

Icarus Florida UltraFest Testimonial

10 – 16 November 2014

Snyder Park

3299 SW 4th Ave
Fort Lauderdale, Florida 33315, USA

“Icarus Florida UltraFest was founded to offer a truly unique event that provides ultrarunners an opportunity to compete with some of the world's best in a high quality event while also allowing those new to the sport to be introduced to ultrarunners and have a once in a lifetime opportunity to meet and run with some of the world's best ultrarunners.” ~ Andrei and Claire Nana

With that simple yet expressive mission statement Andrei and Claire conceived of Florida's first multi-day endurance event to replace the canceled 24 Hour world championships. The event was expanded to include 3, 6, 12 and 24 hour races to complement the 6-day race and offer other runners with limited time budgets to run with some of the world's best multi-day athletes representing six countries.

The event was staged in Snyder Park, Fort Lauderdale, FL on flat shaded park roads to form a USATF and IAAF certified loop 1 Km in length. There was a single well stocked aid station at the start / finish line, staffed with able volunteers Carey Lynn Clarkson, Una Beaudry, Claire Nana and Aleksandar Djakovic Sasa, who kept the runners fueled and satiated with a variety of food excellently prepared. The event was chip timed by the venerable Mike Melton, MCM Timing.

From communication with Andrei and Claire I became very interested in trying my first 6-day, albeit I was pretty nervous too. My only other multi-day was at the Wickham Park 4-day 200 miler last May. Since Wickham is only allowed to open 12 ½ hours each day that becomes the daily cut off and for me anyway I could go home each evening to shower and rest. I finished just 135 miles over four days, being unable to make cut off to hit 50 miles per day. Icarus, on the other hand was a true multi-day; once the clock started it stopped only after 144 hours had elapsed.

I relied heavily on Dusty Hardman, a Vol State 314 mile multi-day veteran, for advice on how to prepare, setting a daily and nightly running and resting schedule, nutrition (“Eat a lot, you're too skinny”), hydration and electrolyte balance. Luckily for me, Dusty was available to pace and support me for most of the six days which greatly improved my total mileage.

This 6-day event has been life changing for me; every attempt to write has ended in a writer's block, albeit that has not been my usual response after an ultra. As Andrei has observed, "Jim is focused and determined in a 100 miler," so I figured that a 6-day would be a simple extension to a 100 miler.

Why was this 6-day different from all of my previous endurance runs? That is what I am struggling with! I have run some 10+ 100 Milers, who knows how many 50 - 99 Milers, much less 50Ks and marathons, a total of 119 marathons or longer races since 20 August 2001.

After numerous attempts at writing a classic race report (I love reading race reports from friends and have written dozens myself! Indeed, Brad's accounting of Icarus is destined to become a classic!) I finally

realized that I was destined to write a “testimonial” to Andrei and Claire’s conception of Icarus, rather than a race report.

My difficulty had been to put this 6-day, my first true Multi-Day, into perspective. Firstly and lastly I cried at the finish line, uncontrollably, a first for me after an ultra. Usually I am just fatigued and happy to sit for awhile with a cold beer in hand. I asked myself why. My answers came to an intersection of the incredible event put together by Andrei and Claire, the fantastic volunteer support of Carey, Alex, Una and others, my coach, support and pacer Dusty, who pushed me beyond my known limits and Charlotte Vasarhelyi from Kitchener, Ontario, who after her own debilitating sciatic flare showed me a dedication and determination, against the severe pain of which I am very familiar, beyond anything I have previously experienced. Indeed Charlotte beat me by some 60+ miles, even though suffering from a sciatic flare up much more than my own!

The remainder of the ten 6-day runners and their crew were no less inspirational. I had many hours to run with them all and chat as they were taking a rest break from running at pace. Several I knew already (Tim, Jesper, Carey and Bill) and several became new friends (K-G, Charlotte, Michele, Jovica, Rimantas, Brad and support crew Wendy and Una).

As I said I am experiencing a new realm. A realm that I have embraced heartily. A realm that Dusty subtly led me into via her tales of the Last Annual Vol State cross Tennessee run. A realm that Andrei and Claire offered to me. A realm that I shared with Charlotte through our sciatic-laden loops.

For the record I finished 7th out of 10 entrants with 247.047 miles or 397.586 kilometers.

In closing, thank you Andrei, Claire, Dusty and Charlotte for a memorial first time multi-day experience. I am now addicted to life beyond a 100 Miler. Assuming I survive the Ancient Oaks 100 miler intact and healthy I will be ready to tackle another multi-day in the January 2015 Icarus Florida UltraFest, spring version. Let the games began!!!