

## Way Too Cool 50 km (2004)

By Heather Macdonald doing her first 50 km.

# Way too Cool 50k



To quote Mark Shorter, "Any ultra that you can walk away from is a success." This one was about heat and finishing.

I wanted to run in warmish weather, so picked Way Too Cool as a destination race in Cool, California outside Sacramento to take place the weekend after Dirty Duo. The temperature is usually 17-20 degrees in March.

The race had filled in 30 minutes from the time they opened online registration in December. With a capacity of 450, it is a very popular race which is on part of Western States along non-technical red clay horse trails and gravel roads in a beautiful canyon setting bordering the American River. It is an out-and-back route with two loops at either end (similar to a figure 8 with a single track stretch in the middle).

On race day, March 13, we gathered in a farmer's field beside the Cool Fire Station (really). A canon sounded and we headed out through a field on gravel roads. The group started out slowly and spread out easily. The first 6 miles were through open fields and light deciduous cover and arrived at the first aid station (the only crew site on the course other than the finish line).

The temperature was on its way to 28 degrees which would be setting a new record. They recommended that we carry at least one water bottle, preferably two because the next aid station was 8 miles away. We refilled and headed into the canyon. Just before the climb started, we came by two guys with a truck who had ice water!

The woman ahead of me announced that she had found a lucky horseshoe and I wondered if she would carry it the whole way.

The race had spread out well and I was running in a pack of ten people setting a moderate (read that slow) pace. At a short stretch of single track in the middle, we met the lead runners coming back doing 6 min miles in the sun. Dodging them, I acknowledged them and they acknowledged me in return (gotta love that!).

The start of the second loop was at the 14 (and 21) mile aid station. I have never seen a spread of food like that before: potatoes, pretzels, chips, sandwiches, cookies, bananas, GU (gel), ice water and Coke. They refilled water bottles and made sure everyone was okay to keep going; the heat was becoming a factor and some dropped out. I was glad I had my eload with me.

I met a woman who had been running for 20 years who had bathroom breaks down to an art. She would take a few steps off the trail, squat, and return. I figured she could recognize poison oak because it was everywhere.

The heat started to get to me but the streams helped. I dipped my hat in the water and poured it over my head. At one point, I lost my sunglasses and had to jump in to get them. This was good because it cooled my legs. When I got cranky, I reminded myself to enjoy the moment (and eat!).

Yes, there were hills, two major ones. One was never-ending, like Powerline on Mt Seymour and the other was straight up, Goat Hill. Highest point was 1600 feet. Ken Greenaway forgot to mention the hills when he recommended this race but I expected them.

Mile 26 was at the top of Goat Hill, at the aid station. When I got there, a runner was sitting in the middle of the trail and the volunteers were pouring ice water over his head. While they

refilled my water bottles, I downed flat Coke in ice water and never enjoyed it more. With only 4 miles left to go, we were getting excited to finish, in a plodding sort of way.

I had a few blisters on my feet by now and tried to ignore them. It helped to run through the streams.

With only 1 mile left to go, a volunteer sponged my head with wonderful cold water. The woman who had the horseshoe had it returned to her by a volunteer who had held it until her return.

The trail opened up into a pasture and I could hear people yelling. In my photo, I look like I'm running on a tilt, probably due to the blisters! It

took me 8:09 but dammit, I finished. I am convinced that my eload saved the day.

If you haven't done a 50 km, I highly recommend this one. Great scenery and food, excellent volunteers, a fast course and a race garment (in 2004, it was an embroidered denim shirt). The percentage who finish is high. Weather variable!

Link: <http://www.run100s.com/wtc.htm>

Blog: <http://fartherfaster.blogspot.com/2008/03/way-too-cool-cool-at-last.html>

