, 45	23:32:23	74. Travis Mattern, 38	24:43:42	104. Jason Antin, 29	26:32:18
16. Charles Corfield, 54	20:57:12	45. Todd Schultz, 43, AZ	23:35:26	75. Kevin Silsby, 45	24:44:06	105. Jim Petterson, 45	26:33:50
17. Paul Terranova, 38, TX	21:04:47	46. Mike Le Roux, 36, AUS	23:37:11	76. Keith Levasseur, 34, MD	24:44:59	106. Adrian Korosec, 41, AZ	26:35:22
18. Aliza Lapiere, 32, VT	21:04:47	47. Ted Herget, 38, AR	23:38:14	77. Mark Wallace, 50	24:49:23	107. Kurt Madden, 56, CA	26:37:26
19. Robert Harem, 28, TN	21:26:51	48. Eric Bohn, 31, AZ	23:46:42	78. Carrie Stafford, 33	24:49:31	108. Joseph Campanelli, 26, UT	26:38:56
20. Todd Gangelhoff, 40	21:32:11	49. Matt Meckenstock, 26, WA	23:47:10	79. Valerie Wrenholt, 37, NC	24:49:54	109. Dana Kragacy, 27	26:39:16
21. Brian Tinder, 32, AZ	21:36:04	50. Jeffrey Spencer, 30	23:48:05	80. Doug Newton, 35	24:50:37	110. Smokey Burgess, 40	26:42:04
22. Jamil Coury, 27, AZ	21:45:44	51. Garrett Graubins, 39	23:49:35	81. Josh Dalley, 29	24:51:48	111. Andrew Wellman, 35	26:44:52
23. Ryan Cooper, 38	22:06:48	52. Tom Brennan, 41, OK	23:51:47	82. Jeremy Ebel, 27	25:03:17	112. Molly Behunio, 48, UT	26:46:08
24. Joseph Berg, 34	22:14:37	53. Mike Neal, 36	23:51:54	83. Harry Hamilton, 52, NJ	25:08:34	113. Margaret Ochs, 37, NM	26:46:22
25. Jason Koop, 33	22:17:46	54. Scott Klopfenstein, 41	23:53:32	84. Chris Wright, 40	25:12:59	114. David Peterman, 49, OH	26:47:22
26. Bryan Williams, 37	22:19:50	55. Bob Ayers, Jr, 52, VT	23:54:13	85. Jay Hunt, 32	25:26:46	115. Paul Hooge, 49	26:49:05
27. Michael Leblanc, 33, BC	22:35:23	56. Matt Urbanski, 31, WA	23:55:03	86. Jay Smithberger, 43, OH	25:29:42	116. Erin Clark, 35, UT	26:50:14
28. Kyle Pietras, 25	22:35:23	57. Bob Gerenz, 44, MN	23:56:01	87. Garrett Ownbey, 23	25:37:27	117. Kattin Silva, 42, NM	26:50:27
29. Javier Montero, 49, MEX	22:40:29	58. Alyssa Wildboer, 33	24:03:06	88. Francois Trocha, 46	25:39:21	118. Matt Cecil, 30, BC	26:51:06
		59. Marty Wacker, 41	24:05:17	89. Brad Whittle, 46	25:42:09	119. Rod Bolls, 37	26:51:30



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Luke Nelson wearing the Alpha during his Zion Traverse. Photo: Fredrik Mannster

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The rocky back side of Hope



Climbing up from the Winfield turnaround

the race as far as we could go as a Mom and Pop." For the race to thrive into the 21st Century, it needed to change with the times – and the pace and scope of that change was more than Chlouber and Maupin could handle.

Consider the simple aspect of registration. "In the old days," Maupin recalls, "We knew everybody in the race. I could tell you their names and addresses." At the dawn of the Internet era, as races filled earlier and grew larger, and entrants flocked to Leadville from all corners of the world, it was too much for one person to handle.

The race's increasing popularity was also an increasing source of anxiety for Maupin every year as the event drew closer. "We had a habit of doing things at the last minute," she says, "and with the size of the race, it was a bit harrowing" thinking of things that might be over-

looked. With ample resources and ready manpower, Life Time is able to handle the logistics of the race in ways that Mom and Pop could only dream of.

Life Time also provides a vast network of marketing opportunities that attract more and more people to the race series each year. They run promotional videos in their clubs, recruit new sponsors to the race series, and increase exposure of the "Leadville brand" all over the world. The MTB series in particular has exploded, with qualifying events in several states, each of them carrying the Leadville name and ultimately bringing money straight back to Lake County, Colorado.

