

# Christian Mauduit - ultrarunner

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All contents of "Christian Mauduit - ultrarunner" on Mon Nov 10 2014

## [Christian Mauduit - ultrarunner](#)

So this is where I talk my various sport-related adventures. The general subject here is [running](#) , but running "for a very long time". I'm interested in anything that is longer than a marathon. To start with, you could read this [race report](#) . If you like numbers, just check out my [best times](#) but I'd better warn you the main purpose of all my training and racing is just to *enjoy* running. So this blog is here to share my experiences with others. I even have a [piece of advice](#) on how to run farer and faster.



This is not a running event. But I like the picture.

This being said, I'm in my (late!) thirties, I'm the happy father with three charming daughters and live with my spouse [Valérie](#). My [father](#) also does some ultra-running.

The big question one might ask oneself when one sees someone running 100k, and even more, is "why?". I'd return you the question: "why not?". Why would we stop at mile 26 when we could go further?

Finally, I'll let the last work to [Nietzsche](#). This quote comes from "Human, All Too Human":

"Exhaustion is the shortest way to equality and fraternity"

Enjoy.

[ufoot](#)

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## [Year 2008](#)

The big event this year was my participating in the [Spartathlon](#). You can read (in French) my spouse [Valérie's report](#) or view (comments also in French) my [vidéo](#).



Picture taken by Glenn Tachiyama at kilometer 78,5

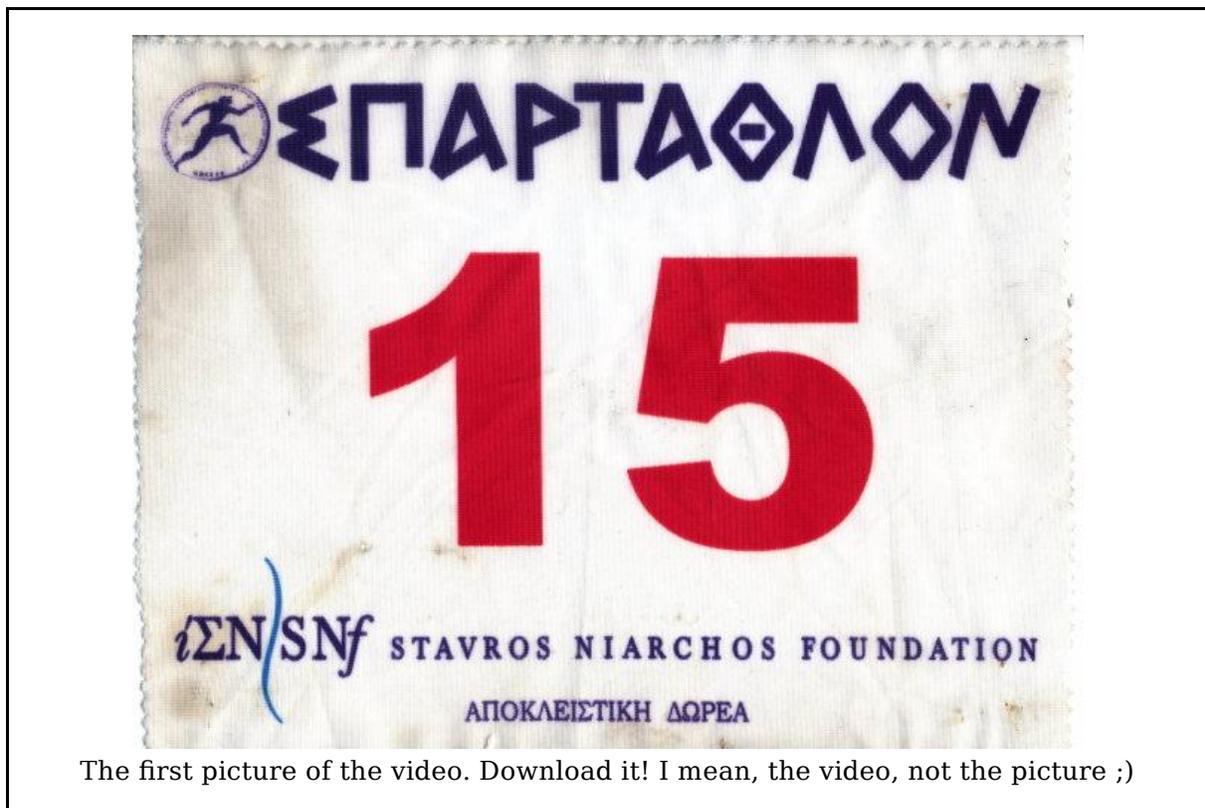
I was very proud to make it and [touch Leonidas'foot](#) after a little less than 31 hours of effort.

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## [Spartathlon race report](#)

### September 26th & 27th 2008

You can take a look at the [video](#), which stands as my race report for this event. The comments are in French but the images themselves are sort of naturally internationalized ;) It's also available as an [OGG Vorbis file \(100 Mb\)](#) and as an [MPEG file \(321 Mb\)](#).



In short, everything went fine. I crossed the finish line after 30h41'51" of almost continuous running. I'm 22nd out of 300 starters. Probably one of the most remarkable races I've been given the occasion to participate in.

Just FYI, below is the global training volume I followed to between January and September 2008, and which allowed me to finish the race:

- running : 2600km
- bike : 3000km
- swim : 50km
- roller-skate : 400km
- weight training : 50 workouts (about 1 hour each)

The whole thing represents about 500 hours of training, that is an average of 2 hours per day.

The race was really wonderful.

ufoot.

PS: To read the OGG Vorbis/Theora format, try [VLC](#).

PPS: about the music of the video -> the first one is an old MOD file called [aryx.s3m](#) on which I stumbled on while playing [EITtris](#). It was composed by Karsten Koch. The second is Al Capone, played by the [Kosmonot](#), which is a French brass band I appreciate. I also do play this kind of music ;)

PPPS: the movie has been entirely build with [Free Software](#), including [Kino](#) and [Audacity](#).

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## [Year 2009](#)

This year, the great novelty is that I'll do some triathlon again. Indeed, after the [Spartathlon](#) in 2008, I needed some change. Something different. So decided to participate in the [Triple Ultra Triathlon of Lensahn](#), Germany. We'll see.

PS: I have translated into English my [race report](#) of this events. Thanks again for all the people in Lensahn for being so great.

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## [Race report of Lensahn Triple Ultra Triathlon](#)

It's been a long long time since I first heard about ultra-triathlon. Must be at least 20 years ago. When I started - triathlon, I mean - I had heard about Fabrice Lucas, about the "Fontanil" (an ultra-triathlon which was held in France, some years ago). All this looked very distant to me. Meanwhile, I have raced "single" Ironman distances, ran ultra-trails, 100km, but well, participating in a "double" or a "triple", and even a "deca" sounded highly unlikely to happen.

Still, participating in the [Spartathlon](#) , something changed. Something changed because at kilometer 170, I met Emmanuel Conraux, and we talked. We talked and talked - while running - and he told me about the multiple-Ironman ultra-triathlon distances, how races were, about the ambiance. And it sounded cool. And sort of "doable". So well, I decided to go to [Lensahn](#) in 2009, to complete my ultra craziness ;) This German race is a "triple" : 11,4km swim, 540km bike, 126,6 run.

My preparation was pretty much the same I would have done for any other race. My theory is that, for an ultra, all that really counts is to be in good shape. Then you can get to the starting line of pretty much any raise, provided you've the ground endurance and took some rest the week before. I mostly trained running, did some significant bike, and a little swim.

It's funny to note that whatever I'm preparing for, my "base training" is a standard "one hour run", at a moderate pace. I just jog. To specialized for this peculiar race, I decided to participate in a [24h foot race](#) in Brive, France, to get used to race "many laps" on the same track, and race a [triathlon](#) just to remember how it feels to practice the "triple effort". And here we go, I'm ready!



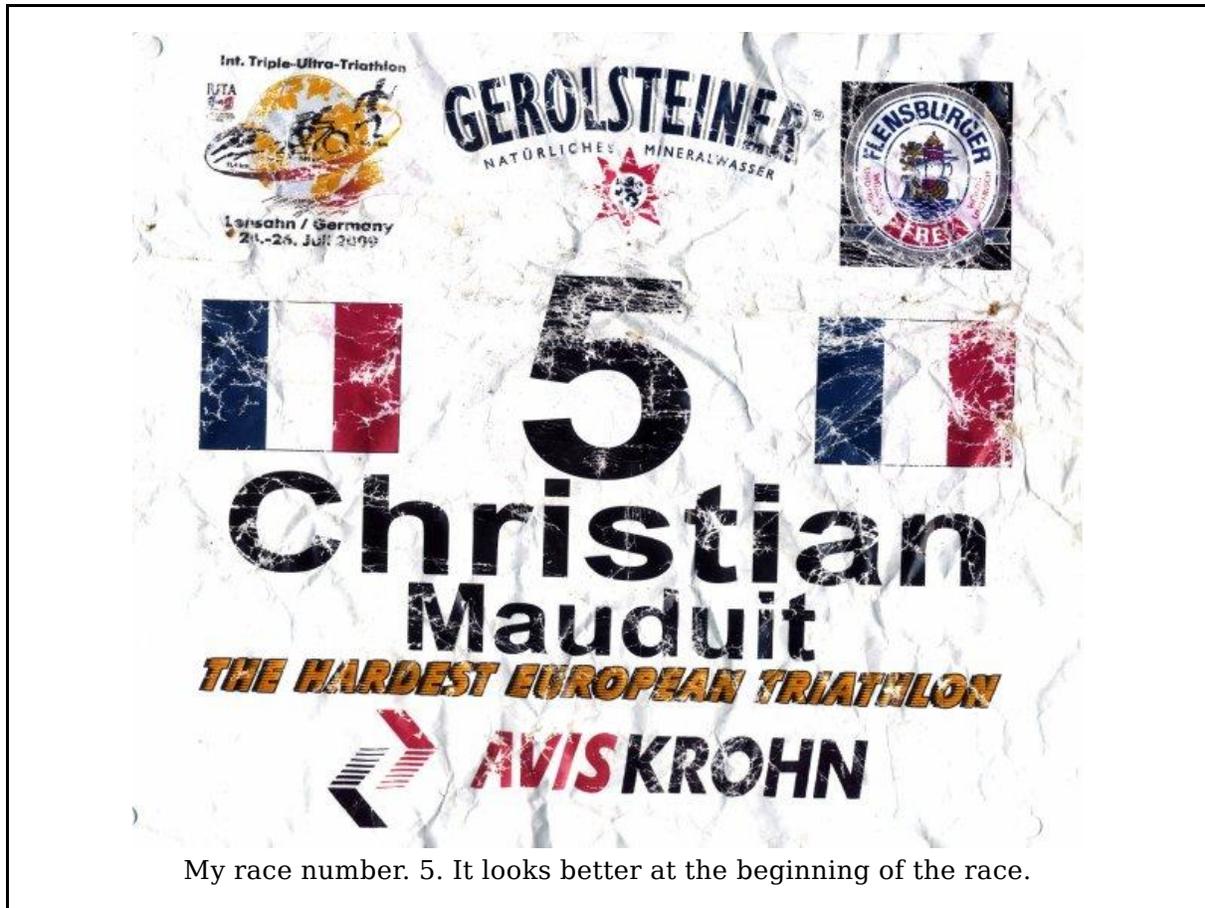
My car with all the bikes on the roof. Should I race with the pink one?

I left home on wednesday before the race (start was friday morning) and halted at [Saïd's](#) home, and discovered his painting workshop. The next day, it's raining and raining and raining. I'm starting to fear this is not going to be easy at all.



My friend's home. Don't be fooled by its... look.

Arriving in Lensahn, I very soon meet the other French guys participating in the race. Emmanuel Conraux, Pascal Jolly, Fabrice Lucas and Guy Rossi. All of them are specialists of this discipline, and very pleasant to talk with. I plant my tent, as planned, pretty much anywhere. We also have the possibility to sleep "inside". I use this facility, since I have 3 little kids (aged 2, 4 and 5) and last night storm certainly must not be fun when sleeping in a tent! Once set up, we go to the "pasta-party".



I'm not saying I'm "stressed" but well, the official start is tomorrow, and I still don't have my race number. Plus these medical certificate quite get on my nerves, there's this hematocrit test I'm not sure to understand and in a general manner, I would just like these things to be done and over. In fact, there's no reason to panic, the race number is given at the athlete presentation ceremony. It's very nice, the [IUTA](#) seem to have set up a special protocol, where all competitors shake hands and smile each other. Neat. I talk with my neighbours, and get the basic paperwork done with Meike a few minutes after.



Yeah, it's clever to bring a tent with you. My daughters are well aware of that.

The other good news I get this evening is that I got a crew! Unbelievable, several German girls offer to assist me during the "whole" race. Initially what we had planned was that my spouse [Valérie](#) was supposed to help me for the "minimum" tasks such as transitions and some basic food refueling, but well, given the fact that she also has to take care of our 3 young little girls, she clearly can't match the efficiency of my new German team. Myriam and her friends - Myriam rapidly proves to be the one that speaks English the most fluently, and as my German is just ridiculously bad, she's the one I'll talk to most of the time - know the race very well. Better than I! They have an impressive equipment, including a tent, chairs, and everything I could dream. I'm supposed to explain them how I view things and what I'll need, but I soon realize they are much more experienced than me. So well, I simply explain that all my food is in that box, that I like everything in it (I choose what's in it, after all), and clothes are in this bag. What I'll need depends on the wether and well, just forget it, let's go to bed, we'll see tomorrow ;)



Filling up the tank with high-quality and tasty fuel.

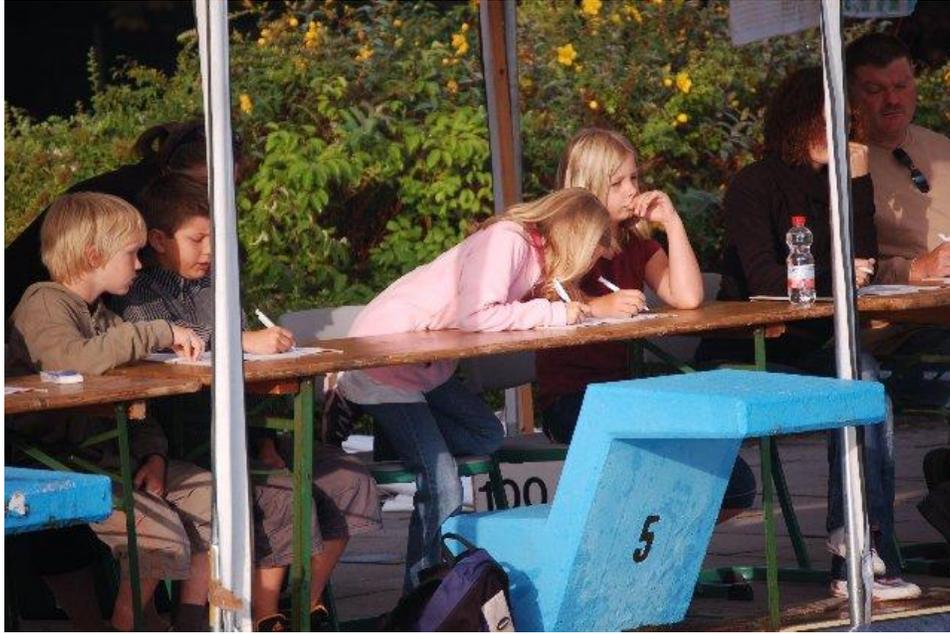
I have a terrible time before going to bed, trying to pin 100 times my numbers, mixing my clothes, checking the chip is in the bag, and so on. Beginner's panic. At its maximum.

Wake up.

I get out of the room, take a breakfast. Milk, muesli, nothing else. I head toward the swimming pool, and meet Cynthia, one of my brand new crew members. Everything's all right. Only Myriam and Cynthia look skeptical and concerned about how few food and drinks I have prepared for the swim. I naively thought a single bottle would fit. I had up some chocolate, a banana, sirup and coca-cola until both girls seem satisfied. After all, they have the experience of the race. I don't. I can certainly run 3 or 4 hours without eating and drinking much, but swimming might prove another story. Next, they ask me if I have some cream. Cream? Why cream? Cream for my neck? Oh yeah! Unfortunately, I have no cream. Will be for the next race ;) I also meet Fabrice Lucas and ask him about what he has planned. He plans to stop every 20 minutes. I judge this is quite often, so I decide - this is a last minute decision, 10 minutes only before the real start - that I'll stop every half hour. So it will be easy for my crew to know when I stop and get ready for the "pit stop".

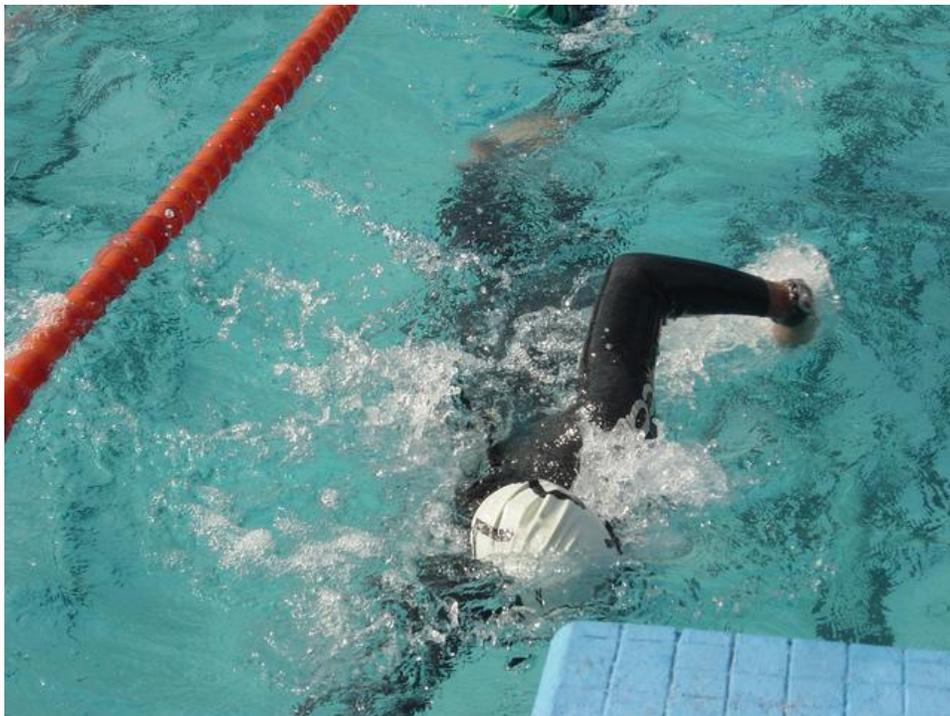
Start.

