

## Pierce finds his first ultra experience more difficult than expected

By Keith Pierce



When my friend, Tod Tieszen, asked me to run the El Scorcho 50K back in April, I told myself it was only 5 miles farther than a marathon and I signed up without hesitation (for the July 19 race). Besides, I am an established marathoner with eight under my belt, so now would be a good time to give the ultra a try. Right?

Most runners can tell you, signing up is the easy part. It's the months of training between signing up and the actual race that tests your resolve.

Training for El Scorcho would prove to be a very difficult task. The race begins at midnight during what is "typically" the hottest part of the summer and takes place around a 5K loop in Fort Worth's Trinity Park. So how do you train for a race that is so unique and out of the ordinary? After all, most runners do not have the freedom of schedule to go for a midnight run each day.

Every marathon I have run, I toed the line satisfied with my training and confident that I would perform well. El Scorcho was no different. I had done some late night long runs, runs in the heat of the day, a 22-mile long run around a 3.5-mile loop, and I had even read Dean Karnazes' ultra running book "Confessions of an All Night Runner." Yet, with four 5K loops (12 miles) remaining in the race, I was fighting the demons of doubt. Whether you are an experienced runner, a beginner, fast or slow, every runner faces a point in a long distance race where they question themselves and their ability to finish. I never thought I would be answering these questions so early at El Scorcho.

Fortunately, I was able to slog through the last few miles and survived to finish the 50K in 3 hours 8 minutes. As I crossed the finish, I swore to myself I would never do this again, but I have a feeling in time I will be giving the ULTRA another shot.

Despite the cooler temperatures, El Scorcho tres (as it was dubbed for its third year) was a great success. The 50K runners started at approximately 12:01 a.m. and the 25K runners started about 10 minutes later. 91 runners finished the 31-miler, while 269 finished the 25K. Volunteers were stationed at the start/finish and at the halfway point of the 5K loop with water, gels, and HEED (the official electrolyte replacement drink of El Scorcho). Friends and family camped along the start/finish area, so there was no lack of support as you finished one loop and started another.

If you are looking for a unique race experience and a definite challenge, you might want to put El Scorcho quatro on your calendar for next summer.