

ULTRA-TRAIL

AUSTRALIA

UTA100 - Lloyd O'Keeffe

A race report from a non-finisher for UTA100.

My name is Lloyd O'Keeffe, I am a Fire Fighter from Canberra and Father of three with another due September. On Friday 13th May, I ran the furthest I ever have (UTA22km). Then Saturday 14th May, I ran even further again (57km's - UTA100km).

Monday before race-day, a friend of mine withdrew from the UTA100, leaving a spare ticket available - I had already entered in the UTA22! I made the decision to run both the UTA22 and UTA100. My goal: to enjoy and finish the UTA22 injury free - anything after would be a bonus!

Lining up at the start was euphoric! Hearing the Didgeridoo and the sound clip from the classic Australian film Gallipoli sent shivers up my spine, I couldn't help but reflect on the sacrifice so many Australians have made for our beautiful country - a feeling I'm positive I'm not alone in.

I was relieved to start the race. Once my running mate (Chris C) and I began descending Furber steps, my body felt surprisingly good. Having people cheer us on at the bottom of the railway line was great, a very nice reminder to enjoy this race. Coming around Pitt's Amphitheatre I couldn't help but gaze at the awesome views. Juggling the importance of foot placement and enjoying the scenery, suddenly became very serious though, as a Gentleman tripped and fell nastily onto a large boulder. We ran over to this poor guy, and with the help of another runner checked him over as best we could. With the injured runner's friends arriving to help and saying we should go on, we gingerly turned and started back on the track, taking our steps with extra caution. Climbing up the Golden Stairs, the views continued to amaze me - seemingly the theme of the weekend.

Looking down onto Ironpot Ridge from Narrow Neck was amazing. As we reached the Tarros Ladders we took the Duncan's Pass option - a very enjoyable technical section. Passing a remote aid station underneath the power-lines reminded me of the amazing people that help make this race possible - I thanked them for their efforts. At CP2 Chris introduced me to a friend, after chatting for a minute we exchanged hugs and headed off - the friendliness of fellow trail runners never failing to put a smile on my face.

I found the climb up Ironpot Mountain very enjoyable with my legs feeling good. Reaching the top and running past the guys playing the Didgeridoo was great, what a reception! Shortly after passing the 40km mark, it dawned on me that I had just run my first marathon distance!

Seeing our support crew at CP3 was great! By now I felt pretty sore and tired, but very keen to continue on. At the 50km mark, Chris pointed out I had just run my first ultra distance. Something I didn't join him in celebrating too much, by this stage I had seriously bonked. Climbing Nellie's Glen stairs, I began to feel the toll the last two days of running had taken on my body. Finally making it to the top, the sun began setting and every part of my body ached.

Reaching CP4, my body felt like it was on the verge of breaking. With a trail marathon booked for June and needing my body to be in top condition for work, I withdrew from the race. About four days after the UTA100, my body began to feel fresh again - coming as a surprise to me. The weekend was a massive learning curve, the tricks my mind played on me and the pains my body felt. However, I have no regrets entering in both races. My experience has made me even hungrier to tackle this epic race in 2017, perhaps next time I'll concentrate on just the UTA100.