I start rather fast, I don't wish to be last in my lane, and be blocked by others. I think I'm sort of "underrated" and could possibly be in one of the faster lanes. I'm in lane 5, having announced an Ironman distance time of 1h20'. This was my real time, but since I signed up for the race, I trained and now I swim faster. There's music. It's dull, I can't hear it when swimming, but I guess spectators enjoy it. My ears are filled with that typical crawler's rumbling. I really enjoy swimming. Not only today, but in general. I like water. I'm not a great swimmer, but the very fact to take some pleasure being there is a real plus. The 50m pool is really cool. Distances look shorter than in the crowded 25m pool I usually train in. Today, the pool looks like a "boulevard" to me, there's room, it's big, clear water. I appreciate.



Kids carefully take note of every passage of every swimmer.

30 minutes since race start. As planned, I stop. Hey, where's my bottle? I was sure to have put it somewhere round here! My bottle? My bottle? Panic on board! I stay here, stuck, not knowing what to do. When I hear on my left "here! here!". OK, I lost my brain in the pool, Myriam was just one meter on the left, with my bottle, ready and all. I drink, and go.



228 \* 50 meters to go.

Kilometers go by. I do not count my laps, I just check my watch from time to time. I know that if I swim well, I can get out in 4 hours. After 2 hours, a symbolic barrier is reached : I had never been that far in water, swimming. Valérie and the kids are here to say hello. It's nice to see them. I'm happy.



Eating while swimming is something I had never done before. It's nice but forget about your nice favourite big piece of red meat.

Two hours thirty. Time to stop again. I drink mint-flavored sirup. I add up some chocolate (delicious, with big whole chestnuts in it, yummy!). Then I just look behind me and see two swimmers. Since I'm one of the fastest in my lane, if I let them pass me, then I will need to pass them again, and I don't feel like doing this. So I start up right away and push very strong on my legs to get some significant initial speed. Aouch!!! Cramp in my left calf. Gosh, it hurts. I'm in a bad position, my mouth is filled with half-chewed chocolate and nuts, one of my legs can't move, and I've got 2 swimmers on my track, just behind. I paddle as hard as I can with my arms not to slow down and disturb the others behind, while trying to relax my left leg. After something that must be about 30 meters only but seems to last for an eternity, my calf contraction finally stops. Next time I won't push like this with my legs, and I'll finish eating my chocolate before going back to swim.



Fabrice getting ready for the bike. Notice all the other bikes are still there, as he's one of the first to get out of the water.

After 3 hours of race, I'm pretty impressed by my overall "freshness". Yes, I'm thirsty and I badly need to take a pee, but my arms do not feel much worse than after the first hour. This is good news!



At last, since 50m craziness is over.

My official swim time is 3h46'35". I'd swear I did a bit less than 11,4km but only something like 11,3km but after all, I didn't really count them. My opinion based on broken calculus improvised after 3h30 swimming is certainly an order of magnitude less reliable than the official count. Who cares anyway.



Two of my almost-too-perfect female crew members.

Being out of the water, I decide to opt for warm clothes. Usually, in a triathlon, it's enough to start fast on your bike to annihilate the coldness one gets swimming. But here, on an ultra, I don't want to start fast. So I put on long sleeves and "long everything", almost ready for winter. Additionnally, I do not really know what the weather will be like in an hour or two.



OK, no hurry, I'll get on my bike once on the road. I don't care about 10 seconds more or less, after all.

I wait until I'm on the real road to get on my bike. A good ol' mountain bike, with road "slick" tires and some basic triathlon accessories, to be able to "rest" on my elbows and spare my arms. This is unusual, most other athletes do have real race bikes. I like mine. Heavy but comfortable. And cheap.



The tent where I'll (probably too often) stop to get some refreshments, food, and

other things.

So I discover the bike course. I take my marks. OK, here's the tent where my crew is waiting for me. And this is the first U-turn. The other one is... Hey!!! Oh, yes, sorry, I missed it. This is where it was.

Now, I'm getting hot. Manu too. I change clothes. I eat a lot. And I can't stop changing and changing over. This is not something I'm used too, I'm more of the "wear this T-shirt from kilometer 0 to the end" type. But this day, in Lensahn, for reasons I can't really understand, I hesitate. I think I'm scared to be too hot and dehydrate myself by sweating too much, and also scared to be too cold and have digestion problems (this is common with me, I fear cold for that) which would be a very bad situation.

So well, after some time I decide to make "big official pauses" at 12h00, 16h00, 20h00, 24h00, and so on. Every 4 hours. These cycles correspond to a "4 meals a day" rhythm, assuming the day is a "normal" day and not one of those crazy 24h/24-never-ever-stop race days. A plate of sausages and puree makes me feel much better.

In a general manner, I judge I stop really too often, and I loose much time by doing so but well, my main goal is to finish the race, and in the long run these stops might prove to be usefull.



Here, the chip goes biiip-biiip-biiip. Behind my is Guy Rossi.

The other French guys keep on passing me. They always have a nice word for me. To be honest, not only the French pass me, it looks like everybody is going faster and that I'm the slowest guy on track. It might be true as well, since started at position 17th, I'll end up 27th (out of about 40).



...my daughters in our tent, during an intense drawing session. The race is long!

The afternoon goes by, and we get soaked by the rain. I feel a little concerned about my clothes. I do not have that many weather-proof stuff, and if I change too often to wear dry items, I'll end up with everything being wet. This is because these years, I mostly run when it rains, and I practice cycling only when the weather is cool. This was a bright idea at the time I was only racing "foot races", but now that I'm getting involved in triathlon, I'd better get more bike-compatible good quality clothes. And one cheap thing I'd need badly now is this transparent water-proof jacket everyone seems to have, but me. So well, I'm hesitating between my two jackets. Should I put the best one now and risk it to be soaked too soon? Or keep it for later, but risk getting cold right now? I can't remember exactly what I did, but what I'm sure of is that the weather wasn't that bad. Had it been worse, I would probably have regretted not to have come with a more adequate equipment.

Night comes. People continue to race like mad. I'm impressed by the level of the best athletes. They go fast, real fast. After up to 200km of race, and probably 300km for some, the rhythm remains pretty much the same. On a popular 24h foot race, at night, you would see many competitors taking a rest. Here, no. Maybe pit stops tend to be a little longer, but that's all. Impressive.

I'm having problems with my lights. I had initially planed to use my wife's bike lamps. Unfortunately here bike was stolen, in France, a few days before the race. And I forgot to buy another one. So when I left France, I picked up (last minute!) some lamps that were taking the dust in an old box, and here we go. I though I could rely on my old Petzl Zipka (head lamp) tied to my bike. But... one of the girls who help me explains me one needs *\*two\** lights. Neglecting the fact that many other racers only have one light (I don't want to argue) I use some tape and fix a "spare lamp" on the bike. And that's it. Solved in 3 minutes.

This little problem illustrates the spirit in which I handled this race. I prepared the minimum, was serious on the important points (I actually *\*did\** have a spare lamp, just in

case) and for the rest I had a "wait and see" practical approach.

My "team" does a great job. I mean, really great. I want a soup? I have soup! Puree? I have puree! Everything on demand, it's better than I dreamed. I just have to ask for something, and next lap, it's available. Sure I tend to stop for not-so-required stuff, but enjoying their warm greetings is something I certainly don't want to miss.

Midnight passes.

I start getting tired. One in the morning. I feel dizzy. For the second time I "miss" the (obvious) U-turn near the stands. My rhythm is fading too, I'm way over 20 minutes per lap. I'm not physically exhausted, but I'm tired, I want to sleep, be elsewhere in a warm bed.

Two in the morning. I'm supposed to wait yet 2 hours more before my next official "big stop", at 4h. At about 3 in the morning, I try and think and figure out that my main goal being to *finish* the race, I shouldn't get exhausted at its beginning. And, this is still the beginning. So I do what I had planned **\*not\*** to do, I get ready to take a nap. I'm about to get some sleep right on the ground when my crew insists that I use the bed (yes, there's a bed too!) in the stand. I lie down and insist a bazillion times that it's of the utmost importance to wake me up in 15 minutes. I finally let it go and try to fall asleep as fast as possible. I hear the other bikes. It's just so cool to be here and not have to cycle and cycle again. I calm down. I don't care any more about time, laps, and the rest. Then I sort of half wake-up and look at my watch, convinced the girls forgot to wake me up (sorry for not being able to trust you :| but well, I guess I was too stressed). But no, it's been only 10 minutes since I've lied down. I go back to "sleep". Just when I was about to really fall asleep "Christian, wake up!". I ump out of the bed, drink a coffee as fast as possible, get ready, and go!

Tadaaaaaa!!!

I worked, I feel just so fresh, I feel like boozing, having a great party, my legs are perfect, I sing in my head, I'm happy to be here, on my bike, at night, after over 300km. Everything's fine.

How long this magic will last, I don't know. But If I can manage it until the sun rises, it's enough.

And here comes the sun. I'm still on my bike. Now I don't feel like being the slowest one any more. I'm in the race. At last! This feeling is probably not due to the fact that I accelerated, but more probably to the fact that the first ones are already running, and have finished the bike part.

Last but not least, rain is back again.



Guy Rossi, running. Guy is always smiling.

A few laps before I'm done with the bike, I see a group of people on my right. Stupid accident (I don't know what happened, he probably got asleep on his bike), an athlete is here with his broken bike, not too badly hurt, but at least well shocked. This makes me think I might have been really wise to take that little nap, a few hours ago.

From time to time I look at my bike odometer (by default it does not display distance, only time, showing distance is too bad for ones mind, it's a motivation killer) and the "540" limit is closing.

I'm happy to be done with this part, at last I will have the permission to go and run with the friends!

I make a smooth transition. I don't want to hurry. Still one last-minute adjustment on my running clothes, I trade my initial pair of shorts for some warmer stuff. Weather does not really look like it's summer here ;)

My first running laps feel surprisingly very easy. My legs do not hurt at all. No problem, no nothing, everything's fine. I feel I could peak at 13km/h if I wanted. Some tried to do it. They now regret it ;) Experience taught me that the "comet attitude", firing and wasting all bullets too soon, is always a bad move. So I keep calm.



How come it can take more than 6 hours to complete a marathon? Answer: analyse my stride carefully, you might get valuable clues.

Very soon, and even with my slow start, I slow down. The course is rather nice and varied. But fatigue can't be fooled like this. I finally reach the point where I have "only 100k to go" (and for the second time in the race, think of it, the Triple Ultra Ironman is one of the only race that allows this!). At this point, I feel really tired. Sort of fed up with all this. Only 100k to go. Yeah, great. Sure. Piece of cake. What kind of an idiot am I to get involved in such events?

Cynthia is with me on the bike. That's the big plus of choosing a mountain bike for the race: I can lend it to my crew ;) Others will accompany me as well, but I think Cynthia did really the big part of the job. I did not count the laps she did, but she did many. My crew had the bright idea to move the stand to the most obvious and convenient place in the world, just about the finish line.



Pascal Jolly and Emmanuel Conraux. They did most of the run together. Very efficient.

The Conraux/Jolly team is efficient. They look tired but this is quite logical, and they are a bunch of laps ahead of me... Guy Rossi moves slowly, but with a constant pace. Fabrice Lucas is good for a DNF, he's wounded (something at the ankle, as I understand it).



There's a little climb, but its counterpart is this little portion where things get (a little) easier.

I talk with Manu Conraux, and come to the conclusion the one thing I have to do is not to start walking, but keep running instead.



The tent has now moved to the best place ever, right close to the finish line.

So I invent my own rhythm, almost a ritual, which makes all that thing acceptable. Each time I cross the finish line, I allow myself to walk a bit, and stop a bit as well to get some drink and food. This way I can "handle" my 10 minutes running laps. I know that after 10 minutes, a little rest is waiting for me. This sort of "oasis" makes it feasible to run the rest of the time. Every 4 hours, I still allow myself a "big" break. "big" means something like 2 or 3 minutes. To this, I have to add another type of breaks, because my stomach is starting to get upside-down, and I'm having serious digestion troubles. Good thing there are restrooms just on the side of the track... And, yes, believe me or not, the public toilet paper standard, here, in Germany, is way higher than in France. Instead of that awfull raw stuff we get in the Hexagon and which is barely better than a sheet of newspaper, here we have thick, soft, almost perfumed high-quality stuff. That's comfort, and I appreciate it!



Cynthia is on the bike, just beside me. She followed me for many laps like this, proving everlasting patience. This was definitely a valuable help.

So you might have noticed it, I just can't stop stopping. On one hand, this is not very efficient. On the other hand, I only walk near the finish line, for the rest of the course, I run all the time, including during the little "climb" (looks ridiculous to call this a climb, but after a while, one feels it's somewhat steep). Still, running 10 minutes in a row really feels hard. My stomach is getting real bad. It's alternatively warm and rainy, and I'm fed up with this race. Valérie transmits me encouragements from the [French UFO Forum](#) and their SMS. I try to stay positive but I kind of fail to do it. I'm thinking I still have 10 or 12 hours to go...



Still a whole night to go. You need to find deep sources of motivation in such a situation.

So I decide to stop for one more "quarter of an hour sleep". The second one. I lay down in my tent and ask Cynthia to wake me up fifteen minutes later. I give her my watch. Since I have my feet outside the tent, my head is "below" the rest of my body and I feel the blood getting into it. So I pick up some random clothes, pack them into a little pillow to have my head higher, and get ready to sleep. I just let everything go away, like if I was surrendering, ready for a DNF. It's over, I want to rest.

Cynthia touches my ankle. I wake up. The rest is over. I go back on track. Once again, I feel much much better. It's too bad this technique eats up 20 minutes, since it's so efficient. I'm really in the race again. One lap running, walk near the finish line, drink it, walk 10 meters, go back to run, and do it again.

I have good reasons to think my global performance and position will be correct, since I see many participants walk a lot. At this pace they will need hours and hours to finish the race.

The first one (sort of a martian to be, he's dressed in green and goes so fast he might come from another planet) has finished. Pascal and Manu too. Night is here again.

At the very instant I have "only a marathon left" I feel great, almost like I would be on ecstasy. I surprise myself to *dance* near the finish line (there's music). The following couple of laps are really great and I dream of a bullet-finish, get rid of this last marathon in less than 5h30 and arrive before the symbolic 45h00 limit.

Well, this was expectable, this euphoria does not last. OK, I have done 3 times 3800 swimming, plus 3 times 180km cycling, plus 2 times 42,2km running, so to some extent, I only have one ninth to go. A marathon, yeah, piece of cake. Except this marathon is just sooo long and so slooow. This is not fair. I swam, cycled, ran for 100km, and this is still not over. I've got the blues again, my spirit is going down, I'm cracking from everywhere, the end is

near.

Two hours before the end (I now count time in 10 minutes slices, I don't think in term of kilometers, it's too depressing) I feel my pace is falling down. I still jog, but it's now really a slow plod, and I'm exhausted. So for the third time, I'm going to try and take a little express-sleep. Only 10 minutes, I can't spare more, since I only have 2 hours to get my "investment" back.

I wake up. This time the magic does not work as well. My legs are sore (no kidding!) and hard like wood. Plus I'm cold. Still, I take a new pace which is much better than what it was before stopping. My head thinks "yeah, come on, show what you can do!" which is an order of magnitude better than the previous "OMG everything is lost I'll never make it to the end".

Several runners have finished now, including some which looked real bad. In fact, any of the runners left could be finishing next lap, from what I know. After my little rest, I start seeing Guy Rossi again. I wasn't seeing him much lately, I guess we were on the opposite positions on the track. Now I do my laps in about 11 minutes, and he does them in about 14 minutes, so we get to see each other again. I feel my 15 minutes "invested" in a rest were not such a bad bet.

The question I'm asking myself is "who will be the next finisher?" doing his last lap in reverse, with his national flag in hand. Guess who? Guy Rossi! Himself. Hey man, that's funny, considering Saïd told me just two days ago a story in which Guy was just 300 meters before him in a 24h race. This guy is real strong.

I didn't take the time to ask my crew, before my last break, if there was someone before or behind me. Had I known Guy was at hand, I might have found enough motivation without even stopping, and since my main problem was a bad spirit, this might have been enough. But wait, it's easy to rewrite history and make the race afterwards, comfortably installed behind a computer or with a beer chatting with friends in a bar. No, seriously. I was just doing my best. No regret.

So well, I just cross Guy who's going the other way, then make my own U-turn and meet all the other runners on my way back. We shake hands, they congratulate me, I wish them a good journey. 4 of the girls (yeah, 4 girls, and this is only a fraction of my crew during this crazy extended week-end!). I'm not very tender with them since I set the throttle "on" and simply go as fast as I can. Fortunately this is not too fast, but they are tired too (they've spend so many hours helping me, being at the stand, cycling, even running beside me) and I guess everyone is exhausted at the end. It might sound stupid to do this final rush (who cares about that extra minute more or less, seriously?) but I really, really, want to get under 46h. It's like that. Runner's stuff, I guess non-racers might not get it, but I do have some sort of competitive mind, especially when I'm running against myself.



Yeah, I did it. Note the way I do not even walk one single meter after the finish line.  
Nothing to spare.

It's almost 5 in the morning, the sun is rising, I've done it.



The rest is over, and I feel like... taking a rest.

Until the end my crew has been efficient and close to perfect. My sandals are here, on the finish line, waiting for me. This feels so good! I wonder what I'd have done without all this valuable help. The story would certainly not have been the same.



