

ULTRA-TRAIL

AUSTRALIA

UTA50 - Brendon Green

Starting in Wave 2 I'd been a bundle of nerves and excitement since about 2:30 AM. After trading pleasantries with people I recognised and jostling for decent starting position we get the final countdown to go. My running mate bolts out like a rodeo bull zig-zagging through the stampeding herd. I feel something isn't right. I discover that my quad sleeves were pulling down my full length tights, I pull over. Slip them off, shoving them in the side of my pack and off again.

The first 5km was steeper and trickier than I thought. Passing Scenic World it was time for the real race to begin, around Katoomba Falls and on to the Cliff View walk. We bounce along narrow track shoulder to shoulder with walkers and tourists until we come to Echo point, stopping briefly before the giant staircase we descend along the trail until we hit the stairs, one at a time watch your footing you think, you hear someone stumble above and below, we make a few jokes, down safely it's time to follow the Dardanelles pass heading to Leura Cascades much of it is single file, stairs going up and down it seems never ending a moment of reprieve and it's bridge, stairs, flat, stairs, and it goes on like this.

We finally climb out grab a quick selfie we reach Sublime Pt Road and into Fairmont Resort, fill our packs with water, shove fistfuls of chips and lollies in for some energy and we're back on course. My running mate has alerted me that he's cramping. I encourage him to stretch his calf muscles, we persevere slowing down to try and alleviate the cramp. I'm now in trouble my pack is not drawing water properly. I do my best to fix it until the checkpoint! We cross Lillians Glen and make our way back up and passing Conservation Hut looking enviously at those enjoying the sunshine in the café.

Bounding along, I look back my friend is out of sight I stop at Wentworth falls to wait for him, I'm a little concerned but then he pops on to the steps and we clamber back up to Kings Tableland almost 4hrs in it's hot and we have no shade, we jog/walk all the way to the checkpoint, nothing seems to be helping my friends cramp. We're greeted at Queen Victoria Hospital by our families cheering, a refuel break and fill up with supplies. A friend from my local running club passes and tells me how fresh I look. We're now past the point of no return we have no other way out but to finish the course.

My friend is cramping hard but insists on running to Jamison Creek I go with him trying to not get too far ahead (I'm feeling really good right now but in no way willing to leave him behind) we hit a dry creek bed. We now know the only way is up! Uphill back down, then up, and up and up stopping briefly at the final emergency station we're less than 10km from home.

From here we decide to walk it and after much trudging we get past the sewerage works and into the forest twisting and turning picking up a few other strugglers on the way 100km runners passing us by on the back half of the course.

Finally the Furber steps 951 stairs between us and the finish. I send my friend first pushing him all the way one stair at a time, we hit the top and I bolt for the finish urging the crowd to cheer as I charge for the line, elated I scream, my daughter clings to my leg and I'm greeted by my wife and as my friend crosses the line the 100km winner appears.

What a day, what a finish!