

## Grossman and Zilmer win the 24<sup>th</sup> AC100

Surprising Results: Many 1<sup>st</sup> Time Participants

by: Hal Winton, Co-RD

This year's AC100 run results were full of surprises in some ways but not unexpected in others. We most certainly expected our last year's champions Jorge Pacheco (2008 UR runner of the year) and Keira Henninger to do well again. Jorge running very fast and strong was eventually out ahead by up to an hour over our eventual winner Dominic Grossman. By mid course Dominic was closing the gap. At Shortcut Saddle (59 mi.) Dominic was only behind by 13 minutes and he caught Jorge at Newcomb Saddle (68 mi.). Jorge spent 14 minutes at Newcomb while Dominic spent only 5. Jorge began to experience stomach problems before Mt Hillyer (49 mi.) and held on to Newcomb. He went on to Chantry Flats (75 mi.) and eventually dropped from the race. He is quoted as saying he went out too fast.

The AC100 course is elusive and difficult and has stopped a number of well known, top rung runners often due to over racing in past years when our run was in later months, October for years then Sept. for some years then August, now for the 1<sup>st</sup> time in July. Of course the usual things can go wrong as well to the human body in such an arduous undertaking.

After Dominic Grossman took the lead from Jorge the race was pretty much his to lose. He stayed steady to the end finishing in 20:21 about an hour off Jorge's last year's winning time. This again demonstrates as we have seen in the past on occasion that the outcome of a 100 mile race depends 1<sup>st</sup> on who shows up, and then conditions that weekend and who can endure (withstand hardship and adversity) to the end. This year's outcome should encourage the not so elite runners to hang in and do their best because you never know when it may be your turn to win.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> male finisher was Ruperto Romero, light of frame but strong as a bull at age 47 finished about an hour behind Dominic. Ruperto with several over 40 wins here outran all the over 30 year olds and earned their Cougar trophy. Tom Nielsen now 52 years age, with 8 prior finishes here, well on his way to 10 finishes and the Elk trophy next year, finished about an hour back of Ruperto. Tom won the over 35 years Horse trophy. He wanted the over 40 Rhino trophy that he in 9 years had not won (Tom won the race in 1999 and 2000). The only solution was for him to run slower apparently. Jeff Pfleuger in 4<sup>th</sup> place finished about 50 minutes behind Tom, the next over 40 runner and earned the coveted by Tom Nielsen Rhino trophy.

Similar to Jorge we had high expectations for Keira Henninger (LD50 RD) to repeat her win of last year. She was close to 24 hours last year and her stated goal was 23 hours this year. Keira stayed about 10 minutes ahead of our eventual winner Paulette Zilmer from Scottsdale, AZ through Shortcut and Newcomb Saddles. Unfortunately what was turning out to be a good race between these two strong female runners ceased when Keira withdrew due to a muscle strain. After the usual wait and see period most runners in trouble withdraw at Chantry Flats (75 mi.) the last place to see runner's crews to the finish line. Paulette running 2 hours ahead of Maggie Beach nevertheless pushed on to a 23:47 finish time, winning the women's RAM trophy while joining the elite group of female runners who have been able to break 24 hours here. In fact only one time in 24 years have two women managed to finish under 24 hours in the AC100 in the same year. Kudos to Paulette. Maggie Beach from LaCrescenta (age 40) as 2<sup>nd</sup> female finished ahead of all other than Paulette over 30 years women earning the Cougar Trophy. Several other young women under 40 years followed Maggie to the finish line. The next over 40 female staying the course was Diane Triester finishing in a bit over 32 hours winning the Rhino trophy, which Maggie Beach had vacated by winning the over 30 trophy.

Other noteworthy finishes were our long standing standout Finnish runner Jussi Hamalainen (28:13, 31<sup>st</sup>) and Garry Curry (29:22, 34<sup>th</sup>). Both have finished all 24 AC100s. Jussi who started doing the AC100 runs in our 1<sup>st</sup> year 1986 at a young age 39 was this year's oldest entrant at age 65. He has also won our race

back in 1990 and 1991. Jussi has won so many bronze trophies at the AC100; one has to wonder where he can keep them all. Garry has like 20 finishes also at the Leadville Trail 100. These two real gentle men are amazing runners and fine representatives of our sport.