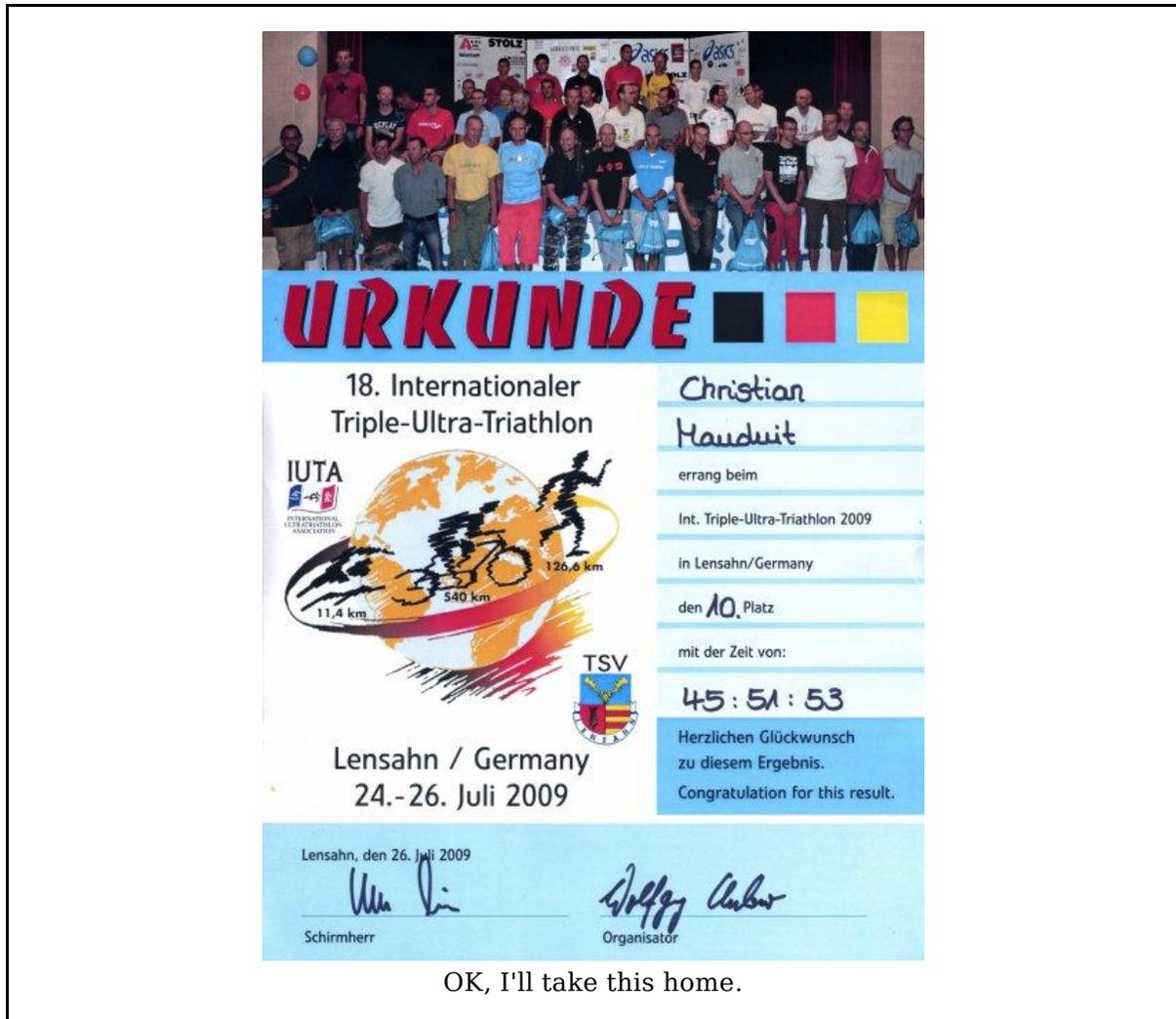
Hey, I get a nice trophy and can shake hands. This was definitely worth it! ;)

I'll finally keep an excellent "souvenir" of this race. I remember all this participants, all of them highly motivated, well-trained and nice to talk with. I remember the last one to arrive, 5 minutes before the overall time limit. Have you ever seen a happy guy smiling? I did. I remember Manu, at night, at something like 2 or 4 in the morning, encouraging me in what seems like 4th dimension. I remember the 4th (Ferenc), always smiling, and his beautiful running style. All these tents, illuminated at night, with life everywhere, this crazy night cycling and cycling forever, hoping rain won't come too soon. The spectators which now call me "allez papa!", an allusion to my little girls crying "go daddy go!" in French. And my daughter Lise, who, while I was sleeping after the race, made a little drawing on a sheet of paper and wrote "daddy, I wish you a good race!".

Ultra-Triathlon		Triple-Ultra-Triathlon				
SE. NF.	Name	Nat.	Rank	Name	Nat.	Rank
1	Conraux, Emmanuel	FRA	3	19	Corradini, Kurt	ITA
2	Rossi, Guy	FRA	3	20	Hessner, Werner	ITA
3	Jolly, Pascal	FRA	3	21	Meier, Daniel	GER
4	Lucas, Fabrice	FRA	1	22	Schwarz, René	GER
5	Mauduit, Christian	FRA	5	23	Zimochka, René	GER
6	Markovic, Matej	SLV	1	24	Ornstedt, Arnold	GER
7	Clamp, Dave	GBR	2	25	Schulz, Martin	GER
8	Fisher, Tony	GBR	2	26	Rau, Meinrad	GER
9	Cusick, Peter	GBR	5	27	Abram, Horst	GER
10	Ochoa Domingo, Carlos	ESP	3	28	Veit, Jens	GER
11	Sorrentino, Angelo	ITA	3	29	Garber, Michael	GER
12	Catalano, Vincenzo	ITA	6	30	Alte, Joachim	GER
13	Harmari, János	HUN	2	31	Hoblinger, Roland	GER
14	Voncku, Antal	HUN	5	32	Eckmann, Frank	GER
15	Szanyi, Ferenc	HUN	5	33	Oesterheld, Peter	GER
16	Martens, Kari	SWE	4	34	Lorenz, Thomas	GER
17	Plahn, Michael	DEU	1	35	Schöne, Stefan	GER
18	Eilholm, Tom	DEU	6	36	Reißel, Thomas	GER

The results, displayed on a big board.

My 2009 season is over. I might one or two little races after, just to keep in shape, but nothing significant. After something like this, I need a serious goal to get the machine back on track. What could that be? Surprise!



PS: did I tell you this race in Lensahn is great, and all the people there great too? Well, probably ;) But the better proof I can give you that it's so cool is that... next year, in 2010, I'll be back again! With my father Jean-Paul. Racing too.

PPS: OK, this is not really secret anymore, my main 2010 goal is to complete a "deca". Just like Lensahn, but a bit longer.

## Year 2010



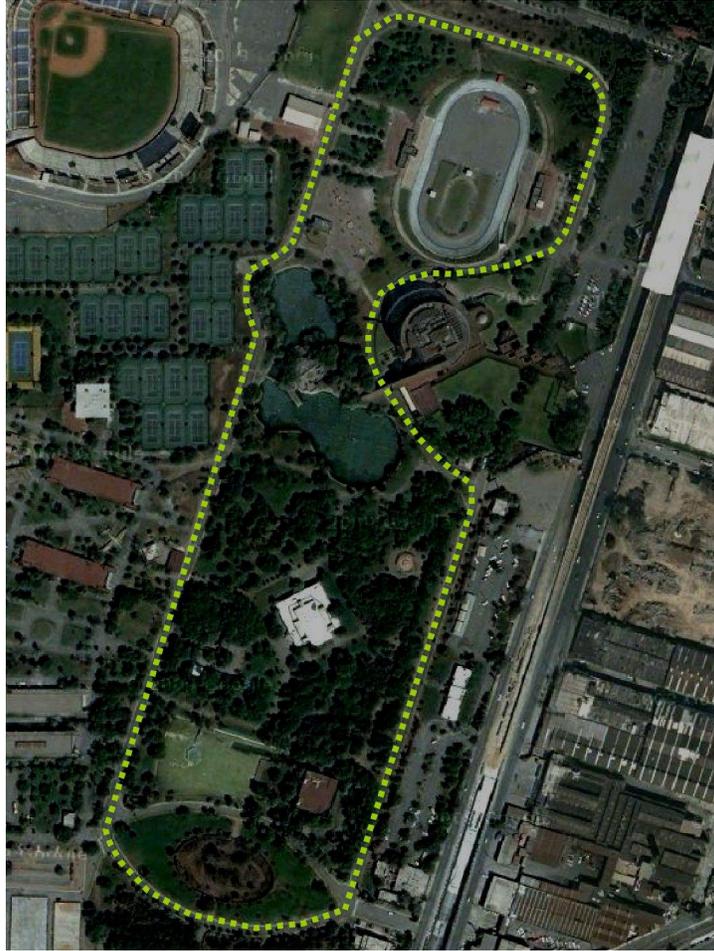
UFO stands for UltraFONDus. Picture taken at Lensahn ultra-triathlon.

My 2010 goal is to finish a ["deca-Ironman"](#). 38km swim, 1800km bike, 422km run. This is said. I plan to have some [partners](#) since this happens to be a "big expedition" at the other end of the planet (well, not quite, but almost).

2010 is going to be yet another exciting year!

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## [Ultra Triathlon](#)



The 1800m track. One way cycling, the other way running. Many laps to go in both ways.

This blog is about my participating in the 2010 [Monterrey deca-Ironman](#) . I ( [Christian Mauduit](#) ) appreciate long distance races, often referred to as "ultra". Of course, such an event does require some [preparation](#) as well as [partners](#) . I hope you'll enjoy following this (long!) adventure. My email -> [ufoot@ufoot.org](mailto:ufoot@ufoot.org).

### **Latest news**

Now the race is over, the good news is that [I did it, in 199h09min29s](#) , and 1st position.

A [video](#) retracing the event is available, as well as a written [race report](#) . More pictures are available in the [live](#) section, but this one is in French only.

### **2010 deca-triathlets**



Monterrey 2010 decaironmens - presentation ceremony

- [David Clump](#) (deca, 2nd in 9 days and 23h)
- [Sergio Cordeiro](#) (deca, 3th in 10 days and 6h)
- [Vincenzo Catalano](#) (deca)
- [Kim Greisen](#) (double deca)
- [Eileen Steel](#) (double deca, woman, DNF)
- [Arthur Puckrin](#) (double deca, oldest in the race)
- [John Price](#) (double deca, his first triathlon, he's a long distance runner)
- [Ferenc Szonyi](#) (double deca)
- [Beat Knechtle](#) (quintuple, winner)
- [Kale Poland](#) (quintuple)
- [Daniel Meier](#) (quintuple)
- [Nick Mallett](#) (quintuple)

The others don't have a website, or at least we don't know it: **Greger Sundin** (double deca), **Uwe Shiwon** (double deca), **Carlos Ochoa Domingo** (double deca), **Roberto Lendaro** (double deca), **Giorgio Alessi** (double deca), **Wayne P. Kurtz** (deca), **Antal Voneki** (deca), **Daniel Jensen** (deca), **Dominique Douvier** (deca), **Roger Lehman** (deca), **Jozsef Rokob** (deca).

## [The « deca » in Monterrey](#)

What's a deca-Ironman? It's a triathlon. Swim + bike + run. But a deca-Ironman is a long one. A *very very very* long one. It's the equivalent of **swimming across the Channel** (\*)

followed by **more than 1000 miles on a bike** (\*\*), and then 10 marathons, that is more than **0,5 million steps** (\*\*\*)).

### Imagine...

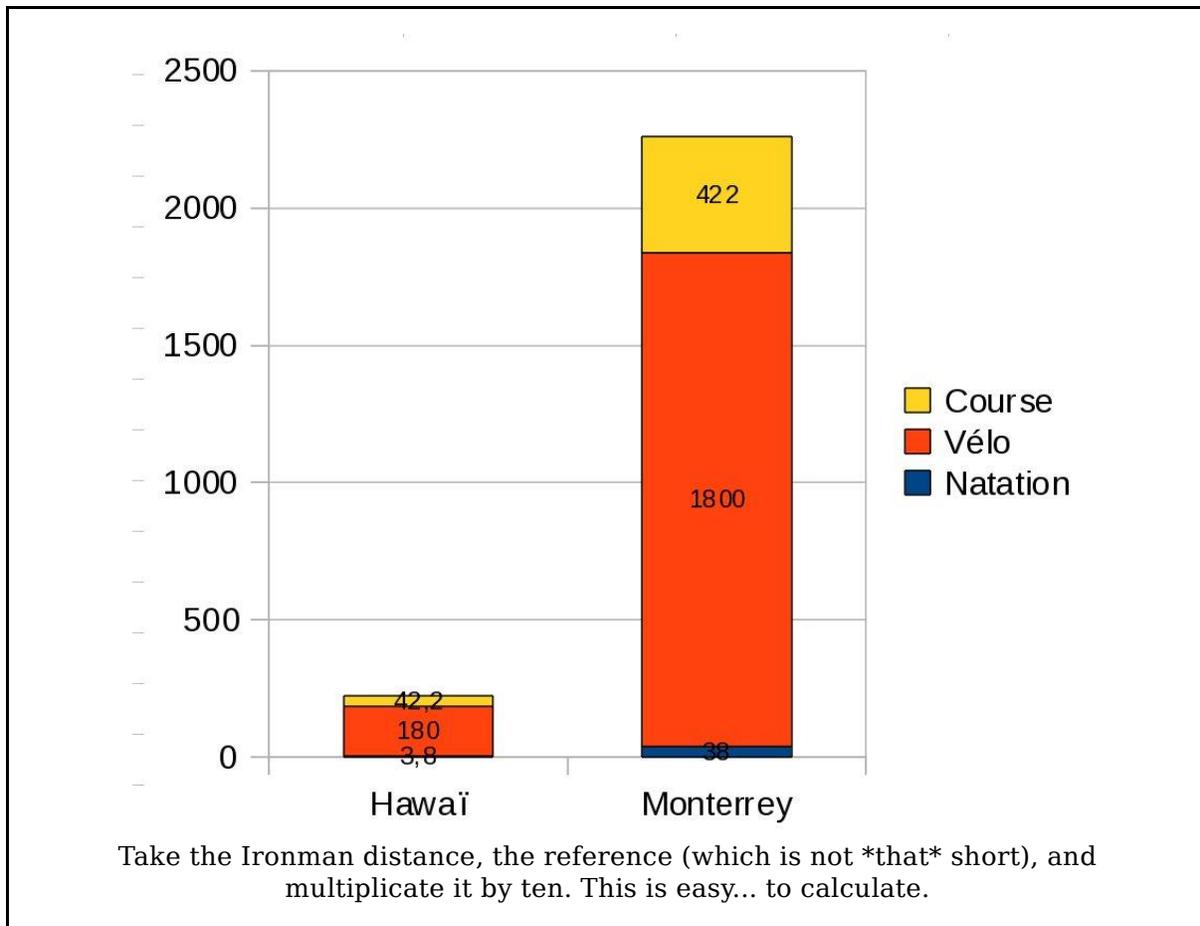


50 meters to go, 50 meters to go back. Repeat this 380 times. Piece of cake ;)

...after a good day swimming (760 laps in a 50m olympic pool), you start cycling. 980 laps on a [ring](#) which is barely over one mile. Every 5 minutes you start again, yet another lap. Once this is over, there are still 223 laps to run, on the same track, in the other way.

A few figures :

- Swim : 38 km
- Bike : 1 800 km
- Run : 422 km
- World record : 8 days
- Time limit : 14 days



The [classical](#) Hawaiï Ironman, is 3,8km, then 180km and finally 42km. Monterrey is just 10 times longer. The « deca » in [Monterrey, Mexico, in November](#) is the longest regular race officially recorded in the [calendar](#) of ultra-triathlon races. In 2010, there will even be a "double deca". Same place, same date.

(\*) *well, not quite. The Channel, the real one, is harder, with cold, waves, tankers, salt, oil and jellyfish. I checked that out.*

(\*\*) *with the noticeable difference that in races such as the « Tour de France », racers can rest in a comfortable Hotel every night. Not here. In a « deca », the clock is always running, if you sleep, you loose time.*

(\*\*\*) « half » a million. Looks like this is an event for « half » athletes ;)

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## [Christian Mauduit](#)



This was back in the 80s, when I was a kid. I had a 130km ride on this rusty 50 years-old bike.

- Age : 35 years
- Profession : IT engineer (race is a [hobby](#))
- Family : [married](#), [3 children](#)

I am a member of the [Triathlon 91](#) (triathlon club of St Michel sur Orge, France) and [USA Athlétisme](#) (runners club of Argenteuil, France).

This is not my first « ultra » race :

- Road : [Marathon in 2h55](#), [100km in 9h25](#)
- 24h : [205km](#)
- Historical route of the Marathon battle messenger : [Spartathlon](#) (246km in 30h42)
- Trail : [Grand Raid de la Réunion](#) (142km, 8000m D+ in 32h27), [UTMB](#) (158km, 8500m D+ in 37h41)
- In a team : Raid 28 ([2005](#), [2006](#), [2007](#), [2008](#)), 80km by night, in winter, in mud and water, compass in hand
- 3 times « finisher » at the Embrun triathlon ([1998](#), [2004](#), [2006](#))
- [Triple-Ironman](#) (11,4km, 540km, 126km) in Lensahn, Germany, 10th in 45h52



246km in Greece, on the track of Phidipides. I finished 22nd in a time of 30h41'51".

## 2010 goal : « finish a [deca-Ironman](#) »

*PS: wow, this looks so serious... Do not pay too much attention to this factual and austere presentation, and read the adventures of a [blue rabbit on the trail](#). Yes, I also run ultras with that kind of outfit ;)*

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## [Preparation](#)

June 2010 : [French Ultra Festival](#) (6 days race) -> [race report](#)



The Fort Carré, in Antibes (France), is reported to be one of the most beautiful stadium in Europe.

In order to train myself to race night and day, and sleep for only 2 or 4 hours, I participate in a 6 days race, to get in gear for my main goal. I expect to reach 700km or 800km. The main point to work on: logistics.

### **And also...**

- December 2009 : free run arround the « Ile de France » (arround Paris) using the path named [GRP « Ceinture Verte »](#). This will be a solo run, with the assistance of my wife. About 270km. Estimated time: 40 hours. -> [report](#)
- March 2010 : [Paris half marathon](#) -> [race report](#)
- April 2010 : [Paris marathon](#), expecting a 2h50 time -> [race report](#)
- June 2010 : [Bordeaux-Paris cyclos](#), 620km bike, 28h time limit
- July 2010 : [triple Ironman in Lensahn](#), Germany (ultra-triathlon world championship)
- August 2010 : « [Embrunman](#) », a famous French triathlon, in the Alpes (3,8km, 185km, 42km)



Cerro de la Silla (1820 meters). Monterrey, Mexico.

### **November 2010 : [déca-Ironman](#)**

Yes, I'm going to [Monterrey, Mexico](#), for about 10 to 14 days of effort. [Valérie](#), my spouse, will be my only assistance 24h/24, which is, in itself, a remarkable performance.

Ultra races are also, and very often, a matter of team work.

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## **Sponsors**

I'm currently searching for sponsors to help me participate in the [deca-Ironman](#) in Monterrey (Mexico). To contact me -> [ufoot@ufoot.org](mailto:ufoot@ufoot.org)

Thanks to those who already support me.

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## **News**

Now the race is over, not much news, activity has moved on [my usual blog](#).

Most content here are only available in [French](#) however some major race reports might be translated. For instance you can read my [race report of French Ultra Festival](#) (a 6-days running event, in France) as well as the [race report of the deca](#) itself.