To Chlouber and Maupin, that's the greatest benefit of their new partnership. Life Time Fitness has fully embraced the mission of sup-

porting the Leadville community, most notably through the Legacy Fund. This spring, the Foundation awarded \$1,000 scholarships to every graduating Lake County High School senior who was continuing his or her education in any post-secondary setting. As the series grows and more people are drawn to Leadville throughout the year, the entire community thrives – which was really the primary goal all along.

WHAT LIES AHEAD

Revival of a nearly dormant community is one thing; rapid expansion of a beloved ultramarathon is something altogether different. Among ultrarunners, the primary concern about Leadville today is that the race has simply grown too big. More than 1,000 runners toed the start line this past August; even with Leadville's customary high drop rate – this year only

45 percent finished – that's still an awful lot of runners on a frequently narrow, occasionally treacherous out-and-back course. In some ways, the Leadville 100 has become a victim of its own popularity.

According to the organizers, the foreseeable future is likely to play out much like the past year did. Race Director Colley reports that the U.S. Forest Service caps the number of people on the trail at 850, so factoring in a certain percentage of pre-race drops results in a signup capacity of 1,100 to 1,200, just as it was in 2012. The difference is going to be how quickly those slots fill up. As recently as four years ago, you could enter the August race in early summertime; this year it sold out the second week of January.

Ironically, considering that it's one of the toughest 100-milers around, Leadville is also one of the easiest to enter. There's no qualification standard, or even any requirement to have completed another ultra beforehand. There's no volunteer requirement, and no lottery to turn hopeful runners away. And as long as Ken Chlouber's around, that's the way it's going to stay.

"By God, if you think you're tough enough to run 100 miles, I'm with you, and I'll do everything I can to help you," he says. Chlouber detests any barrier to entry, because "It isn't the cowboy way! If you want to try this race, you shouldn't have to prove your ability to anybody but yourself."

Chlouber is even tolerant of those who don't realize what they're getting themselves into. "There isn't anybody who shouldn't enter," he explains. "If someone starts this race and is unable to finish, I want them to light a fire of motivation to come back next year and complete the whole course." As long as that person enters in time the following year, presumably.



Women's champion and eighth overall, Tina Lewis on Sugarloaf

Interestingly, both Chlouber and Colley mentioned the same primary factor in assessing whether the race ever becomes too big: "It's all about the race experience."

THE LEADVILLE EXPERIENCE

So what is it like to run across the sky with 1,000 other people?

Before the event, Leadville looks like any oth-

er small town race. Check-in and bib pick-up takes all of 15 minutes (although they do route you through the Leadville Race Series gift shop at the end, just like when you're exiting Space Mountain at Disneyland). You can park right across the street from the 6th Street Gym before the pre-race meeting. (However, once inside, the gym is packed to the rafters, and many participants have to stand throughout the meeting. RD

