

March 24, 2011

COYOTE TWO MOON 2011, OR The Best Cutoff I Ever Missed

After the 2010 C2M when I arrived at the Finish about 15 minutes before it opened (should have ducked in the bushes for an hour's sleep), the Two Moon Buffoon placed me in the later starting M3 Group to go at midnight Friday instead of 9 PM. I took it as a personal challenge, as I would have only 12 additional minutes over the 2010 time to finish before the big party at 10 AM on Sunday. BIG Mistake. Should have begged the Buffoon to put me in the M2 group (9PM in 2011), based on advanced age, misplaced male ego, and stupidity.

The 2011 weather forecast on Thursday AM was not bad, and I reasoned my time should be better after the snow, rain, mud, and wind of 2010. I do not wear a watch, so I thought I would move steadily along, running through the creeks instead of trying to balance on the rocks (usually fell in anyway), avoiding the trap of the chair at the Aid Stations, grabbing food and stuff out of the drop bags in a hurry, and most important, just keep moving. I decided not to ask the time at the Aid Stations, but would ask the Buffoon at the Gridley Top AS how I was doing. Again, the tactic was just to keep moving.

The Rose Valley AS #2 advised me that the forecast had changed – now it was a 100% chance of rain. Oh good. More interest on the trail at night was definitely needed as it could get boring.

Arriving at Gridley Top, I checked out the farm yard animals (Nice udders!), and the Buffoon informed me I had 6 ½ hours to go down to Cozy Dell and return to make the 1230 AM cutoff at the Top. No problem with that - Only a little over seven miles one way.

And then I rediscovered why it should be renamed the trail to Cozy Hell. Up to Nordhoff Peak and then down, and down, and down, with a finish through the Poison Oak Forest on a very muddy and slick clay trail. PO and I do not get along at all, so I tiptoed, almost literally, through the mile or so of clay very slowly. Only fell on my butt once. I determined it is much easier to go through the PO Forest in the daylight than it is at night with a light. And it started to rain, seriously.

When I dragged my muddy carcass into the AS, it was almost 9 PM. So much for the “No problem”. I had only 3 ½ hours to get back up to Gridley Top by the 1230 AM cutoff. I could try it, but in all probability, the Buffoon would tell me to go on down to the Gridley Bottom AS, but don't bother to come back up due to missing the cutoff.

I am dumb, but not totally stupid (well, some of the time). I could drop at 9 PM and 65 miles at Cozy Dell and get a shower and a good night's sleep, or I could go another 13 miles in the dark and rain (snow?) and get dropped at Gridley Bottom sometime early Sunday morning. Duh. The shower and hot meal Saturday night were great.

On Sunday at the S/F that was being dismantled in the downpour, I found out Chris had made a difficult, but very correct, decision sometime Saturday night or Sunday morning to call off the run due to the weather. I understand the Gridley Top volunteers had to hike the trail down to the Bottom AS. WOW! I am impressed with all the C2M volunteers, but that bunch may be the toughest. All the runners and volunteers got down safely, and that was the only important thing.

Some thoughts on the C2M 2011:

- After the 2010 C2M which I thought was one of the most “fun” ultras I have ever done, the 2011 version was also a “most fun” ultra, right up to my dropping at Cozy Dell at 9 PM, or a bit later when the Chris made the wise decision to stop the run for the safety of the volunteers and runners. Tough call, but it was the right thing to do. Thanks from all of us, Chris.
- Too many ultras are getting full of their own hype these days, and lack the easy going lets-have-some-fun attitude. Fortunately, C2M is still a low-key fun run that we can all enjoy. Who else rents an entire bowling alley for a tournament of a bunch of funny looking non-bowlers, freely passes out boner and bonus minutes that affect your time, and arranges an opportunity with the staggered starts for slow plodders to get to the finish before the fast runners? It does not get any better.
- The RD and his staff are incredible. Not only are they responsible for the most innovative and fun 100, but they put in many long days making sure C2M remains a high quality event. Emails, pre and post race activities, staggered starts, boner/bonus minutes, and zany aid stations make the Coyote an event to be remembered. Many, many thanks from all the runners – we owe you.
- All volunteers at all ultras are special – we runners could not go out there and have fun without them. I have done over a hundred ultras, but the C2M bunch is the most helpful, the most enthusiastic, and can make the finest gourmet PBJs on the planet. Besides, who else gets to walk or drive out in a roaring storm? They are the Best. Many, many thanks from all the runners – we owe you.
- The “Hardly Walk” may be a more difficult 100 physically, but for the last two years, the Coyote has been special mentally and emotionally. All Coyote runners have a cutoff to make on Sunday morning, even the elite runners. And going back up the hill to the Ridge from the off-ridge AS to get back into the wind, rain, and snow has kept it interesting. I have not done all the 100s, but the Coyote is definitely one of the toughest with all the ups and downs, maybe one of the top five?
- In 2012, after two Coyotes, I will be back as a volunteer so I can try it again in 2013. Yep – it’s on the website under “Volunteers”. Boner minutes to those of you who have not read it. After two runs, we have to volunteer for a year to be able to come back the next year. Great requirement – we have to give back to the run and sport we enjoy.
- If you are one of those 100 milers who need a pacer, sunshine, and good weather to complete the run, and whose idea of foul weather gear is a trash bag scrounged from the Aid Station, skip the C2M. Go to those 100s with 20+ aid stations to coddle you, great weather, and minimal hills. You are not worthy of the Coyote.