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## [2010-06-12 - French Ultra Festival race report](#)

### **Context**

I decided to participate in the [French Ultra Festival](#) (June) to prepare for the [deca-Ironman](#) in Monterrey (November). I'm not a novice as far as ultra is concerned, but for the deca I think I need to know how to handle a multi-days effort (more than 3 or 4 days).



1295m (0.8m miles) of pure fun.

The race consists in running/walking as many 1295 meters (0.8 miles) laps as possible, during 144 hours (6 days). One can stop, eat, sleep, swim in the nearby sea, only the winner is he who managed to make the greatest amount of laps. I expect to score between 700 km and 800 km (about 450 miles), and I'm excited at the idea of devoting a whole week to one of my passions: running. I acknowledge I'm quite lucky to have the opportunity to live my dreams for good.

### **As simple as a smile**

While in the train from Paris to Antibes, I'm reading a book by Noël Tamini (he wrote lots of things about running in the 80ies) and chomp radishes with great pleasure in my 1st class seat. For whatever reason this ticket was only 45€ so I did not hesitate and opted for the great comfort option. I travel alone.



Their motto, in French, brags about performance and ecology. They missed an occasion to shut it up, with their broken platform ruining the Gulf of Mexico.

The train company employee checks tickets. Despite my efforts it seems impossible to have that controller smile. I hate people who don't smile. I know when I meet another runner when training, and he does not answer my good old « hello! », I get in a bad mood and feel like accelerating, just to show him who's the boss over here. Just look at trekkers in the mountains, they do say hello to each other. As for me, when I'm wandering in the woods and meet someone, I rarely miss the occasion to be polite and hopefully cheerful. But this guy with his official train company cap seems to be determined in not smiling at all. You would expect someone who walks all day along a train with hundreds of people in it to be sort of socially bloomed, but this one is like the caricature one would make of such a profession. He checks tickets. No more, no less.

Controller, why did you steal my smile?

**Antibes, Juan les pins**



In Antibes, which is a nice town, aside from having a super-cool race.



My main pair of shoes and all my alternate choice. You never know what can happen...

I'm in Antibes now, on the French Riviera. Sun's shining. I set my tent up. Then go shopping in town. And forget half of what I was supposed to get, despite a precise and complete list. I decide to swim a little bit, as the Mediterranean sea is just there. After a few yards, I feel something itching my arm. Is that jellyfish? No, this is not possible, not in Spring. Not yet. I keep on swimming. I believe I could swim way up to Tunisia, water is perfect, I feel great. And then AOUCH I get an electric shock in my left arm, fore sure that's nasty jellyfich.



I enjoy walking around marinas and looking at boats. It's not as fun as sailing for good, but well, it's still nice.

I head back toward the beach with my sore arm. I have three visible marks on my upper left arm, and it's swelling, getting bigger and bigger. OK, no panic, I go back in town and buy a cream to stop the pain. You know, I need to sleep well tonight.



My friend Marc, with the blue shirt, is trying to fill his stomach with strange mixtures involving bread and pepper. He's still waiting for his food!



This is where I get it ;)

The evening is spent in a little restaurant near the marina, the prices of which have nothing to envy to those of Paris. Also takes ages to get your food once you've managed to order it but well, the good news is that I'm with happy friends, among them [Alain Gestin](#) who happens to offer a handfull of great adventure races all over Europe and Africa, and possibly elsewhere. Great man.

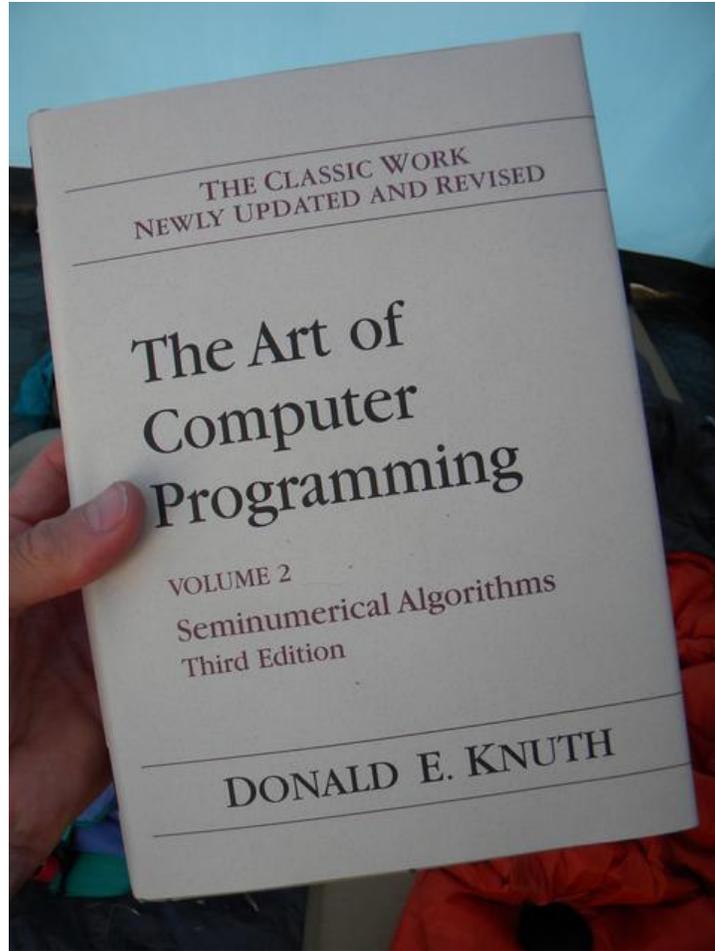


The race director's bike. Hard to figure which of them came first.



My tent, at the only moment in the week you could see it not being an awfull mess.

After a night sleep, I go back in town to buy a few more items, get my race number, and have lunch far away from the race buzz, with my friend Tonverre. I used to play the sousaphone in a brass-band he created, called [La Voiture 4](#). I totally miss the race briefing but at least I'm having some good time, with no pressure. This is all fine.



Hard to fall asleep? Try this! TAOCP, vol 2, a must have.



Every day I had one of these little packs. A melon, some cool snack, and various baby food.

Then I dress up and... ready, set, go!



A delicious salad. Mmm, yummy!



Nothing can beat a banana split.

### **The secret plan**

Yeah, I had a secret plan. I even hesitated to publish it during the race (day 4 or 5) with the help of my spouse [Valérie](#) but I didn't do it. Still too superstitious.

Roughly, the idea came to my mind reading [Slow Burn](#) by Stu Mittleman, who happens, if I'm well informed, to hold the 1000 miles record. It's said at the beginning of this book - foreword or something - that Stu, during his record setting race, looked better the last day than the first one. Yes, you read well, he seemed in better shape at the end than at the beginning, with a world record in between. How is that possible? I found this intriguing, and even if I never thought a 6 day would be a great rest for me, I just wanted to know how one could approach such a result.

He describes in his books two of his participations in the La Rochelle 6-days. First one is a failure. Registered last minute, he starts with a strong will but no plan. He would sleep a little bit when exhausted, but the rest of the time keep going as strong as possible. This is the 100 miler strategy. The problem is after 36 hours or so, he's just wandering around the track, with no speed, totally annihilated. A fellow sees his distress and helps him. He asks him to observe the other runners. What do they do? After some time, he acknowledges most of them follow a pattern. And the 6-days happens to be a confrontation of each runners routine rather than a brute-force comparison of physical condition. He picks up his mind and by adopting a 5 hours run / 1 hour walk cycle manages to get back in the race, and perform correctly. Now for his other participation to the 6 days, trained by [Maffetone](#) this time, he starts right away with a 1 hour walk - 1 jour run - 1 hour walk - 1 hour run - 1 jour walk pattern. This 4 times a day. He's sceptical about his coach idea but applies it anyway. Walking the first hour proves to be hard for the French public whistles and goes "booo" "booo" "booo" as at this time being an American citizen is not the best way to improve your mojo in France. He sticks to the plan. By day 3 or 4 he's moving up the field. Ultimately, he does not win the race but ends up very close to the winner, Jean-Gilles Boussiquet.

So well, I needed to check that out. I decided having a similar strategy would be my best card to, play. I imagined 3 hours cycles, with 1 hour walk, then 2 hours run. A 2 hours jog is just what everyone does on Sunday morning, isn't it? So here's the raw plan:

- 04h00 a.m. - 05h00 a.m. : walk
- 05h00 a.m. - 07h00 a.m. : run
- 07h00 a.m. - 08h00 a.m. : walk
- 08h00 a.m. - 10h00 a.m. : run
- 10h00 a.m. - 11h00 a.m. : walk
- 11h00 a.m. - 01h00 p.m. : run
- 01h00 p.m. - 02h00 p.m. : walk
- 02h00 p.m. - 04h00 p.m. : run
- 04h00 p.m. - 05h00 p.m. : walk
- 05h00 p.m. - 07h00 p.m. : run
- 07h00 p.m. - 08h00 p.m. : walk
- 08h00 p.m. - 10h00 p.m. : run
- 10h00 p.m. - 11h00 p.m. : walk
- 11h00 p.m. - 01h00 a.m. : run
- 01h00 a.m. - 02h00 a.m. : walk
- 02h00 a.m. - 04h00 a.m. : sleep

-4 : 30 : 11

CLASSEMENT 6 JOURS - COURSE

6 JOURS				6 JOURS			
Dernière mise à jour : 0:00				Dernière mise à jour : 0:00			
Cl	Doss.	Nom	Tour Distance	Cl	Doss.	Nom	Tour Distance
1	2	MAUDUIT - Christian	0 0	42	93	RAY - Claude	0 0
2	3	FATTON - Christian	0 0	44	54	ARITA - Selgi	0 0
3	4	HAUSMANN - Martina	0 0	45	55	FRIEDMANN - Daniel	0 0
4	5	JACQUES - Michel	0 0	46	56	PIERQUIN - Jean-bernard	0 0
5	6	ANTOINE - Christophe	0 0	47	57	BOULANGER - Jc	0 0
6	7	GRUENLING - Peter	0 0	48	58	SAUTEREAU - Christian	0 0
7	10	FOUQUES - Francois	0 0	49	59	CASPER - Alain	0 0
8	11	COMTE - Pascal	0 0	50	60	ESPINO - Jose roberto	0 0
9	14	MELNEZ - Alvaro	0 0	51	61	LAFONT - Jeanrick	0 0
10	15	DONALDZ - Christa	0 0	52	62	MARANZINA - Aldo	0 0
11	16	MEURDUE - Floppie	0 0	53	63	ZIMMERMANN - Walter	0 0
12	17	BOUCHER - Alain	0 0	54	64	MICALLETI - Mika	0 0
13	18	CHAILLON - Marc	0 0	55	65	CARRIERE - Andre	0 0
14	19	CLARAUD - Stephane	0 0	56	73	CODET - Gilbert	0 0
15	20	CHEVILLON - Bernard	0 0	57	76	BROUARD - Remy	0 0
16	21	BEAUMEL - Jean claude	0 0	58	79	BEN - Roger	0 0
17	22	FREY - Jean-paul	0 0	59	80	LAVIGNE - Patrick	0 0
18	23	CHAKON - Olivier	0 0	60	81	TANAKA - Katsuhiko	0 0
19	24	CHIFFOLEAU - Alain	0 0	61	82	JUGRET - Floppie	0 0
20	25	BILLARD - Philippe	0 0	62	86	PETTAROS - Frederic	0 0
21	26	BOUQUIN - Charles	0 0	63	87	BLANGY - Ugovaldo	0 0
22	29	SARON - Marie-jeanne	0 0	64	88	GRIZARD - Philippe	0 0
23	30	ROY - Bernard	0 0	65	89	KLUKA - Peter	0 0
24	31	LECLERC - Marc	0 0	66	92	THEBAULT - Jean	0 0
25	33	GIBOURO - Marc	0 0	67	93	BAIER - Norbert	0 0
26	34	TOUGNE - Chantal	0 0	68	94	POGAM - Sylvain	0 0
27	35	LANCHAS - Pascal	0 0	69	95	LABORIE - Christophe	0 0
28	38	VAN GEENE - Regina	0 0	70	96	FORESTIERI - Alexandre	0 0
29	39	VELLY - Christian	0 0	71	97	NYSTROM - K-g	0 0
30	39	JOLY - Jerome	0 0	72	98	VAUCHEL - Daniel	0 0
31	40	SEGUE - Gerard	0 0	73	100	BUTTEN - Rik	0 0
32	41	DEHU - Gerard	0 0	74	191	SJAAVIK - Trond	0 0
33	42	WANTIEZ - Wilfried	0 0	75	193	GURBERT - Guy	0 0
34	43	WANTIEZ - Patrick	0 0	76	194	MARINI - Ruc	0 0
35	44	VANHIEL - Paul	0 0	77	195	WRIGHT - Eric	0 0
36	45	MARTINEZ - Alain	0 0	78	196	VALLE - Romain	0 0
37	46	ARMAND - Laurent	0 0	79	198	ARZEL - Jean claude	0 0
38	48	PRIOU - Michel	0 0	80	199	QUEVENARD - Agnes	0 0
39	49	CORNICHON - Laurent	0 0	81	200	GARGANO - Angelo	0 0
40	50	JEANNIN - Marie claude	0 0	82	201	RIZZELLI - Michele	0 0
41	51	JEANNIN - Christian	0 0	83	202	SIEURAC - Joann	0 0
42	52	RAY - Monopie	0 0				

Just before the race, everyone is still zeroed.

And well, since I also had to cope with the meals offered by the organisation, I decided to complete the plan, so here's the enhanced version:

- 04h00 a.m. - 05h00 a.m. : wake up! Get ready. Ideally at 4h15, put the first step on the track. The idea is to walk until I'm fully awake, ready for a long day.
- 05h00 a.m. - 07h00 a.m. : a little jog, with the sun rising at about 5h45. This is usually pleasant, and I do a good mileage, usually something like 10 miles or more.
- 07h00 a.m. - 08h00 a.m. : walk, and have breakfast with Friends. It's a good occasion to sit at a table, tell a few jokes, drink a huge bowl of coffee, eat bread with a totally insane quantity of butter spread on it.
- 08h00 a.m. - 10h00 a.m. : the second jog of the day. This one is cool two. Coupled with the first one, those twin jogs sometimes made other runners believe I was attacking them. Now, I wasn't. I was just following my plan.
- 10h00 a.m. - 11h00 a.m. : walk, and eat a melon. I had bought 6 melons before the race. One per day. I ritually cut it into 8 slices, put those slices in a plate and walk around the track holding the plate in one hand and a slice of melon in the other. Delicious.
- 11h00 a.m. - 01h00 p.m. : yet another 2 hours jog. This one gets harder. I admit sometimes I had to split it and made pauses to eat something.
- 01h00 p.m. - 02h00 p.m. : walk, with one important thing in mind: eat as much as

possible. It's important, at this stage, to have energy for the rest of the day.

- 02h00 p.m. - 04h00 p.m. : run, but not for the complete 2 hours, I offer myself a good shower at the end. This lead us up to 04h00 p.m., which is the time the race was started. This is why the shower is placed here, it's a hot time in the day, and after the shower I'm fresh and ready for the next 12 hours cycle.
- 04h00 p.m. - 05h00 p.m. : walk. So yes, like Mittleman at La Rochelle, I walked the first hour of the race. This is also a good occasion to check up race positions and global mileage.
- 05h00 p.m. - 07h00 p.m. : run. That's why it was important to take the shower and then walk, this is a long day.
- 07h00 p.m. - 08h00 p.m. : walk, and have dinner. Think about calling my spouse.
- 08h00 p.m. - 10h00 p.m. : run. This one is tough. Additionnally, night is there.
- 10h00 p.m. - 11h00 p.m. : walk.
- 11h00 p.m. - 01h00 a.m. : run. To be honest, I very rarely ran this one. It was just too hard, I was exhausted after almost 20 hours being up and moving around.
- 01h00 a.m. - 02h00 a.m. : walk (if I can stand it, else go to bed)
- 02h00 a.m. - 04h00 a.m. : sleep in my tent

So this was my plan. Not very complicated, I didn't really need to write it down on paper - but still I did - it's very easy to deduce what you have to do at a given hour with only those 2 informations : it's a 1 hour walk / 2 hours run cycle and that the alarm clock is supposed to ring at 04h00 a.m.

You'll also note there's no mileage given. To be honest I did write some distances in my initial plan but as soon as race started I never looked at them. Useless. If you walk and run in the same proportion every day you end up doing pretty much the same mileage...



My birthday present, Valérie offered me 6 watches. I wore a different watch every day.

As a conclusion about this plan and its spirit, think about French writer Flaubert who wrote

« Soyez réglé dans votre vie et ordinaire comme un bourgeois, afin d'être violent et original dans vos oeuvres. ». In English « Be regular and orderly in your life, so that you may be violent and original in your work. ». My bet was to have a very cool, relaxed way of life, as if I had been on a vacation camp on the seaside. My choice to sleep between 02h00 a.m. and 04h00 a.m., for instance, was pretty logical if one knows at this time of the day the body is not at 100% of its possibilities. It's time for car accidents to happen, people feel dizzy, you need to sleep! Some argue that at that time the outside temperature is perfect for running but I prefer to fight the 02h00 p.m. raging sun with all my power and strength rather than try to overcome fatigue at night with my body letting me down.

### **Race tactic**

OK I had a global strategy (the plan!) but as far as on-terrain tactic is concerned, I stayed very light. At least, at the very end, I worried about keeping my 3rd place and/or tried to see whether getting second was within my capabilities.



I deliberately started the race with non-encumbering clothes.

But to summarize the event, I mostly saw many runners fighting hard to gain a place. I, for one, was just cruising around. 2 hours jog. That was my way. A 2 hours jog is barely worth noting and does not look competitive but at the end of such a race, it does represent something. Typical scenario follows: a runner is just behind me. He sees me walking. Thinks hey, this Mauduit fellow does not look in great shape. He runs and gains loops. He's almost

at my level, maybe before me now. I don't mind. Then it's 8h00 a.m. so I start my 2 hours jog. I run. He stays just by me, matching my pace. I run one hour. One hour and fifteen minutes. The guy gives up. I put 45 minutes more. Now I'm clearly ahead, but I start walking. For me it's easy to handle the two hours jog for I know it will only be two hours. For the other it's harder, he doesn't know when this will end unless he observes my routine of if his crew does. But no one seems to care. So each time I had to fight for my position, I was in the comfortable of he who is in control, backed up by my plan (simple, but efficient) which I knew that, if respected, could get me very far.

Each time I had a hard time, I decided to stick to the plan. The very fact it was there was a relief. Follow your plan, you'll do well. This was confirmed by messages by [Paulo](#) (my father) and [Mmi](#) (a 6-days specialist I admire) and I thank them for that, their help has been precious.