120. Brian Passenti, 38	26:52:31	152. Thaddeus Gilliam, 27, GA	27:43:41	184. Andrew Reiff, 39	28:19:12	216. Joshua Winter, 38	28:41:49
121. Christopher Norcia, 44	26:52:36	153. Vlad Henzl, 33, NM	27:44:32	185. Joel Dekanich, 41	28:19:41	217. Brian Oestrike, 33, NY	28:42:42
122. Morgan Jason, 37	26:58:04	154. Podog Vogler, 46, AR	27:44:47	186. Junko Kazukawa, 49	28:20:14	218. Matt Anfang, 28, WI	28:42:58
123. Annon Piegras, 35, AB	27:07:23	155. Carrie Dalbec, 40, TX	27:47:06	187. Benjamin Hauschulz, 27	28:20:20	219. Kurt Wilson, 33, NC	28:43:05
124. Shane Anderson, 36	27:07:32	156. Todd Duncan, 42	27:49:12	188. Matthew Watkins, 33	28:20:58	220. Molly Barnes, 43	28:43:20
125. Kirk Apt, 50	27:07:58	157. Daniel Evans, 34	27:50:11	189. Joe Seracuse, 50	28:21:05	221. Matthew Berdine, 33	28:43:25
126. Ryan Jones, 33, PA	27:09:02	158. Ken Gordon, 47, NM	27:53:09	190. Ryan Guldan, 28	28:21:35	222. Jeannie McCurnin, 56, IA	28:43:27
127. Mike Lall, 31, GBR	27:10:45	159. Keith Straw, 57, PA	27:53:09	191. Dale Humphrey, 53, MN	28:22:48	223. Timothy Bishop, 36	28:43:56
128. Paul Smith, 56	27:13:01	160. Tim Chamecki, 37, UT	27:53:53	192. Matthew Deneen, 35	28:23:03	224. Ivars Ragainis, 32, OH	28:44:38
129. Elizabeth Davis, 32, AZ	27:15:02	161. Phil Atkinson, 40, WY	27:54:31	193. Jamen Nelson, 28, UT	28:23:54	225. Erik Richardson, 34, MI	28:45:17
130. Jake Jones, 39	27:17:01	162. Megan Sweeney, 31	27:55:45	194. Neil Blake, 47, NM	28:26:09	226. Chris Boyack, 42	28:45:24
131. James Holland, 36, TN	27:18:50	163. Brandon Worthington, 27	27:56:05	195. Andreas Aguirre, 33, CA	28:27:12	227. Lori Enlow, 39, OK	28:45:35
132. John Byrne, 47, IA	27:22:17	164. Paul Turner, 49, AR	27:57:21	196. Adam McRoberts, 37, WI	28:28:00	228. Richard Brown, 43, LA	28:45:41
133. Rick Fountain, 42, IA	27:22:17	165. Rob Parish, 35	27:58:01	197. Jay Baker, 51, SC	28:30:12	229. Amelia Jaxtilla, 45	28:46:03
134. Dan Boyle, 48, CA	27:23:22	166. Daniel Labrecque, 56, NC	27:58:48	198. Jason Zakaras, 29, NE	28:30:54	230. Charles Howard, 35	28:46:24
135. Paul Tucker, 39	27:23:38	167. James Kaminski, 30	28:00:56	199. Ray Solis, 43	28:31:12	231. Timothy Barry, 51	28:46:52
136. Robert Howard, 25	27:26:28	168. Sheri Foster, 39, AB	28:01:40	200. Donald Buraglio, 41, CA	28:33:03	232. Tom Wroblewski, 53, CA	28:47:46
137. Vishal Sahni, 32, DC	27:28:03	169. Russell Valdez, 52	28:02:01	201. Thaddeus Meyer, 33, MD	28:33:19	233. Scooter Smith, 22	28:48:18
138. Michael Towe, 42, CT	27:28:57	170. Stephen England, 32, NY	28:02:40	202. Kelly Agnew, 39, FL	28:33:52	234. Everett Carroll, 19, AZ	28:48:30
139. Michelle Halske, 43, WA	27:29:11	171. TR Maloney, 44	28:02:55	203. Filip Boelen, 35	28:34:19	235. Tom Perry, 57, UT	28:49:14
140. Brandon Fuller, 37	27:29:17	172. Brian Harnos, 49, UT	28:05:37	204. Humberto Yelaza, 37	28:34:43	236. Beck Hubert, 54, DEU	28:49:40
141. Victor Zuniga, 33, CRI	27:29:22	173. Vasiliou Gerasopoulos, 38	28:07:41	205. Meghan Spieker, 27	28:34:46	237. Samantha Waggett, 46	28:50:12
142. Joan Hellmann, 41, AZ	27:32:23	174. Trevor Gates, 31, TX	28:08:08	206. Paul Rapinz, 42	28:35:19	238. Jeff Friedman, 29, IA	28:50:58
143. Michael Lamond, 38	27:34:30	175. Larry Pearson, 51, TX	28:09:14	207. Enrique Maldonado, 44	28:35:24	239. Sophia Wharton, 42, KS	28:51:01
144. Peter Bianco, 30, IN	27:35:03	176. Dan O'Connell, 34	28:10:26	208. Brian Manley, 48	28:36:38	240. Jason Romero, 42	28:52:08
145. Ben Gilbert, 39, NE	27:36:04	177. Richard Webster, 45, CH	28:12:46	209. Matthew Grund, 35, GA	28:38:16	241. Aiden Costello, 32	28:52:18
146. Nicholas Davis, 23	27:37:44	178. Ross Moreland, 29, FI	28:12:47	210. Tim Urbine, 32	28:38:16	242. Anthony Parillo, 38, MA	28:53:35
147. Jason Vieth, 39	27:41:24	179. Eric Pence, 46	28:13:07	211. Jessica Miller, 34	28:38:29	243. Joel Martin, 32	28:53:39
148. Brian Costlow, 38, TN	27:41:29	180. Drew Weiman, 28	28:13:15	212. Jason Thieme, 34	28:39:00	244. Todd Scott, 48, MI	28:54:01
149. Christopher Dale, 34	27:42:06	181. Stephen Gartside, 47	28:14:58	213. Laurie Nakaguchi, 42	28:39:05	245. Ron Hammett, 42, NV	28:54:16
150. Kara Henry, 27	27:42:16	182. Johann Aberger, 34	28:16:46	214. Zach Allen, 33	28:40:08	246. Jason Coleman, 34, MO	28:55:03
151. Marta Fisher, 37, OR	27:42:38	183. Matt Gant, 25	28:16:50	215. Sean Churchill, 46	28:41:08	247. Will Fortin, 27, WY	28:56:03