Mike Stephens (like Tom Nielsen) completed his 9<sup>th</sup> AC100 run making them both eligible for the Elk Trophy next year. Dan Brenden from Phoenix did another outstanding run finishing in 27:40 on his way to another LGR6 award when he finishes Leadville and Wasatch Front 100's

Our race was a bit harder this year being now on the 3<sup>rd</sup> weekend of July (where it will remain) with somewhat higher temperatures. Heat training similar to what is done for the WSER canyons is recommended for future years. More than half of the runners at the Wrightwood briefing indicated that they were new to our AC100 run. New to the run and 1<sup>st</sup> timers to do a hundred miles with little or no heat training may have contributed to the lower by 5% finish rate to 58%. Hopefully many runners learned lessons at our run this year while enjoying the San Gabriel Mountains and trails and will return to do even better in future years.

Wrightwood was again great, the briefings went well, USFS officers showed up for the very 1<sup>st</sup> time to participate in the briefing, the aid stations and support crews were again exceptional, our district ranger Mike McIntyre signed our 5 year special use permit for the run, and we didn't lose anyone thanks to the methods of our diligent ham radio operators and the Dwyer's had a field day patching up the blisters and helping the runners to keep moving. One or two runners made a visit to urgent care centers to be assisted with their recovery.

Next year the forest should have even more of our ANF trails opened and with Hwy 2 having been reopened since June all the way to Wrightwood (we ran the race through an, in operation, road repair site near Eagles Roost this year with the road crews assistance) perhaps we can get back on a more normal basis with training runs plus trail work where we don't drive through Sunland to work on the higher elevation trails. Those interested in participating in the AC100 run next year would do well to enter early in the spring in order to gain entrance. We don't put on a big numbers event at the AC100 but we do our best to have a quality run for all participants. Next year will be our 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary run.

#### Background of the 2011 AC100 Run:

This year and last year in particular had several challenges for our AC100 Run. In 2010 we had to rebuild some of our trails in the Station Fire burn area, very badly damaged by unimpeded winter rain runoff due to destroyed hillside vegetation. Flooding was common in the 2009/2010 winter. Our 2010 AC100 trail crews did about 1,000 hours of work repairing badly damaged trails including one large fence wall in the west end of Idlehour Canyon and a nearly totally washed out/destroyed El Prieto trail. Without their incredibly hard work, conditions for the race would have been much worse, if at all possible.

Over the past year the vegetation, grasses and bushes, made a big come back helping to hold the hillsides in place and as a result the trails had far less damage to them this year. However some sections like Charlton Flats day use area had about a mile of burned tree snags the FS could not clear as yet and the Silver Moccasin trail remained closed there. So we re-routed that particular section of our course onto an intermediate paved road. Otherwise the course remained the same. The Back Country Horsemen again used their chainsaw skills to remove fallen trees from the Acorn trail out of Wrightwood and along the PCT near Mt Baden Powell.

Our unexpected challenge became the PFPD (Purple Flower Poodle Dog) bush. It turns out to be a “native” plant that goes dormant except after large ground disturbances such as forest wildfires and grows all over the burned off mountains in the years after the fire until the usually seen plants crowd it out again. Its root systems are very strong and good for stabilizing hillsides as we saw this year. However the PFPD bush can be very bad for people in some cases depending on the level of exposure, it can produce welts and lesions. It is unlike Poison Oak which has an oil that Tecnu and Ivy Block can repel. Poodle Dog bush has fine hairs that carry a very different chemical reaction on the skin. Like Poison Oak some are only minimally affected by it while others may require steroid shots. Most of us can use over the counter anti itch 1% Cortisone cream to calm down the reaction. The reaction may take a day or so to start but should be less of a problem in a few days or after a week or so. People unaware of its presence and its bad effects when highly exposed can go through a lot of un-comfortableness until a doctor gives them steroid shots. The best is to avoid it and keep the skin well covered. Hard to do in the heat of the day but running in the cool of the night such as out of Chilao and Charlton Flats at night tights and long sleeve shirts may be of use.

The AC100 scheduled trail crews cut the Poodle Dog bushes back well but it grows again out fast enough so we had to return in some places and cut it back even more strongly. It will no doubt be a challenge again in 2012, but we will again remove it from the sides of our trails with vigor. Hopefully we did the job well enough this year that runners were not too badly affected. The mountains and forests are full of surprises like this even for old timers that have been around for decades. What makes it so bad is that the bush when in full purple bloom is quite attractive and the uninformed may pick it for their gardens as some runners/hikers have done.