The mistake one certainly must not (definitely not!) do is to run a part which was initially planned to be walked, in order to catch up. By following my plan very precisely, running at 8km/h (12 minutes miles) and walking at 5km/h (20 minutes miles), that's to say by doing, one after the other, 3 hours half-marathons, one can tackle 900km (more than 550 miles).

## **Walking**

I should have trained for that. Like 95% of runners entering this event, I forgot to train properly for the most important of things: walking. At day 6, walking hurt my legs very bad, while running is almost natural. Only the problem with running is that it's too demanding for my heart and my feet cannot handle the bumps any more.



This 6-days is your best opportunity to spend a whole week of vacation on the French Riviera for a ridiculous price.

This being said, while racing, I had a bright idea. Indeed, numerous walkers where registered in this event. And so I as walked quite often I had many opportunities to start friendships with some of them while other runners were fighting at the head of the race. So I talked with Jacqueline. A great walker, 40 years of competition, she held world record on 5000 meters in 1975-1976. So well, as she's a qualified trainer, I just ask if it's possible for her to give me an accelerated walking lesson. She agrees. Cool!

The result was a little deceiving since I probably worried about that a little late, and additionnaly, my arm pits really didn't like the rubbing induced by moving my arms so far and fast. Still, next time I'll race a 6-days, I'll have and will very likely use this additional knowledge.

## **Pleasure**

At day 3 (I think it was 3) I started to really move up the field. Without entering a very competitive mode in which I would fight hard to gain places, I started to think it would be wise not to waste a good chance to make an excellent race and, who knows, win it? So well I got a little more serious. Before, I used to cut down my 2 hours jog just to chat with a friend, or to hang out (oh, just a little bit) at the refreshment table to tell or listen to a good joke.



Hey man, I think I've been there before!

I decide this is gonna stop.

Bad move. I realize this in the evening. I'm just unable to run past 11h00 p.m., I'm burnt, completely exhausted. I walk like a zombie on the track, trying to pile up loops I manage to finish only in 20 minutes (25 minutes miles). I stay on the track because I do not want to give but it's so hard, and it's clearly not efficient. Next day, I decide not to deprive myself from all these little daily pleasures. So I tell jokes again, I have a good old breakfast sitting at the table, I enjoy the present, I live. To sum it up, my bet is that self-care and feeling in great shape makes me stronger than clenching my teeth fighting against the watch my adversaries.



Running, racing, does not prevent us from having a little chat. This is absolutely necessary.

And it works. This night I manage to run a proper 22h00 p.m. - 01h00 a.m. jog, I mean it's not perfect but mileage is significantly better.

The lesson I got from this is that for a multi-days race I can't - some might be able to do it, but I can't - be all the time outside my comfort zone. I need times when I draw forces from my friends, times I enjoy. When Gilbert takes his dog out on the track, he's not wasting his time either. Fred with his I'm-so-cool look, Phil and his warm smile, Marc always ready for a chat, all belong to an atmosphere which helps me perform well. And when everyone sings « happy birthday to you » - I was born June 9th, it was the 3rd day of the race - it's important, and I'm touched. And I insist, my first walked hour at race start was helpful of course because it got me in the right rhythm, but also because it allowed me to discover lots of people in the mid or even back pack, people it would otherwise have been harder to get in touch with. Slowing down to chat with a walker is not necessarily lost time. This guy might, later, be here to support you, and conversely, you can support him. At the end of the race I could not even run 400 meters without passing a friend. And we would exchange a smile.

This very smile the train company employee refused me. Remember the beginning of the race report?

This very smile I got it back from all the other runners, this smile which illuminated my face each time I read the various cheering messages which were handled to us every morning. This is what pushed me to the end.

Thanks to all.

Thanks to Valérie, to Paulo, to Gégé, to Gilbert, Phil, Fred, Neo, Florence, to the Mouettes, to Daniel, Maryse, Jeannick, Jacqueline, Philippe, Marianne, Jean-Claude, Stéphane, Greg, Peter, to Bagnard, to Coureursolitaires, Sam, Craie, Runstephane, UPDA, Jamel, Maïpi,

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## Food

Let's be simple: I ate like an oger. No so-called energy drink, no powder, nothing in that category. My speciality, baby-food (mixed vegetables, things one gives to 1 year old kids) with my favorite during these hot 6-days being carrot and zucchini based meals. For the rest, I simply ate (in vast amounts!) what was available on the refreshment tables, which were very well furnished IMHO. Cakes, peanuts, chips, sausages, banana, water, coke, everything was there.

Back at home in Argenteuil, I checked my weight. I lost 2 pounds. Not that much considering I've been exercising for 6 days...

## Sleep



I was afraid of not being able to fall asleep because of the race stress. In fact, it proved to be a non-problem. But, I also discovered that after 130km days (80 miles), once I was lying in my tent, after half an hour, I was seized by an atrocious leg ache. It would last half an hour at least, then the pain would go below the level required to allow me to fall asleep.

So the « typical » night would consist into heading toward my tent at 1h15 a.m. and lie down at 1h30 a.m. I would be calm, but have cold sweat, and feel uncomfortable. Then I would wake up at 2h00 a.m. with pain in my legs, trying to find the right position, but failing to get rid of this continuous aching. Then finally at 2h30 a.m. I would fall asleep for good. Wake up at 4h00 a.m., this is another day.

I can't say I enjoyed these nights, one hard point was that I also needed to handle all sort of low-level details, such as choosing socks for the next day, counting them to know wether I had enough or if I needed to take some to the shower with me to quick-wash them, triple-check that my alarm clock was correctly set. Well, it happens that as far as night is concerned, a little crewing wouldn't harm.

## **Laughing gas**

The atmosphere is somewhat electric over the campus. On Friday when my little sister Florence comes by, I'm laughing like mad with Marc, we're like two teenagers who do not remember why the laughter started, but can't help stopping it. What is so hilarious? Is it the arrival of the 48h racers, all clean and well dressed-up on Thursday afternoon, which made us cross the line between sane and insane people? We warned you guys, the « sentier des poilus » (a part of the track which can be very warm and which has tough footings) has no mercy for novice runners! Also, what a strange idea to start with clean and colored shoes when among 6-days men we all wear the same model: unknown brand, dust color.

And this guy who hesitates, along with the race doctor, to unwrap his feet and redo all his bandages. But there's only 36h to go... Oh yeah, you're right, for only 36h it might not be necessary to go through all that fuss. Let's keep these bandages as is.

I'm not sure I was always totally aware of my acts. I remember one night I considered walking a few laps on the other course. The extra course, the alternate one. I have no idea what would have happened if I actually had opted for this. Maybe I would have ended up down town, away from other runners? Strange.



Wind is blowing strong, these waves are more commonly seen on the West coast of France, on the Atlantic Ocean. Mediterranean see is supposed to be somewhat quiet.

And I'm also having some fantastic times filled with euphoria. When the wind is raging (the race almost got cancelled, it wasn't a real storm but it was blowing hard) I just feel comfortable, like a fish in water, I appreciate the feeling of the wind over my body. I even stop and take pictures and even a short movie of the sea with waves coming from the horizon and breaking themselves on the shore. I like to think I'm filled with the same energy, a long term, deep energy which allows me to add up miles, slowly, but restless. I certainly lived some of the best instants of my life, it was thrilling, no time, no space, only me, my stride, the wind, and the track.

### **The last night**

OK, this super-secret-plan story is fine, but by almost never checking ones mileage and barely getting informed of the other's positions, one risks to loose a place for a few minutes, and/or miss a symbolic goal. So well, at the end of the race I started to worry about numbers.

So on Friday night, less than 24h before the end, I'm 3rd. The 4th runner is well behind, and AFAIK he's pretty much driven by competition with others so unless I explode and show open signs of great fatigue, he won't try to come back. Or maybe he just can't. Anyway, I won't see him again, I don't look that way.

But for the 2nd place, well, who knows, if they fail to maintain their pace... Also, I feel I can grab the 800km mark (almost 500 miles). But I don't want to have a horrible day tomorrow, with, for instance, 80km (50 miles) to be done in 12 hours. So I need - remember the plan, alarm clock rings at 4h00 a.m. - to pile up enough kilometers/miles before going to bed. And I must not go to bed too late.

But I'm dead. Burnt, vanished, exhausted, call it the way you want, I'm done. I just ate dinner. It's 09h00 p.m. and I'm hot. I sweat like crazy, I feel I have fever, I can only walk at a slow pace, I can't eat, it looks like this is the end. Hell, I'm not gonna give up now, eh? I remember two days ago I had to stop at the race doctor HQ for my nose was bleeding. I know I can't fight heat and fatigue with brute force methods. And clock is always running, and my laps add up so slowly, and my sleeping time shrinks as I'm wandering around the track, distressed.

So I lie down near my tent and ask a friend to wake me up in 15 minutes. I decide to try some micro-sleep, this worked last year in [Lenshan](#) so why not now? At least it will make my body temperature get a little lower, this can't harm.

And here we go, I'm back on track. Ready for the longest jog in my life. While I was asleep, the distance display went off so I can't even know what's my score. The only thing I know is that I walked too much, that I spent 15 minutes not moving at all, and that now I'm probably late on my schedule. So for one time, once in a whole week, I forget the plan and run. I ran, ran, ran, ran until it was time to go to bed. I ran pushing it hard and telling myself « now Christian, you don't let it go, keep it up! ». This lasted about 3 hours. 3 hours is ridiculous compared to 6 days. But try, just try, to run 3 hours when really tired.

Shortly after 1h00 a.m., distance display showed 736km. Well done. So then, I went to my tent, and fell asleep.

The race was over. I knew the next day, I only had to score a regular 70km (45 miles) to go beyond 800km (500 miles).

I was cool, relaxed. Like somebody who's done with a great exhausting work day, comes back home, and feels tired but light hearted.

### **The best jog in my life**



Don't you like my hat?

The best jog in my life? It's the one I started with Marc this Saturday, at about 11h00 a.m. A jog which would take me very close to the 800km (500 miles) barrier. Thanks to last night effort, I can offer myself 2 hours of gentle jog (everyone enjoys a cool 2 hours jog!) in the sun.



I'm on the best march you could dream of. The 1st and 2nd had a hard time stepping down from the podium.

When Olivier Chaigne and Christian Fatton are fighting like crazy ahead of me, I'm just cruising behind, enjoying this very moment. Uncredible. Third. On the podium. I'm happy.



My brave Saucony Echelon look just so fresh after this!

But, you might argue, what's this looser's attitude? Isn't it time to push the machine hard? I doubt it. I tried, out of curiosity, to go a little faster. Oh, just, slightly faster. The answer came fast. The « sentier des poilus », in the heat, is not a joke. Off course, you can always speed up. But at what price? You might collapse as well... After 140 hours of racing, one is not really in what I would call one's « normal state ». Just after a little sprint I made to impress friends, I feel my head dizzy, and my heart goes boom-boom-boom and takes ages to slow down. There's a time to play, and a time to get the job done.



You've probably read it's wise to wear bigger shoes when running. But how big? Yeah, that big. Note that this problem (elephant feet) only appears after the race is over and is usually gone 3 days after. By the time I write these lines, everything's fine.

So I ended my race the way I had begun it, at a very cool pace, and I think that's the way it should be. The 144 hours are over, after 812km (504 miles).

### **A few numbers**

I remember I was 30th at the marathon distance, and passed km 100 after about 15 hours of race. For the rest, please refer to the array below, which is build with data collected by my spouse Valérie during the race:

jour	classement	distance partielle	distance totale
1	9	98	98
2	6	84	182
3	4	80	262
4	3	82	344
5	3	80	424
6	3	80	504

## **Video**

During the race, [Valérie](#) took some pictures but also some videos, which I have put together later, and summarize my preparation & the race itself. The video is available in both English and French, the music and comments are translated.

- you can view it [in English on Youtube](#) or download it in [mpeg](#) or [ogg](#) (in English).
- and also [in French on Youtube](#) or download it in [mpeg](#) or [ogg](#) (in French).

Just FYI, the music on each version are the only songs I had on my MP3 when I was trying to keep on track at 11 pm. Only 10 songs, in loop mode. At least, I knew them by heart!

Besides, a written race report is available in the French magazine [Ultrafondus n°76](#), I can only recommend you read that good stuff.

Video made under GNU/Linux using free software (free as in speech) [kino](#) and [Audacity](#).

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## [Race report](#)

### **Deca-Ironman, November 2010, Monterrey, Mexico**

It must be something like 20 years since I did my first triathlon. I announce, probably boasting a bit, that during 20 years of practice, I never gave up and « DNF'ed ». Still, during the last 6 years, I've been pretty much active, with several « ultras » (trail, road, triathlon...) per year. In 20 years, I moved from a very occasional practice, which to some extent is pretty much what fits a teenager, to a way of running which causes my doctor to raise his eyebrows when I announce him that I need yet another medical certificate. « How many miles did you say? ». A deca-Ironman, what's that beast exactly? More than 23 miles swimming, 1118 miles on a bike and 262 on your feet. What for? This isn't even the longest race. A « double-deca » is organized, same place, same start time. One can always find more « ultra » than oneself. So what's the point in flying from Europe to Mexico, cross the ocean to compete for days on a ridiculous 1.2 miles ring? Still, everything drives me back to this event. It's mythical. You take the « Ironman » distance. Something most people agree to consider long, even the longest conceivable. Then you multiply it by 10. Not 2, not even 3, just a plain 10 factor. Totally nuts. Each part of the race (swim, bike, run) taken alone can raise problems, including when done by « specialists ». To take the run as an example, there are races longer than 200 miles, but not that much. 100 miles is usually considered to be enough for athletes to express their talent, and after all, one must stop at some point... But why stop? I'm 35 years old, but I still have this childish curiosity that drives me and pushes me to try and know what's on the other side. I want to know. I'm not in a big hurry to get old, I can wait. So why wouldn't I try this thing, this « deca » which itches me so badly? So it's Sunday morning in Monterrey, Mexico, and I start a deca-Ironman.

### **23.6 miles**

Race start. Swim. Stay calm. Zen. The longest I've ever done swimming is a little more than 7 miles. My training log, for the last 10 months, including races, reports I've done less than 60 miles. This is obviously not enough. My bet is that swimming, as far as triathlon is concerned, represents nothing, and that this part of the race is usually perceived as real small compared to the rest. Great. My arms look ridiculous compared to those of Uwe Schiwon, an athlete who's racing the « double » (he's gone for 47 miles...) and who swims in my lane. Mr Muscle. Arms like my legs, and legs like... well, stop comparing. The third guy in

our lane is Dominique Douvier, the other French guy, whose swimming preparation is pretty much the same than mine. On the paper, we're simply not ready. But who cares, the race is not held on paper, it's held in a swimming pool.

After 100 meters, I feel definitely too hot. I wait a little bit, to make sure not to take too quick a decision but after half an hour my mind is set, I take off my swimming suit. Some athletes choose to put ice cubes in their suits. Every one finds his/her own solution. Swimming without the thick suit makes it harder to keep my legs at the surface of the water, and besides I don't want to waste my legs energy in keeping them horizontal. But this 85°F water gives no real choice. Talking about the water, that one is chlorinated. Race director tells us it isn't, but the double guys, after more than 2 days spent in it, would swear the contrary. I'll put my suit back on 7 hours later, the water being down to 83°F. Plus I'm getting tired and fatigue makes me feel cold.

Dominique and I share a common position on this swim: it was fun until mile 12. The rest was harder. More exactly, it was painful. I never got distracted from my plan, which, for the swim, was to swim without stopping but for a planned « every-half-an-hour » break. At these stops I would drink, eat, and satisfy other low-level practical needs. I only have to think about the next 30 minutes, the rest is outside my scope, I'm not concerned. Valerie, my spouse who is about to crew me for the whole race, takes care about all the logistics. Each time I stop, she's there, with drinks, food, informations about my mileage, I need nothing else. Perfect.

The last miles are a real pain. 20 miles. 21 miles. 22 miles. I can't take my arm from the back of my body to the front « ready-to-push » position. Strange enough, the act of pushing, what propels me forward, isn't a problem. Yes, my shoulders are numb, but it's not that bad, I'm trained for that. But the other part, what happens outside the water, in the air, making my hand land in the water in front of my head « as far as possible », is a nightmare. I can't do it any more. It hurts too bad. So I don't do it completely. My hand gets in water just a few inches ahead of my shoulders, and rather far on my side. This is the best I can do. I'll learn, later, that several guys from the double had the same problem, and the same solution. Only it was even worse for them. I could even consider me lucky to have been touched only on my right side. My left arm is quite OK.

Valerie tells me « only 3 left! ». My skeptical mind make me think this means only 300 meters. But in fact it means only 150 meters. So at the very moment I've finished those 38 000 meters, I go back for yet another... « Christian, Christian, Christian! », it's not easy to call a swimmer who's spent more than 17 hours immersed... I crawl (!) to the ladder and get out of the water, pretty happy to be done with it. But well, I was somehow expecting something worse. It was long, tiring, but nothing more. Still on the feasible side of things. Now what's next?

## **1 118 miles**

Rule #1: never race before the real race starts. I follow the rule of thumb that says « endurance starts at the last third ». We're not there yet. So I don't care about who's in front, who's behind, this will change anyway. And I'm a moderate to bad swimmer. But I'm a great sleeper. I learnt, at the [6-days in Antibes](#) - in fact I learnt that before, but I verified my theories in Antibes on a very real race - that playing with fire is dangerous, as far as sleep deprivation is concerned. A fair amount of sleep, of deep sleep, is needed on multiday races. My plan is simple: up at 4 in the morning, and never less than 2 hours sleep per night. I started at 9 am. It's 2:30 pm. So tonight I'll make an exception - the first night is special anyway - and won't have my long comfortable 2-hours-in-a-row night. I lay down in my sleeping bag, wearing warm pyjamas (yeah, I brought my pyjamas!) in a room which is right beside the pool, reserved for that usage. Technically, I'm in a transition, almost already on the bike side. Still, I'm sleeping at the pool. I can't fall asleep. I'm pissed. One can't force

oneself to sleep. I still enjoy an hour and a half of quietness, before the bike. This will be a long day. The other ones too. It's 4 in the morning, I must go.

4:30 am, I'm on my bike. At last. A short ride on open roads, followed by a police car which protects me until I enter park Ninos Heroes, a place which I'll soon now very well, along with all its details. Especially the track the race is held on. 939 bike loops. It's wise not to count them, this would give the feeling of trying to empty an ocean with a mere spoon. There's already some people in the park, those of the quintuple, who have finished the swim long ago, and the deca guys who swam faster than I.

