

# ULTRA-TRAIL

AUSTRALIA

UTA100 - Adrian Mulholland

“Mate, is your torch f#\$@\*d?”. “No English..... Je ne parle que français.”.

Crickey, this dude has been 1/2 wheeling me for 15 minutes in silence, since leaving QVH with his head lamp off. Never more than a meter away, in front, behind, beside, we are otherwise alone. Why is he doing this?

I left the joy of CP5 and my crewman, the recently injured runner Richard, in high spirits ready to zoom down then battle up the valley but nup. Mr Wet Blanket suckered on to me in total silence, close, really close and was not going away. I could not even manage to tell him politely how rude it was. So I accelerated, slowed down, nothing, he was using my headlamp so that was it. I let some people pass, acting doggo so he would go with them, my luminous ball was a few lumens too much, thanks Mr Petzel. I had ‘company’ for an hour.

A fake slash was my only trick left and it worked a treat, I even turned my lamp off and hid behind a large tree, to “Pee pee”. Only to come back up on Mr Bogart-your-photons with a mate of his soon after, how they found each other, with lamps off, I don’t know. I think it must be some ‘Soul Runner’ thing they do in New Caledonia (my guess as to the man’s provenance). These interesting characters had the same yellow-green gear on and HAD to be mates.

I pushed hard to get past at about km 85 but no need, the Moon was out and these happy fellas had found each other and there was enough natural light to move. Trail runners.....

Flowers in the Petzl.

Flowers in the Petzl, attract more than bees....

One of my adventures along the way to a 3rd finish on the driveway outside Scenic World. Redemption was the name of the game after a poo fest at Northburn Station had me questioning my guts and their ability, in both senses to cope with Mountain Ultra Running.

This year was hot, we all cramped from Hanny to Ben and maybe old Alf. I did too. In “The Farm” it started and only stopped after sundown and a return to normal operating temperatures. I pulled a few frothy saves out of the Graham Hammond hand book, a Sholtz tab under the tongue and a few Glucodin. You look mad, a pink foam mouthed fanatic and can only grin at people while the sodium and glucose get in, allowing the nerves and muscles to do their thing but it works. All the way from “Deliverance Farm” to the top of that hill before you run down to Six-Foot track, I worked it and solved the dreaded cramp.

At said Six Foot, Super-Crew-Man-Richard was off getting a hot dog for him, his three kids, wife and mother in-law, so my wonderful Partner (Lesley), and daughter did the duties. Bottles in and out, gels in, rubbish out. I waited for Richard so he could say his line, “Sunscreen on the head?” I put sunscreen on my head, I had to give him something, Mr Hot Dog Eater....

Six Foot-The North Face 100 2015 Six Foot UTA 2016. Same same.... Plus CRAMP!!!

I knew the day would end poorly after cramp one and there were a few more. I was going at a steady pace all day, drifting back through the waves, trying to stay in control and did, just the heat is Kryptonite to this not so Super Man. Around the magical Iron Pot I started taking people and kept this up until our torch less friend post QVH. My gentle pacing did allow me to creep up The Golden Stairs with another French-speaking runner, only she was Mme Pantalons Rouge, despite the electrolyte rattle in her pack she was fast and carving through the goggle eyed pack of sweaty older men.

Feel the Serenity. Feel the Serenity.

So things were difficult and I knew there was zero chance of beating my 2015 time, I slipped into semi-tourist mode, enjoying the “Serenity”. It worked but you take longer, the day drags on, you still have to cover the distance, walk up Nellies. I was close to melt down at Katoomba Aquatic Centre, low on energy, low on the usual plentiful yellow flowers I pick along the way for my hat (and then give to my daughter, who covets them). My watch even carked it! My superhero Lesley, bucked me up and encouraged me out the door, Richard gave me his watch to use, they all cheered me off, I went for another mandarin, they cheered again.....It was tectonic.

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You have to love the stairs section, it's demented, so tedious, so irregular, so slow, the obstacles are immense. It looks easy on the map but it is the nest of Hells Angels, they come from in the stairs. I made it through most until it became properly dark around the Fairmont. Wow, so nice, I crashed a wedding to use the dunny, I heard a man ask an "Official" if he could pull out, only it was Brendan Davies, he said "You sure mate?!".

My mojo and photons stolen by the Light Bandit and energy sapped away with sunshine's partner sweat and crime pact buddy cramp, I found myself pining for the Sewage Works. Here I came back to life, regular energy intake and a slow hike, some Led Zeppelin (Water stop music) and I was away. I even suppressed the horror of a porta-loo at km 91, Google the infamous Italian movie, "Salo" (on a non-work computer) for a glimpse of the terror within that yellow-green horror hut.

Not for Kids or normal adults really.  
Not for Kids, or even normal people.

I plonked through Leura Forrest passing people here and there, something I had not done since zooming into CP5 like a man late for a rave. It was fun, until my Petzel blinked its blink, I had to stop and change the battery at km 98.5! Thanks again, Mr Hammond at Find Your Feet for that (though I did nearly go mental doing the swap by iPhone light). Perhaps the Photon Thief drained my battery too!?

A last gasp up Furber was in order but the swap killed my hopes of a Saturday finish, it was a few past midnight and I did a plane imitation into Tom's arms, I might have called him names. He gave me a towel! And a Buckle. Started with a Hanny impersonation. Became an aeroplane. A dodgy pilot. Almost done. Happy but the clock does not lie.

At a quarter to six the next morning Hanny sent me a text, she knew I would be awake, you can't sleep after these things and she was in the same twitchy pain cave. Coach gave some expert advice that I watch Eurovision and I did, it was awesome but nothing compared to the fun I had the day before.

So top tips? Battery power, you need lots and a watch set to go the distance. You need a cramp solution that works. If things go poorly, take it easy and enjoy, at a slower pace you can chat, stop stressing and make the most of the only 'day off' you'll get all year.

Thanks Les for letting me do this and putting up with me, I love it but love you more.

Thanks Richard and family for the support, above and beyond!

Thanks Hanny for looking after me so long and continuing to, when you know you shouldn't.