

November 2<sup>nd</sup>, Moab Trail Marathon, Half-marathon, Adventure 5k

Moab, UT

21k (half marathon)

Time: 2:40:54 (348/750 O/A, 33/299 div M40-49)

On November 2<sup>nd</sup> I had the privilege to participate in the 2013 Moab Trail Marathon in Moab, Utah. This event is a fundraiser for the Athena Project, a non-profit group that supports women who have gone through medical crises, and consists of a full trail marathon, a trail half marathon, and a 5k obstacle race. Being my first event outside the country I chose to enter the trail half, which coincidentally also happened to be the US National Championships this year and put me in some fast company.

Package pick up the day before the race was at Milt's Stop and Eat, a must stop in Moab as it is the town's oldest restaurant and a long-time supporter of the event. It is here that I started to get an idea of how big this event was and later it was reinforced by the number of racers at the local pasta restaurant. There were a total of 1304 entrants in the various categories with 750 in the half marathon alone.

The day of the event was beautiful - clear and a cool 3°C. The start/finish area was cheerful as racers and supporters huddled around camp fires, sipped soup, and drank coffee. From the staging area one could easily see how this was going to be a challenging and visually pleasing race.

I went out in the third of five waves of mix of full and half marathoners . Each wave was staged approximately 7 minutes apart, with everyone high-fiving the race announcer on the way out.

As the pack started to spread out the trail took center stage starting out in deep sand interspersed with large rocks with the occasional stretch of slick rock and transitioning to steep gravel single and double track. The first third of the course was designed to sap the strength from our quads and often a line of people could be seen snaking their way up the steep ascents culminating in a brief celebration at the apex of the course.

The decent began fast and flat with lots of room to pass until the first aid station then the single track started again. Thankfully everyone I encountered was polite and would let faster runners pass, especially on the more technical parts of the course. This wasn't quite as easy in certain spots though. Some sections were not conducive for passing as the foot wide paths were bordered by shear drops and rock faces. I like technical descents and these were technical to the extreme with some runners sliding down on their bottoms to keep from pitching over the edges. In other sections standing up-right was not an option while slipping under overhanging sandstone. While the scenery was stunning I did not take my eye off the trail for long, because there were too many rocks and drops to be ignored.

Once I finally reached the bottom of the canyon it was a short run to aid station two which greeted competitors with free beer and we got to say farewell to the full marathon runners before climbing back out on a fire road and re-descending on more single track to the first of several river crossings. There was no escaping these foot numbing stretches of water that raged from ankle to thigh deep, and it seemed that as soon as I got the feeling back in my toes I were back in again. This only stopped when we hiked back up another service road with amazing red cliffs on one side and a deep canyon on the

other.

The final kilometer of the race dropped from the road to another short creek crossing to some flat technical track, followed by some nimble footwork over and around boulders, through a waist deep creek crossing, and a scramble up the opposite bank with a sprint to the finish line.

Happy to be done I took my finisher's mug to the nearest food table and refueled on cola, cookies and oranges while cheering on runners for the next hour.

This race was one of the most fun that I have entered, partly for the friendly participants, partly for the spectacular vistas, and also for the technical challenges of the course. I would like to enter this event again in a couple years and possibly bring others to compete with me, though I need to practice my hill climbing and sand running skills if I am going to do it again.

The overall winners of the half marathon were Joseph Gray of Renton, WA (1:23) and Stevie Kremer of Crested Butte, CO (1:38). the Full Marathon winners were Mike Foote of Missoula, MT (3:13) and Kerrie Bruxvoort of Broomfield, Co (3:59). taking the Adventure 5k were John Valanis (from Fort Collins, CO (36:16) and Zitlalic Ley of Los Angeles, CA (38:01)

For me, my results were very encouraging. In advance of the event I predicted I would finish in the upper middle third of the competitors/racers with an estimated time of 2:45. And indeed I met my goals. Not bad for my first time at this event!