5 minutes per loop. About 5. Less than 5 minutes, fast loop. More than 5 minutes, slow loop. I stick to a pace which I judge being the right pace. It's my training pace. Almost 16 mph in the early morning, 15 mph most of the time, and slower when night comes. I'm steady. I initially planned to stop every 4 hours. But there's a problem with that. The race does not offer the traditionnal « nuts & chocolate & dried fruits » supplies I would find on a typical race in France. So it's hard for me to snack on the bike. It's also hard to rely on that kind of food for if you put food « in the open » on a table with the idea to pick them up from time to time, you get the bee problem. I mean, there are bees everywhere during the day, and food gets covered with them about a few minutes. So well, I inform Valerie that I have a new plan: stop every 2 hours, and have a real meal at every stop. This means eleven to twelve meals per day, night adjustments might change the details, but you get the spirit.

This proves efficient. The « cantina » offers all kinds of food, a real cook is here, preparing different stuff every day. OK, if you don't like scrambled eggs, corn, and beans, you're in deep trouble. But we had a great time eating bunuelos, quesadillas, hot-dogs, hamburgers, pizzas, watermelon, melon, clementines... For me, it was perfect, it matched my « eat-anything-I-stumble-on » profile, to the point that after the race, I kept having meals at the same place, without finding it to boring. Only bad point: coffee is made the american way, it's just hot water with a brownish color. These « deca-stops » (5 minutes each, 10 minutes max.) are completed with water and energy drinks I carry on the bike in dedicated bottles.

This is how between 4:30 am (first pedal strike) and 1:00 am (last pedal strike) I managed to put 20:30 - 12 x 10 ' = 18:30 of « efficient » bike. This regularity did pay. At 15 mph it gives a total of nearly 280 miles at the end of the « day ». I was very close to the traditionnal « Audax » average of 22.5 km/h. On the track, I was one of the slowest guys. Everyone was passing me, again and again. Those and the quintuple where just going faster. Shorter race. Those on the double (don't bother saying « double-deca », let's call it « double ») were out of the pool long after us, so they were in better shape, from the bike point of view, for quite a time. And all the other deca guys, with the exception of Sergio Cordeiro (who will end up 3rd of the race) passed me. I couldn't follow them on the track. Still, I was almost always 3rd or 2nd. Being steady is a must, I learnt that observing Marina Haussmann, a great 6-days and other ultra/multi-days running female expert. So I would never go too fast, never, ever. I never accepted to go beyond the point where my legs would have become « hard ». Never in the red zone, always thinking about economy. I'm not strong. I must be clever.

So my motto was to not panic, let other go fast if they wanted too. Still, you need some strong self-control not to feel offended by all those mexican rockets. Indeed, the track was closed to motorized traffic, but bikes could go there. So dozens of bikers would simply humiliate us - of course they didn't mean to do that, they were just innocently training on their usual course - by passing us at such a speed we would sometimes doubt we could follow that, even not in the deca context. I see the positive aspect of this, it's a plus for us, animation, ambiance, it's great, much better than being alone for hours. It's like the ducks, it adds fun to the race. Yes, ducks. Ducks in Monterrey are cool. Ducks don't race. They don't quack. They are. And you'd better not hit one of them. Beat Knechtle, winner of the quintuple this year, had the bad luck to hit one last year. He broke his shoulder and had to

quit. Sad DNF.

The first day, my shoulders did hurt real bad. From the swimming. Valerie had to dress me up, I couldn't put a simple t-shirt without her help, let alone handle long sleeve items, which are definitely required at night. The race number we had to wear also proved to be a problem in that context, we had to take it off and on again at each minor clothe change. This got better the second day, at least I could grab a fork or a spoon without carying my right arm with my left hand. Yes! Third day was butt day, this was my worst day in term of mileage, I just couldn't stand that saddle any more. This saddle was broken from race stard, had probably be broken for months but I just didn't realize that while training. So for some reason the upper part of the saddle is just stuck right on the hard tube which comes out of the frame, most of the cushionning is gone. With a rolled pair of socks, Valerie and I found a temporary solution. Additionnally, when it was cold enough, I was wearing three biking shorts, one on top of the other. My arms were also a problem, my elbows were not used to resting for such a long time on the areo/triathlon bars and it was also a pain. Last, but not least, my bike shoes were a little too small, I found it useless to by new ones before the race (great, you're gone for at least 4 days of bike, and you save money on that...) so I kept an old legacy model which I had chosen for short races in warm weather, when I don't wear socks. But well, I just take of my shoes at each stop and jump in my sleepers instead. Once again, Valerie did a terrific job, anything I wanted, I had it just next lap (remember, 5 minutes only...).

Bike was also the occasion to discover and talk with other entrants. In this race « drafting » is forbidden, but as in most long distance triathlons, running side by side with two yards between each other is tolerated as long as you don't spend too much time this way. People are very different, ranging from the rather reserved Hungarian Antal Voneki to the ever-ready-to-talk american Wayne Kurtz. I try and remember every English joke I know to fuel the conversation. We had a good laugh. Making the race a nice time, socially rich, is my solution to transform this grueling event into something more acceptable, something fun. It's a race, for sure, but it needs to be handable. One needs to last. So past midnight, when fatigue is overwhelming me, I just sing aloud some funny song, driving like a zombie at about 11 mph, zig-zaging and fighting hard not to fall asleep on thhe bike, but basically happy to be here, being conscious that it's a gift to be here, and that I'm living great times.

As the end of the bike approaches, I start worrying about my position. I seem to be rooting in second place. The first one is about an hour ahead. I only have 60 miles to go. It's about 11 pm. Finishing the bike now and sleep afterwards is tempting. But it would mess up all my sleeping habits. I strongly believe that to sleep only 2 jours and a half per night, and still feel great, sleep must imperatively be spent in good conditions, and, among other things, at fixed time. I just want to change anything. Not now, it's too early in the race. Soon after 1 am, I leave the track, let my position become whatever it can, I'm just 20 miles behind, but I go to sleep. I take a shower, the last one, before slipping in my bed, in my 3rd floor room at the olympic village. Tomorrow I'll only have 25 miles to go. An hour and a half if, as usual, I bike strong early in the morning. Then, I'll run. Running is where I'm (supposed to be) strong.

## **262 miles**

Waking up is hard. Yesterday I started in super-rocket mode, this morning I'm having a bad time, but I've no choice, I got to go. As planned, the remaining bike seems nothing to do. I put my running shoes on, and discover park Niños Heroes from another point of view. On my feet, and « reverse ». I mean it, it's very different. We use the inside of the path, alternating between sidewalks and gentle paths, and if you add to this the fact the moving speed is (very) different, one could almost believe this is just another place. I claim there are, on this races, 5 different loops. The bike loop when the sun is up, the bike loop at night, the running loop during the day, its counterpart at night, and finally the last « running » loop, which is

even different from all the other ones. But the last loop is just very far away. 222 laps to go.

I can't help following the evolution of the first guy on the race. I think he made a mistake. He didn't sleep. He is now more than 15 miles ahead. 13 laps. It's a lot, it's about 4 hours at our average pace. At the same time, I did sleep, and he didn't, so I'm ahead in terms of sleep, I have that in the bank... Tactically, I've never experienced something as interesting as this. Dave Clamp, who is ahead, is a very good runner, with personal records on marathon and « regular » Ironman which are far better than mine. He's in his fifties, has great experience, and has already finished a « deca ». Still, he didn't sleep. Experience or not, I'm deeply convinced he'll pay for that.

I start right on, without making too much of it, but strongly decided to maintain constant pressure. My reasonable bike, never hammering it too hard, did preserve my legs, and my morning jog is just a breeze. I set up a variant of the strategy I had on the 6 days in Antibes, I walk 40 minutes and run 1:20. I adapt this according to the weather, if it's not too hot, I run 1:30. If the sun is too strong, I let it down to 1:15 running, 1:00 if needed. My average pace is good. And I continue to eat every two hours. You don't change a winning team. Valérie, once again, is doing a great job. With her help, I can eat while I walk, because at the very instant I need it, my plate is ready and full of Mexican food, I barely need to stop. And on some occasions, I do not stop at all. I don't run that fast, I don't walk that fast, but the « zero stop » strategy is just so efficient.

My goal is simple: tonight, I want to have, at least once in the day, been ahead of Dave. Tomorrow, I want to have made up my 4 hours, that is being in the same loop than Dave with equivalent sleep status. Then, pull ahead. Dave impresses me. He's just so tough. He's marked by fatigue, heat doesn't help, still he doesn't let go anything, always in the race. I feel sort of disappointed for I feel this ain't the right thing to do and this isn't his perfect race. I'd have preferred he did his ideal race, this way both of us would, I think, have gone even faster.

When night falls upon us, I check our mileages. My estimation is that, if I don't make a big blunder, I can win the race. Dave was finally forced to sleep and handle various problems. Meanwhile, I kept moving. About 80 miles in less than 20 hours on the first day. Not bad. Ideally, I should maintain that for the next days. 80 miles a day is what I did in Antibes on the last 4 days. So why not here ? If I do this, I can even tackle the world record. I'll head for that. If I do it, it's great. If I don't, well, I just have nothing to lose, I came here to finish the race, and I'm now given an opportunity to win it.

I took a special option tonight, sleeping outside. I don't want to climb - let alone go down - the stairs that lead to my room. And I also think it's now time to play it hard, race, attack, that sort of things. I was rather optimistic (that means, « I was a fool ») in deciding to sleep on the grass and not settle on the concrete floor on the other side. In Monterey nights are cold, but in addition to being cold, they are humid. When my clock rings, I'm stuck in damp clothes. Everything is wet, my sleeping bag is wet, my running shorts are wet, my shirt is wet, my hat is wet. I'm shivering. I start walking, not very proud of this stupid blunder, but still determined to make up my 80 miles until the next « sleep ».

This is a terrible day. It's hot. Hot and humid. I'm waiting until the evening comes, to be able to run for good. In the afternoon I very often, if not always, replace my running sessions by walks, believing I'll make up the lost minutes later when it's cool. But the night is humid too, running is barely possible for me, I sweat a lot as soon as I start running and when I walk I'm freezing after a matter of minutes. I use my MP3 player as an external motivator during the night, but this ain't enough, when I finally go to bed, I've only done 75 miles. This is not good. Maybe things would have been different if my night had been better ? It's useless to rewrite the past, I'll just do it better tomorrow. As Guy Rossi states « c'est la vie, et elle est belle » (« that's life, and it's beautiful »). Tonight I'll sleep in my room, sleeping outside

just plain sucks. Next time I'll plant a small tent on the side of the course.

3rd day running. Hell on earth. Waking up was real hard. I try to run. Impossible. Oh yeah, sure I can run, but 200 yards, and that's it. After that, I just blow up. I try to recall what a training session is. Just one hour running, that's nothing ! But here, after a single minute, I need to stop, there's nothing left, no energy, no motivation. Additionally, I get strange feedback from the back of my legs, hurts in weird places, feels like injury isn't far. The second is now way behind, tactically, the race is over. World record is still a little ahead, I try to start the machine again and go for it, but nothing comes. I eat, I drink, but this doesn't seem to help. Heat is getting on my nerves, it does not make it easy, even if it's still very tolerable. I've handled worse, as far as weather is concerned. I'm bored. I'm alone. Valérie tells me I've got a great lot of fans, over there in France, cheering me up. Yeah great, but I'm here in this park with no one around, no spectators, it's just depressing.

Hours go by. I don't run anymore. Total demotivation, did I start too fast on the first day ? Even now, as I write those lines, I don't think I did. But it's hard to have a clear idea of the situation at this stage of the race. I have seen elephants on the course as I was on the bike, I saw hieroglyphs on the ground while I was walking yesterday. Hallucinating almost every night for a whole week, I just need a break. After all, I planned this race as a « big six days », and this is day 7. Maybe I was wrong. Any way, I can't be wrong in believing that under any circumstance, I need to keep moving. So I walk, trying to minimize stops. And at night, I walk too. No sleep tonight, no fancy 2:30 night at the olympic village. I wasn't fast enough on the track, so I'll make that up on my sleep time. I'll still do some little 10 minutes naps now and then and a bigger break of 30 minutes in the early morning, and that's it. This night I was just alone, only 3 bikers from the double-deca were on the track too, all the other runners were asleep. Again, this is only possible with the help of Valerie who was there to wake me up and fix all my needs. This ain't such a bad day, I almost did 60 miles.

Last day on my feet. Last day of the race. I'm pretty confident I'll be done with it today. Less than 9 days, for sure. Not bad. I just need to walk all day and it will be over. I just need to keep moving. I got nice blisters, one on each feet, my legs feel like wood sticks, but I've got no serious problems. Just this crazy impossibility to run. Yesterday I was even wondering if, some day, I would be able to run an hour in a row without stopping. I came to the conclusion I would not. I'm out of order.

And then the sun comes up. And then it's 9 am. And hey, you know what, after walking all that long, it's like I had a rest and I'm in great shape. And, that's crazy, but if I manage to do 27 miles in... 8 hours, I can finish in less than 200 hours. I just can't miss that. I pick up my mind. I start and run. I was doing 26 minutes laps, now I'm doing 14 minutes laps. I do 9 of them. 2 big hours. I've never been so motivated, so happy. Valérie went for a nap, she doesn't have a clue I just accelerated. To cheer me up, I populate park Niños Heroes with all my friends, yelling « Go Christian » as if I was in the Tour de France. This works. It's just easy to build such fantasy when one has lived along with hallucinations for days. I use a great deal of water to cool me down, I pour it on my head, use my large hat made of cotton, way more efficient than all this synthetic caps, which dry out in seconds. It's the most beautiful marathon of my life. Valérie comes back right in the middle of this « hey I'm racing again » section. She seems happy. My feet (almost) do not hurt anymore. This pain which in Antibes I did attribute to the « Poilu » (this was a mistake, it's just that after 200 miles, it hurts) disappeared along with my bad mood. You need to stay positive, this will never be repeated enough.

After those crazy jours, I eat, and offer myself a little break. I fear the instant explosion of my body. After all there are still several hours to go, the sun is shining hard, and I almost didn't sleep last night. I continue on an intermediary rhythm, and for the last lap, Valérie and I decide to offer an ice-cream to all the other guys on the déca. So it's with this international formation, mostly smiling, that we cross the finish line, a little after 4 pm, on a monday

afternoon, one day in November, under the Mexican sun.

## PS

- There's even a [video](#) ;)
  - For pictures of the event, see the live archives (text in French) : [j0](#) , [j1](#) , [j2](#) , [j3](#) , [j4](#) , [j5](#) , [j6](#) , [j7](#) , [j8](#)
  - A version of this report has been published in French magazine [Ultrafondus n°76](#), I can only recommend you read that good stuff.
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## [Chuck Norris meets the Barkley Marathons](#)

I like (I'm fond of!) [Chuck Norris Facts](#) and was wondering if he knew the [Barkley](#) which is IMHO both the funniest and the hardest race in the world. No less.

So, just for fun...

- Chuck Norris is pacer at the Barkley. He carries a balloon which says "less than 3 hours".
- Chuck Norris did finish Barkley's 6th loop. Clockwise and counter-clockwise.
- When Chuck Norris participates in the Barkley, it's the race itself who ends up whining "no Chuck, not so hard!".
- Chuck Norris enjoys racing the Barkley. On fridays, just before his long week-end workouts.
- At Barkley's second loop, you notice "hey, this torrent wasn't there last time". Indeed, Chuck Norris stopped for a pee, up in the mountain.
- When Chuck Norris feels like doing some little trail running, he participates in barkley's "fun run". If he can afford a whole day, he finishes the real race.
- Participating in the Barkley or getting one's ass kicked by Chuck Norris is more or less the same. It hurts very bad and one ends up whining.
- Curious, this morning, in Frozen Head State Park, there's a dense blue smoke and a smell of burnt rubber. Fog? Burning vehicle? No, Chuck Norris is warming up for the Barkley. He calls it "burn-out".
- Thanks to Chuck Norris, Gary Cantrell had no choice but to definitively quit smoking. One can't even finish a single cigarette within the time it takes Chuck to complete the five loops.
- Chuck Norris' beard is as hard and hurts as bad as Barkley's briers.
- If there are 5 loops at the Barkley, it is to allow Chuck Norris to make at least 10 strides.
- Chuck Norris' favorite library is Frozen Head State Park. He enjoys a fifteen minutes walking break between two books.
- There's a common point between racing the Barkley and ass kicking. Chuck Norris enjoys it better when done barefoot.
- The Barkley was actually held in 2002. Only Chuck Norris won it. His results is kept secret, to avoid humiliating other runners.
- Chuck Norris knows on which day and at which time Barkley will start next year.
- If the Barkley is harder and harder every year, it is because the organizers hopelessly believe that some day, Chuck Norris will consider it hard enough to enter it.
- What's wrong with Chuck Norris participating in the Barkley? The course still didn't

manage to produce an essay on "why should I be allowed to have Chuck Norris race on me."

- Why Chuck Norris still hasn't been to Frozen Head State Park to kick Barkley's ass? Because he does not waste his time on wimps. You need to be tough enough to get his focus.
- On the Barkley, one might find chaotic dead trees on the course. That's right, Chuck Norris loves playing with his dog on Sunday mornings. And sometimes, he throws the stick a little too far.
- Chuck Norris does not need to carry food on the barkley. His eggs and bacon are just fried that he's back from his loop.
- At the Barkley, Chuck Norris does not listen to race directions. Race directions listen to Chuck Norris.
- Frozen Head State Park is, to be exact, modeled after Chuck Norris' face. The forest is his beard, the rocks his teeth, ditches his wrinkles. In comparison, Mount Rushmore is a mere plaster bust.
- When Chuck Norris sends his registration form for the Barkley, he does not send a license plate. He sends the complete Department of Motor Vehicles building via Fedex.
- June, 1977 10th, James Earl Ray evades from from Brushy Mountain prison. Legend: he can't escape from the mountain and surrenders three days later. Reality: he met Chuck Norris, who was jogging around.
- Found in Chuck Norris' training log: "thursday, 2h30 fartlek at Rat Jaw, 6 minutes miles, I should try and make my stride a little smoother".
- Chuck Norris does more laps at the Barkley than Yiannis Kouros at a six-days track event.
- When Chuck Norris runs the Barkley, he attaches his feet with an ironclad anchor chain a marine friend gave him for Christmas. It adds a little historical touch to the race, he can pretend he's just escaped from prison, and also gives other pretenders a chance to follow him for the first mile.
- At the Barkley start, Chuck Norris knows who will come back home with a good old DNF. Everyone but him.
- When racing the Barkley, if hungry, Chuck Norris chops a tree with his hands and roasts a wolf or two. Powerbars suck.
- Most runners refer to the Barkley course as "out there". Chuck Norris calls it "home sweet home".
- There are several ways to finish the Barkley. You can, as most runners do, wander in the woods for hours, tortured by cold, hot weather, rain, briars, mud, face amazing steep paths, feel an unbearable pain and extreme fatigue. But there's another way to do it. Be Chuck Norris.
- Swim across the Pacific Ocean or finish the Barkley is about the same for Chuck Norris. This is all too easy. With a 6 hour cut-off, maybe, he would consider entering it. Hopping on one leg.
- When Chuck Norris races the Barkley, each of his laps is faster than the 4 other ones.
- Barkley's staff never asks Chuck Norris to bring book pages back. Instead, Gary feels sorry and goes and fetch them himself.
- When Chuck Norris climbs Rat Jaw, he needs to slow down badly at each switchback. Who cares, there are on switchbacks.
- When Chuck Norris shits at the Barkley, he wipes his butt with a Grizzli.