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THE PERFECT BALANCE OF CUSHION AND SUPPORT

PHOTO: GREGGON/STANLEY

Colley reports they'll probably switch to a larger auditorium next year.)

Glancing around town, you'll find handfuls of runners congregated in front of the county courthouse, or in coffee shops and diners on Harrison Street discussing race plans and other anxieties prior to disbanding in hopes of getting a bit of sleep.

On the start line, the atmosphere is absolutely electric. Bright lights and rock music overpower the 4:00 a.m. darkness, and everybody in the start corral is a powder keg of nervous energy. The shotgun blasts and the crowd roars to send you on your way, and the road out of town is lined with cheerleading residents (many of them in pajamas) to encourage you into your adventure.

The first five miles are primarily on wide, flat dirt roads, so there's plenty of room to settle into your pace before cruising comfortably around the single-track perimeter of Turquoise Lake. Once the sun comes up and you've reached the Mayqueen aid station, there's no longer any difficulty in getting around people.

About those people ... they're everywhere you look. Unlike other 100-milers, you can never fully disappear at Leadville. You constantly see other runners ahead and behind on the trail, even after day turns to night and the DNF count climbs into the hundreds. If you're looking for those seemingly endless stretches of isolation and introspection that some ultrarunners crave, it's extremely hard to find it here.

On the other hand, if you thrive on the social aspect of ultras, it's probably impossible to beat Leadville. Enormous crowds of spectators and crew await you at every aid station, and cheer you through the stretch of road between Fish Hatchery (miles 24 and 76) and Tree Line (miles 28 and 72). You can exchange well wishes with every other runner in the race on your way to and from the turnaround point at Winfield. And when the going gets tough, you can keep trying to fall into place with the next runner to come along.

Aid station support is outstanding, with scores of volunteers bustling about to assist in

any way needed. There's plenty of food to go around, with the exception of the Hopeless station (miles 45/55) – but they can be forgiven for running out of a few items, considering that they have to carry everything by llama up to their lofty post at 12,000 feet. Every station is well organized, and the volunteers are among the friendliest people in the world.

When you're running the Leadville course, you don't really care that it's a corporate deal. Yes, you see the Life Time logo at the aid stations and pretty much everywhere you look, but that's not significantly different from many other ultras nowadays. If you're attentive to your race and focused on doing what it takes to finish, the question of who owns the race will probably be the furthest thing from your mind.

Because make no mistake, Leadville is still epic. The elevation, the mountains, and the scenery are enough to literally take your breath away. The challenge still requires as much "grit, guts, and determination" (to use Chlouber's phrase) as it ever did before. There are many times when you have to mentally dig deep, to tap into strength and courage that you're not always certain is going to be there. And when you finally make it to the finish, Merilee is there to give you a hug, place a medal around your neck, and welcome you to the Leadville family. It's one of the greatest experiences in ultrarunning, and in all the ways that matter, the spirit and character of the Leadville 100 remains exactly the same.

At least, that was my experience this past August – but based on a tour of blogs, race reports, and running forums around the Internet, other participants in the 2012 race may beg to differ. Recent opinions about Leadville tend to follow a predictable pattern: those who had a bad day seem more inclined to think the race is going downhill and that Life Time Fitness will ruin it, while those who had a good experience don't see what all the fuss is about.

Perhaps the best person to compare the races from a competitor's standpoint is Bill Finkbeiner, a 29-time (no, that's not a typo) Leadville finisher

who, over the years, has finished everywhere from top 10 to back of the pack. Commenting on whether his race experience has changed under Life Time ownership, Finkbeiner says, "Once I'm running down the road leaving Leadville, I really don't see any difference in the race."

While he acknowledges that the increasing numbers are having an impact – for example, he heard a handful of people complaining about having to wait a few minutes to get water at some aid stations – he felt that this year's course change (replacing the road section to Winfield with a single-track trail that added approximately three miles and 1,000 feet of overall elevation gain) had a far more tangible effect on determining who finished and who timed out at later aid stations.

In Finkbeiner's opinion, as long as Ken and Merilee are around, the race can't help but stay true to its roots. "No other race I know of reflects the personality and character of its leader more than Leadville," he says. "Leadville is defined by Ken like Apple was defined by Steve Jobs." He sees no reason to think the race will suffer as long as Chlouber and Maupin are involved; the more critical transition will be when one or both of the race's founders are no longer involved in the race.

Until then, the Leadville 100 carries on in more or less usual fashion under new ownership – and the entire Leadville community continues to benefit. Coincidentally, in May of this year, the Climax mine whose closure triggered the race's development restarted its commercial operations in Leadville, bringing additional jobs and revenue back to the area. It's boom times all over again in Leadville, thanks largely to one man's connection to the old days, and all the endurance athletes who have contributed to the mission. Two years into the transition process, most signs indicate that Life Time Fitness is the right company to honor and sustain that legacy for the long run. ■

UR

RUN WOODSTOCK



Suzie Spangler enjoying some solitude and single-track

A RUNNING FESTIVAL, WITH MUSIC

by Tracey Cohen

"An amazing festival of trail races and a three-day classic rock festival," says Randy Step, describing his fourth annual Run Woodstock, with distances of 100 miles, 100K, 50 miles or 50K to choose from. Step is the CEO of a running store – Running Fit – that has organized the Dances With Dirt race series for years.

Run Woodstock kicks the weekend off with a 4:00 p.m. start for the 100-mile and 100K races. Step says, "They finish their run during the day and have maximum crowd support, and they love finishing into a party!"

Bill Fuchs, running the 100K commented, "I really like the Friday afternoon start. It gives you time to run one loop before dark and get to know the course and some of the other runners before the night falls."

And fall it did along with temperatures and buckets upon buckets of rain. Tough conditions to be sure but not so much as to deter the hardiest of the bunch.

"The atmosphere of this year's race was very upbeat," said 100-mile/100K race director, Angela Justice. "Everywhere I looked I saw smiling faces, helping hands, lots of laughter and happy runners. The optimism of the athletes during the rain overnight was awesome. They really pulled one another through and wouldn't let the rain get them down."

Happily for all, including scores of hardy, dedicated volunteers, the sun shone bright Saturday morning for the 50-mile and 50K race starts and continued until the final ultrarunner crossed the finish line.

The course, a 16.6-mile route repeated as many times as necessary for the appropriate race distance, included horse trails, gravel path, dirt road, single-track, hills and flats.

"I really enjoyed the variety of terrain that the course offered," Tim Schmitt enthused. "It led to a wonderful diverse experience and allowed the feel under your legs to alter just enough to keep them energized."

Jonathan Clinthorne won the 100-mile men's division, finishing in 18:10, and Anastasia Andrychowska had a solid lock on first for the woman in 21:46.

SANDY STINER ADDS:

It started with my husband reading Dean Karnazes's book, *UltraMarathon Man*. He passed it on to me and said, "We should do one of these!" I laughed at first and before I knew it we were signing up to run the North Country 50-mile. How hard could it be? Several years and ultras later...

...I followed a training plan from Bryon Powell's book, *Relentless Forward Progress*. The title

of the book became a mantra for me. The summer consisted of lots of long, hot training runs in almost unbearable weather. The neighbors looked at me as if I were crazy. Of course I am. Who intentionally goes out to run in the hottest part of the day? I went out when it was raining, on purpose. I was bound and determined to run in all weather so when race day came, I would be ready.

To set the picture for the race. Run Woodstock is a hippie-themed event; three days of peace, love and running. A full, laid-back, welcoming weekend of music, bonfires, friends and running. It takes place in Pinckney State Park, not far from Ann Arbor, Michigan. The course is made up of six loops, about 16.7 miles each, with an elevation gain of 1,301 feet per loop (7,806 total.) It has single-track, rail trail and horse trail. You encounter an occasional runaway mountain biker or horse. The trails are clearly marked and I never had a problem following the markers.

...The start was 4:00 p.m. I personally like the afternoon start. You get the night portion in before you are super tired, unlike some 100 miles that start in the morning. For the entire week before the race I felt like a race horse waiting for the gates to open so I could get running. I had no pre-race anxiety. I knew there was no