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## [Year 2011](#)

2011 will be marked by my come-back on the "trail" and my participating to [Paris-Brest-Paris](#) with [Valérie](#). Both are IMHO complementary, and anyway this will change me from loops on a track (24h, 6 days, ultra-triathlon...). I like to discover other things, change is at least enjoyable if not necessary.

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## [Race schedule](#)

### **The plan**

Here's the list of race & events I plan to attend in 2011:

- January 16th-17th : [Raid 28](#) (50 miles trail, team of 5 runners, with my spouse [Valérie](#), race involves orienteering, mud, bad weather, night, tricks & fun)
- March 12th : BRM [200k in Noisiel](#) (cycling brevet, 125 miles)
- March 26th : [Ecotrail](#) (50 miles trail)
- on a beautiful spring day : [Barkley](#) (100 miles, 60 000 feet elevation)
- April 10th : BRM [300k in Gif sur Yvette](#) (cycling brevet, 190 miles)
- April 30th - May 1st: BRM [400k in Chartres](#) (cycling brevet, 250 miles)
- May 14th-15th : BRM [600k in Beuvry](#) (cycling brevet, 375 miles)
- June 30th - July 2nd : BRM [1000k in Longjumeau](#) (cycling brevet, 620 miles, this one I'm not sure I'll do it, still hesitating)
- July 9th : [Altriman](#) (triathlon 2.4 miles / 120 miles / 26.2 miles)
- July 15th - July 17th : [Andorra ultra-trail](#) (trail 105 miles, 36 000 feet elevation)
- August 21st - 25th : [Paris-Brest-Paris](#) (745 miles, on a tandem)
- September 11th - 18th : [Tor des Géants](#) (trail 205 miles, 72 000 feet elevation)

### **Why this?**

First step was to plan to do [Paris-Brest-Paris](#), which remains my primary goal. The idea is to do it with [Valérie](#), on our tandem (was a wedding gift). To do that, we also need to participate in various cycling brevets, first because it's mandatory, then because it's pretty darn useful to be prepared for such an event. That's a lot of bike.

But then, I'm a runner. And I needed to do something "serious" after the [deca](#). So I signed up for the [Barkley](#). The idea had been around in my little head for years, but my estimation was I wasn't ready, and getting an entry slot ain't that easy anyway. But finally I applied. Finishing that might prove awfully hard, this race has a reputation of being one of the hardest in the world. Only 9 finishers in 25 years... Crazy elevation, faint trail, briars, changing weather. This will change me from the comfort of track races.

And well, since I was engaged in that trail, I decided to go trail for the whole year, so I signed up for [Tor des Géants](#) too, which represents, for me, the mix of very long races (6 days, deca...) with trail running. I expect great fun!

All this represents 3 major events with serious competition involved in the year, and at those I'll try and do my best. It's already a lot, IMHO the maximum, maybe I already exceeded it. This explains, among other things, why I won't go to [Antibes](#) this year, and why my triathlon season will be reduced to its bare minimum (one single race). Apart from these 3 major events (Barkley, PBP, TDG) the rest will be just for fun and in order to prepare the other

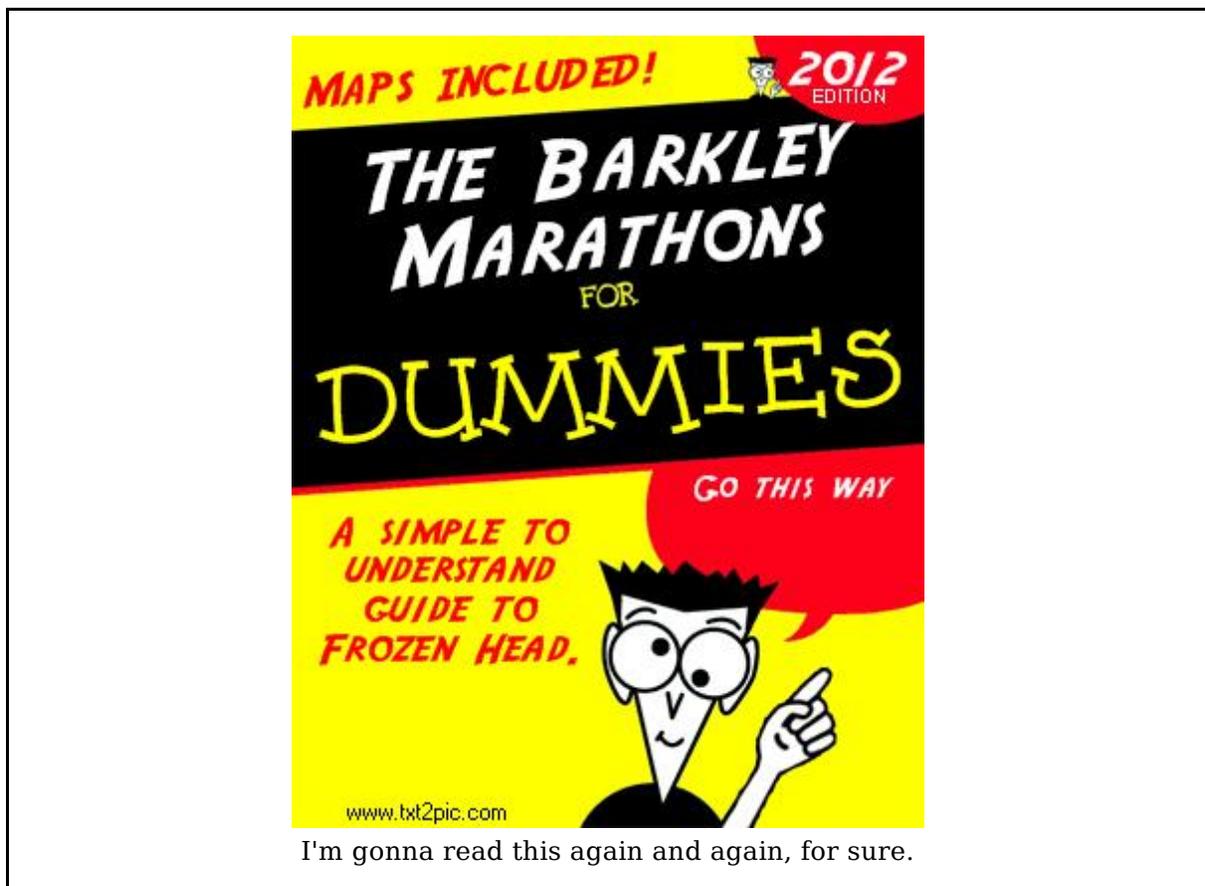
races, I'm simply applying my principle that says it's better to go to a real race and not fight for the missing 5 minutes rather than trying to set up crazy solo training sessions, which are boring and somehow complicated to organize.

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## [My Barkley 2011 in a nutshell](#)

... I screwed up!

OK, it's true this is a hell of a hard race, it's true it's not uncommon to come back with a "DNF" but honestly, this time, I could (and should) have done better. For various reasons, I end up aimlessly wandering on loop 2, in the middle of the night, with only 4:30 spare to finish 6000 ft ascent, a large part of it on no trail at all (let alone "candy ass"... ) and after spending way too much time on searching for book 4, I just call it a day and hike back to camp. 4 hours to come back, and this is yet another Barkley lesson. Even quitting is hard.



Now, to remain positive, let's consider I'm back home with up to 26 hours of instructive experience, 22 of them being spent on the course, and about as much spent "alone, just 100% alone" Out There. The race in itself is just great, tough, and Brett's victory definitely impressive.

I could give a long list of excuses for my failure but this simply does not make sense, moreover, it's useless. Let me conclude on this little joke, it's a guy that asks an old wise

fellow how he came out with all this wisdom:

- so tell me, how come you're so wise, what's your secret?
  - two words: right decisions
  - yeah, sure, but how do you make right decisions?
  - one single word: experience
  - great, but then, how to you acquire experience?
  - two words: wrong decisions
- 

## [Year 2012](#)

After [2010](#) where I first ran the [deca](#) and [2011](#) with a failure at [Barkley](#) and a [PBP](#) that was OK, here's my 2012 schedule:

- February 2012 : [48h on a treadmill](#) in Evreux;
- July 2012 : [Triple-Ironman in Lensahn](#), Germany;
- September 2012 : [100km in Millau](#) (to be confirmed, probability that I really go there is about 80%)

This year is less dense than previous years, but well, one cannot always do more and more and more races ;) I will try and best some of my reference times, to come back on longer distances later. To be continued...

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## [48h on a treadmill race report](#)

### **Treadmill, why would you run on a treadmill?**

And why not? After all, I already ran [road races](#) , tried [triathlon](#), raced [on a track/loop](#), enjoy [trails](#) , but treadmill, this I had never done. It's never too late to give it a try ;)

So I'm entering this unique event : 48 hours on a treadmill. Non-stop. Clock never stops. Thanks to [Gérard Cain](#) and [Mickael Micaletti](#). 6 of us on the starting line :

- [Sharon Gayter](#)
- [William Sichel](#)
- Jean-Pierre Guyomarch
- Olivier Chaigne
- [Christian Fatton](#)
- [Christian Mauduit](#)

All heavily loaded ultra profiles.

### **Preparation**

Globally, I prepared the same way I do for any ultra. Lots of junk miles to build up then, 2 months before the race, a bit of specialization. Indeed, at the beginning of January, I took a member card at the gym just close to my office. So I could go there for lunch on a standard

job day. At the beginning of February, I did to "long runs" on the treadmill (one of 6 hours, and one of 8 hours) where I repeated the beginning of my race and validated I wasn't getting bored too fast, for I suspected this could happen when running in the same place for a long time. The test was a success.

Concerning shoes, I did the same blunder than in last September, 10 days before the race I only have trail shoes at home (not really suited for the treadmill) and worn out road shoes (up to 1000 miles). So I bought new ones just last minute, only a week before the race. On D-day, they look brand new, they only have 20 miles logged. I know this is bad, but I couldn't put many miles on them in 3 days, especially just before a major race. On the other hand, I chose a good old pair of [Saucony](#), and I'm used to wearing those, so there should be no surprise.

### Strategy

Q1			Q2			Q3			Q4		
Heure	Vitesse	Distance									
18:00:00	9	4,28	18:30:00	10	9,03	19:00:00	11	14,25	19:30:00	7	17,58
20:00:00	9	21,85	20:30:00	10	26,60	21:00:00	11	31,83	21:30:00	7	35,15
22:00:00	9	39,43	22:30:00	10	44,18	23:00:00	11	49,40	23:30:00	7	52,73
00:00:00	9	57,00	00:30:00	10	61,75	01:00:00	11	66,98	01:30:00	7	70,30
02:00:00	8,9	74,53	02:30:00	9,9	79,23	03:00:00	10,9	84,41	03:30:00	6,9	87,69
04:00:00	8,9	91,91	04:30:00	9,9	96,62	05:00:00	10,9	101,79	05:30:00	6,9	105,07
06:00:00	8,8	109,25	06:30:00	9,8	113,91	07:00:00	10,8	119,04	07:30:00	6,8	122,27
08:00:00	8,8	126,45	08:30:00	9,8	131,10	09:00:00	10,8	136,23	09:30:00	6,8	139,46
10:00:00	8,7	143,59	10:30:00	9,7	148,20	11:00:00	10,7	153,28	11:30:00	6,7	156,47
12:00:00	8,7	160,60	12:30:00	9,7	165,21	13:00:00	10,7	170,29	13:30:00	6,7	173,47
14:00:00	8,6	177,56	14:30:00	9,6	182,12	15:00:00	10,6	187,15	15:30:00	6,6	190,29
16:00:00	8,6	194,37	16:30:00	9,6	196,93	17:00:00	10,6	203,97	17:30:00	6,6	207,10
18:00:00	8,5	211,14	18:30:00	9,5	215,65	19:00:00	10,5	220,64	19:30:00	6,5	223,73
20:00:00	8,5	227,76	20:30:00	9,5	232,28	21:00:00	10,5	237,26	21:30:00	6,5	240,35
22:00:00	8,4	244,34	22:30:00	9,4	248,81	23:00:00	10,4	253,75	23:30:00	6,4	256,79
00:00:00	8,4	260,78	00:30:00	9,4	265,24	01:00:00	10,4	270,18	01:30:00	6,4	273,22
02:00:00	8,3	277,16	02:30:00	9,3	277,16	03:00:00	10,3	277,16	03:30:00	6,3	277,16
04:00:00	8,3	281,11	04:30:00	9,3	285,52	05:00:00	10,3	290,42	05:30:00	6,3	293,41
06:00:00	8,2	297,30	06:30:00	9,2	301,67	07:00:00	10,2	306,52	07:30:00	6,2	309,46
08:00:00	8,1	313,31	08:30:00	9,1	317,63	09:00:00	10,1	322,43	09:30:00	6,1	325,33
10:00:00	8,1	329,18	10:30:00	9,1	333,50	11:00:00	10,1	338,30	11:30:00	6,1	341,19
12:00:00	8,1	345,04	12:30:00	9,1	349,36	13:00:00	10,1	354,16	13:30:00	6,1	357,06
14:00:00	8	360,86	14:30:00	9	365,13	15:00:00	10	369,88	15:30:00	6	372,73
16:00:00	8	376,53	16:30:00	9	380,81	17:00:00	10	385,56	17:30:00	6	388,41
18:00:00	0	388,41									

Stay on the bike !  
(Wayne Kurtz)



My plan, which included sleep on the second night (which I didn't do after all) and displays on the bottom left corner the ultimate advice from Wayne Kurtz "Stay on the bike!" (no matter what).

I soon found out that running at the very same speed on a treadmill for... too long, one gets bored, and worn out. I imagine in real conditions (eg not on a treadmill) one thinks one is jogging at 6 miles/hour but in fact sometimes one is running at 5.9 and sometimes at 6.1, so the road/track can climb up, descend, wind can change, in other words, the effort level varies. But here, if you ask 5.5 to the treadmill it will serve you 5.5 exactly, no more, no less, no variation.

So I introduced change. In Antibes in 2010 I had chosen 3 hours cycles, 2 hours ran and 1 hour walked. Here, I chose 2 hours cycles, composed like this:

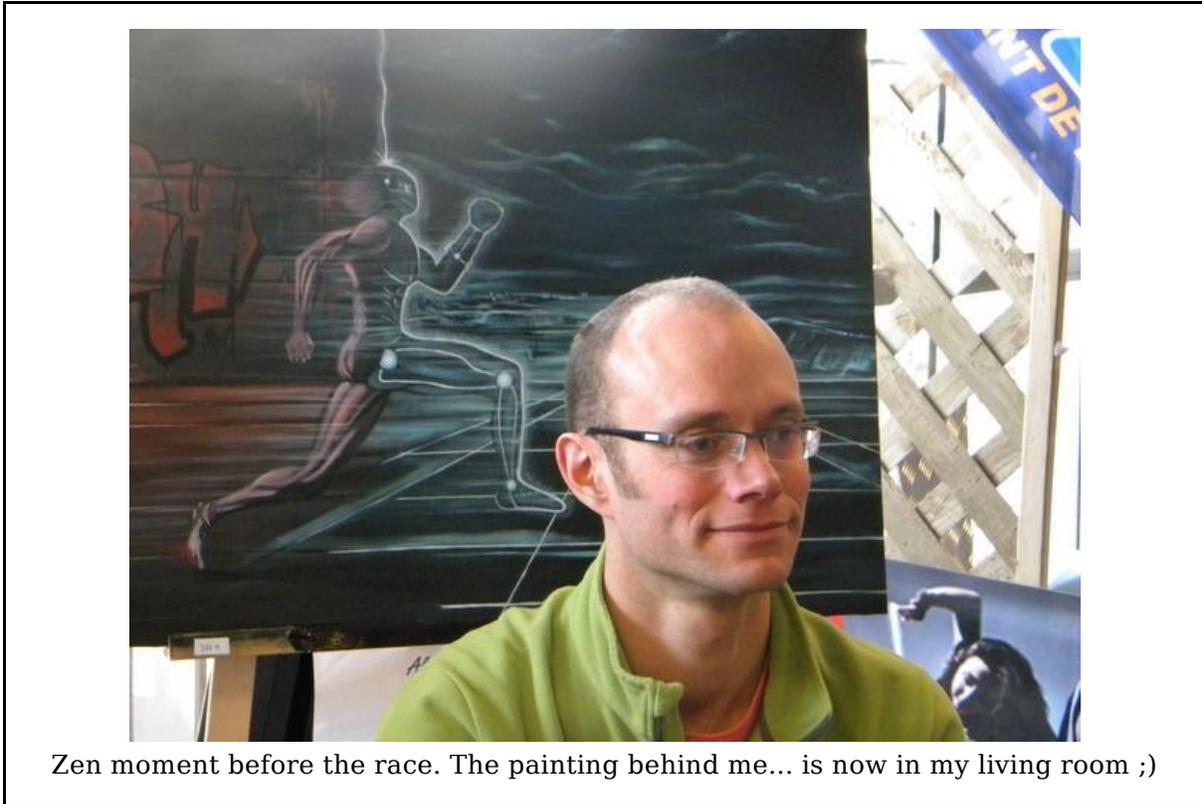


This was a (supposed to be funny) menu I had prepared to put on the treadmill display, not to be encumbered by numbers when running. "Avance, bourrique!" (written on the plate in the middle) basically means "Move your big fat ass!".

- half an hour slow
- half an hour average
- half an hour fast
- half an hour walked (slower than anything else)

Globally, I anticipated a decrease in my average speed because, well, one gets tired after some time. So at the beginning I was planning 5.6 mph. And 5.0 at the end. Same thing for my walking speed, it was 4.3 at start and 3.7 at the end. What's more, I tried to avoid speeds around 4.5 mph, which is a typical average speed but is hard to maintain. 4.5 is too fast for a walk, too slow for a jog. I prefer walking slower, running faster, and alternate to make a good average.

## Race context



Zen moment before the race. The painting behind me... is now in my living room ;)

I'll never be thankfull enough for race directors and all the people who helped them : we were received with all comfort and attention from [Euro Fitness](#), and the race itself was IMHO very well set up. One might wish to tweak some things, for instance having better real-time informations about runners mileage and instant speed, but globally, everything was done so that it was really easy for us to pile up miles. I lacked nothing. This is also with the help of [Valérie](#), my spouse, who crewed me during all these long hours. The [Pro-Form treadmills](#) where arranged in two lines of three treadmills. In front of me, Jean-Pierre and the other Christian. On my right Sharon. The two others (Olivier and William) where somewhat too far, I didn't really get a chance to talk with them during the race.

**Ready, set, go**



First steps on the treadmill. I had put the official shirt of my former running club (USA), but took it off soon after, my arm pits do not like gears without sleeves.

The first 8 hours were just like training. I did a little more miles than planned (2 I think) because with Valérie it was easier to eat and drink. When training, I had to leave my treadmill every 2 hours to go and open my locker to get new foods and beverages, for instance. Everything went fine. At this stage, I could spot Olivier who made a very fast start. I know him and suspected he wouldn't go very far like this. First he was informed just the day before that he would participate in the race. Second, since the first hour, one can tell he's tired from his face, when he usually looks rather cool. Sharon has the nicest stride of us 6, no doubt about this. And William is having stomach problems, he's sick, it's really hard for him, he can't perform at his right level. Christian Fatton and Jean-Pierre run easy, they're ahead of me.



A typical example of what fans and crew could see for... 48h.

I just let things go, running my race.

After 8 hours, I'm having trouble following my schedule. So I adjust it. I raise some speeds up, and lower some other sections, taking care that the global average speed remains equivalent. In reality, Valérie does all the calculations for me. She went to sleep in the early evening so that she can be up during the hardest part of the night, at about 3 am, when everyone is longing to take a nap.

### **First thursday**

Thursday is \*the\* complete day we'll have to run. I'm still moving steady. It's funny to see that on the graphics made with hourly data I look like the most regular runner with constant moving forward, when in fact I often change my pace. I'm still sometimes running over 6.2 mph, which is not that common at this stage of the race.



My shoes were new at start (only worn for 20 miles before). Is it because of that or because of my low stride that there's so much dust on the back? Nice way to catch footprints.

I'm now well engaged into the race, and I'm waiting for the night with patience and dedication. Night which should, I expect, be the hardest part. The second night is always hard. Especially when you don't sleep. Olivier lost his lead, I'm at about the same mileage than Jean-Pierre, Christian Fatton is way ahead. I just wait, keep going, following the plan. Curiously, my fast sections are the ones I enjoy most, I then allow myself to use my earphones and enter some sort of out-of-this-world state, endorphins powered, I run, fly, I feel great. During the walking sessions I exchange jokes with Jean-Pierre.

### **Salsa lesson**

Well, I say "salsa lesson" but in fact it wasn't salsa, was some other dance and/or music, something spelled with a "Z". Who cares. Between 7 pm and 9 pm, it's thursday night fever, loud and entertaining music, girls dancing, bit big party at Eurofitness, and I love it! I learnt afterwards that some other runners didn't appreciate that so much, but as far as I'm concerned, I found it great, and I was even waiting, longing for that. The mayor of Evreux even came to run a treadmill with us. But he also did take a shower and put clean clothes on, while we were still running like brainless hamsters.

I got Manu Conraux on the phone. I ask him for pieces of advice for the 2nd night, which is coming real soon. He tells me I should "keep going" and also that it will probably be a "hard time". Oh yeah, great!

It's really hot now, with all those people in the room, I got a fan directed on me, which propels fresh air on my body. Other runners do the same thing. Thierry and H  l  ne came and see me. They replace Val  rie so that she can take a nap and be strong during the rest of the night. This is something magic in this sport, we meet really great people.

## **In the desert**

I handled this night OK I think. Christian Fatton is exhausted. I see him slow down shortly after the 24h mark. I judge he's somewhere below 5 mph, magic is gone, his body is taking over his mind. We cheer him up, but he's stalled. Nobody can do the impossible. I'm slowly filling the gap, mile after mile. Then he goes to sleep. I stay alone with Jean-Pierre. Jean-Pierre won't sleep. Then I won't either. And then I leave. My head leaves.

Now we're in a garage. I'm having some trouble finding the bathrooms when I stop for a pee. Val  rie wrote down what I said, and translated, it gives something like "let's face it, I get lost since we moved to this new gym". I'm having a hard time finding out which treadmill is mine when I come back, I almost step on Sharon's, who's gone to sleep. It takes a long time for me to find the big hudge green "Start" button. I have to use my brain not to press the red "Stop" instead. This is typically when, during a trail race, I wouldn't take any more risk and decide to take a nap along the trail. But here I don't care, there's no real risk. Hopefully, I never fall from the treadmill, no problem, no nothing. A miracle. Or maybe, the mere habit of running saved me from doing a blunder. I run mechanically. By the way, great thanks to Jean-Pierre who very quickly found out I was hallucinating and adviced Val  rie to follow me everywhere I went. This was a bright idea. On can tell from this Jean-Pierre is a really experienced guy, used to see runners screwing up.

By the end of the night, I finally offer myself 5 minutes lying down, I'm just becoming crazy. This is a good move, when I "wake up" my brain feel better. I wasn't really asleep, I just let things go for a few minutes. Now the counterpart is that I'm cold, and my legs are hard, hard, aouch', this hurts. I quickly step back on my treadmill. Now ahead towards the morning, the sun, life, and the finish line!

## **Fight**

Just in front of me this morning, Jean-Pierre and Christian. Jean-Pierre is chasing, just behind Christian. He might get the 2nd place, after all. But Christian keeps running strong, and finds hidden forces to maintain, and even increase, the gap between them. Both of them are really giving it all, it's nice to watch. And it's motivating as well.

Since last night, and knowing I didn't really sleep, I'm trying to find wether I can catch the world record. Is it still within range? The problem is that even the slightest increase in average speed costs me a lot. I can manage to move at 4.4 mph, stops (rare...) included, but I'd need to move over 8 mph. So there's only a big fat "half-a-mile-an-hour" to gain, but at this state, it represents a lot. But anyway I can still grab the 390k mark (242 miles).



As we were reaching the end of the race, I took off my "menu" and allowed myself to view my speed and mileage. Here, there's a little 10.6 km/h (about 6.6 miles per hour) on its way. Not that bad after more than 40h.

At km 360 (224 miles), as I get the first "intermediate prime" (thanks [Techni Chauff!](#)) I feel tired. Valérie reminds me "so what the hell did Manu (Conraux) tell you to do now? Take a rest or try and do your best?". Thanks Valérie, thanks Manu. This is one solid team one can count on. So I placed to strong hours of steady runs at paces well over 6 mph, between 3 pm and 5 pm. Then I'm ahead of my initial target, but I'exhausted. Before those last 4 hours, there was no beginning, no end, only bare running. But now, as the (virtual) finish line is at hand, minutes seem to last an eternity. My brain is full of garbage, I just pile up miles and stack them into rows, each row corresponding to an hour, so they are like little blocks I put in a virtual library. I try and find the equivalent between the duration of the songs I'm listening to and the miles themselves, is there any relation between them? And if I run faster, will the songs take up more or less place on the SD card there are stored on? For the last 8 hours, I took away my "menu" and now I can view the real treadmill display. It's all blue and hypnotizing. I think I'm (finally) getting nuts.



OK, it's over now. I'm back to real life.

And well, even the best things come to an end, some musician friends of mine came and see me (thanks POD!), I see Christian Fatton running his final sprint. I'm happy with a smooth increase of my speed (up to 7.5 mph) to go and get the 395k mark (245 miles). And that's it, the treadmill stops. Valérie did press the button. I hurry up and sit down on my chair.

Good.

### **Final word**

If I had to do it again? I'd do it!

Something to be noted, and because it's rare: I ate very few solid food on this race. Much less than usual. On the other hand I drank and drank gallons of energy drink (pineapple-exotic flavor from [Vit'effort](#)). I was drinking almost a full bottle (the kind of bottle one puts on a bike or carry in a backpack) every half an hour, so knowing there are 96 half hours in the race, that should represent something between 10 and 15 gallons.

Thanks to all those who made this possible, and congratulations to Tony Mangan for placing this beautiful 405k mark (more than 251 miles), a record which will make us dream for some more time.

### **Videos**

- [Race start video \(GEA TV\)](#)
- [French television coverage](#)
- [Interview of C. Fatton \(GEA TV\)](#)
- [Race end video \(GEA TV\)](#)

## Year 2013

For 2013, I planned 2 major races :

- [May 2013, French Ultra Festival 6-days](#) in Le Luc, France: the rules are simple, run/walk as many laps/miles as possible within 6 days (144 hours)
- [September 2013, Race Around Ireland](#) : as you can guess from the name, this is a race around Ireland. The difference with the Tour de France is that first this is a race \*around\* Ireland and not some random path making funny shapes in the middle of the country, then there's no such thing as a good night in a hôtel with gourmet meals, massage and modern comfort 16 hours per day. This is a non-stop race, clock never stops, looks like this is over 1400 miles, about 24 000 meters elevation, for a time limit of 132 hours.

And of course, other side-events as well to keep busy and training, for instance I'll be at [London-Edinburgh-London](#) which is a bike event similar to [Paris-Brest-Paris](#). It happens only every 4 years, and I could reasonably not miss that.

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## Ultra French Festival (6 days) race report

### **Chaotic training**

Succeed in an ultra is often directly linked to how well you're prepared. I've no magical recipe for this, all I know about is good, serious, copious training. For this [6 days, AKA Ultra French Festival](#) - just FYI, the concept is simple, run/walk as many laps, or put another way as far as possible, in 6 days, that is 144 hours - I decided to improve my walking power and style (by doing [long walks](#) and some exercices [technique](#) ) and of course, try to still better my running level, which some good old long runs. And this is where I got problems. A few weeks before the race, on a 35 miles long run (I seldom fire a day off job, and have fun this way, I rarely do it but still do it once or twice a year) I was going downhill when CRACK I twisted my right ankle. It's one of my weak points. Right ankle and left knee. These are the places that hurt first. So well, this right ankle made a strange noise. Then it did hurt, I managed to keep going for 6 or 7 miles on it, just enough to get to the nearest train station and go back home.

I keep an eye on it during the following days. It gets bigger, but the pain is still bearable. I got 2 options. Either I slow down and expect it to fix with rest. Or, I ignore it and keep going with heavy training, taking the risk never to fix it, or least be unable to run on race day. I choose the later. I already have a personal record of [500 miles](#) on a six days, and I want to better this, and if I take a rest now, I suspect I won't make it, so I play double or nothing. Day after day, I look - and listen - closely at my right leg, I double-check I never take any bad step - no second chance ... - and, miracle, it works. Two weeks before the race, it still hurts a but not too much. On D-day, the final rest before the race having done its ultimate work, I don't feel anything anymore, and I have a strong training behind me. I won that bet.

### **The track**

The track, called [circuit du Luc](#) is a real race track. Not something improvised on a

supermarket parking area with a few barriers and some cones. No way, it's a real professional track, designed for cars, designed for speed. It's a bit unusual, but very convenient since we are allowed to camp on side of the track. Concerning logistics, Gérard Cain, race director, has just been perfect, we have - important detail - showers and restrooms just 10 meters away from the track without any stairs. It's not absolute and total perfection, but we're closing. Usual complainers will argue that the track was hard to run because it was not totally flat, and because turns had a tendency to break your ankles and knees because they were slightly inclined for cars to be able to go faster. This is true, but the track was the same for everyone.

## **The Mauduit team**

I came with my whole family. My spouse [Valérie](#) but also my daughters Adèle, Lise and Garance. We planted the 6 places family tent plus a smaller one for me, so that I would not disturb everyone when going to bed at 1:00 AM, and, what's more, waking up at 4:00 AM. I could not ask for better than that, both from a technical and human point of view. I only had one thing left to do : run strong.

## **Start**

A six-days is kind of weird. Just in the middle of the afternoon, we start. Just before, everything was quiet. Then everything is still quiet, except the race is on. I start slowly. I walk for one hour. I plan to alternate run and walk. My bet is : by walking strong, and I should able to power-walk, because I trained for this, I should do better than last tie, and better my personal record of 500 miles. Try and reach 530 miles, and maybe even 560. Very likely, such a mileage should put me in the first three places, but carefull, there are lots of serious contenders, and there's plenty of rooms for surprises. I just plan to do \*my\* race, run as far as possible, wether it's possible to win and/or finish with a nice place is a question for day 4. Until then, I follow my plan.

## **Crazy rythm**

On day 1, I surprise myself with my mileage. I'm about 115 miles, even with a short night break. For a slow start, this is not bad. But still, I respected my planned run and walk sessions, which, one has to face it, is quite efficient.

Now the question is... how long this can last. But for now, everything's fine.

## **Technical problem**

Problems start to peer out on day 2. I feel a very distant pain on my lower tibias. This is annoying, but I have a fix for this. I just relax, think about something else, and pain disappears. Or at least, makes itself bearable, I barely notice it. It's getting worse and worse, but nothing really bad at this stage. I have logged 150, 200, 250 miles, it's not a big surprise that those miles have some impact on my body.

## **Nice memories**



My daughters on the right, with a friend, and on the left the kid I did the "interview" with.

This race was definitely very nice, as on many long distance track races, there's this unforgettable spirit, ambiance, it turns out as this is a big holiday camp. I chat with people, I chat, chat, and log miles. I can't remember when I really got in first position, but who cares. My estimation is that my current rythm can lead me to 530 miles possibly 560 if everything is going smoothly.



Gilbert, race director of the Grand Raid 73, he'll be in my crew at the Race Around Ireland.

A nice point: race director had organised a partnership with a local association, so I had the opportunity to make a little "interview" with a very nice boy, about my daughters' age, whom I've been able to share my passion with. This was definitely a great idea, I really enjoyed that part of the event, and he did to I think.

I also remember all the efforts of Valérie who did everything she could not only for me, but also for other runners. Watermelon on a sunny day is a recipe that always does work, and it will keep working I guess, no runner can resist. And Gérard seemed to appreciate the "Big Mac" coming directly from the nearest local Mac Donald's (then, we'll talk about mediterranean food and how it's supposed to be one of the best diets in the world...)



My table, just in front of my tent, maintained with patience and dedication by my family.

I also sort of innovated and decided to bring an MP3 reader. I usually do not carry that kind of item with me, but finally though it could be usefull at night. It's strange, but I realized time feels \*longer\* with music than without. Seems counter-intuitive, but it's like this. I still use it to keep awake since after 11 pm I start getting... tired and at least, with music, I don't fall asleep. On a bike, this fight against sleepiness is very different, since one has to keep fully awake and avoid falling down. Running, things change, one can go much farther, especially on a track, and try and reach the extreme limit. I remember, on night, I asked Dominique (an old friend from my former club [Tri91](#), which I've somewhat motivated to come and have fun with us on this 6 days) to help me "come back home". Indeed, I was afraid to collapse on the way back to my tent, which was, let's face it, only a mile ahead.



Logging miles, just so easy when there's no problem.

I took the time to make a few laps with [Jean-Claude Perronnet](#). Jean-Claude is a somewhat special runner, who needs someone to run with him. Why is that? He's blind. And runs up to 400 miles in 6 days... Had he been able to use his eyes, a bunch of us - including me - would have lost a place. A very interesting guy, very nice.

I also remember all those times I passed my tent, with my wife and daughters helping me the best they could. I had everything I needed, any time.

The only thing I regret concerning logistics - and this is entirely my fault - is that I did not use their help as well as I should have when going to bed. One night, just when I was supposed to sleep, I spent about 40 minutes trying to fit the various wheels and cables in my tent, so that I would wake up at the right time. Wheels? Cables? In a tent? What the hell is that? I don't know. I can't remember. I think I was just "half mad" and started to have weird ideas alone in my sleeping bag. Still, I wasted more than half an hour of good old sleep that way. It's like that, that kind of thing happens, when one is very tired, one does not always make smart choices ;)



Hey wait, I almost looked tired on that picture. One should not pay so much attention to appearances...

I appreciated the 100k and the 100-miler, those were side races, with - and this is sad - too few runners racing them, but at least they brought happiness and movement on the track, with runners who were sometimes racing those distances for the first time, and deserved their "finish".

### **La chute**

After some time, the pain in my lower limbs is getting worse and worse. Olivier Chaigne gives me some cream to release the pain. I appreciate his help, unfortunately, it does not really have any effect. I passed the two thirds of the race (4 days) and decide I need to speed up. In any case, if I want to reach 530 miles, I have no choice, I need to move, and fast. So I switch in "race mode" and watch after every single minute, trying to "almost never" stop.

On the evening, I make a very slight change to my schedule and follow Jimmy, and chat with him while jogging - when on my plan, I should have been walking - and this way I increase my daily mileage. I go to bed really tired. A little late, but I can afford this because the end is, or at least seems, close.

The next day ouch! My legs are surprisingly stiff (but well, after nearly 400 miles, this is maybe no big surprise...) but by concentrating a bit I manage to smooth things out, and even

manage to jog again. Yeah, I'm on the road again! I rejoice myself and expect this to be a beautiful day. I pass my tent, I signal Valérie that there's going to be some action!

I pass the official arch, counting our laps.

Then my left tibia, on its lower part, in front, tells me something is going wrong. In less than half a mile, I'm forced to stop. A very precise pain, in the area that was "globally suffering" for 3 days. This time it's different. I feel like someone is cutting my bone in two parts, that something is getting seriously broken in there. I read that for a champion, pain is merely information. I don't know if I'm a champion, but here the message is clear. It says: STOP! STOP NOW! I try my usual remedies, I walk, take it easy, concentrate, calm down, but nothing helps. I'm stuck. Half way on the lap, I decide to stop to sort things out. Going across the rack, from right side to left side - about 5 meters or so - takes me a full minute. Any movement on my left side fires intense pain, something is going on. Something not cool, if I believe the "informations" I get about it.

Holy f\*cking sh\*t!

I ask other runners passing me to ask someone to come and get me with the little electric car officials use to move on the track. All runners are great, one of them (I forgot who it was, shame on me...) will even move a barrier so that I can relax on it. Now an official (disguised as a prisoner, lol!) is here. I climb in the car. Valérie is surprised to see me like this. 20 minutes ago, I was fine. But it was 20 minutes ago.

The race doctor takes a look at my leg. Everything is swollen in there. One can't really see anything. My legs usually swell during races, even when "everything's fine". I don't want to keep going and risk an injury that would span on several months. I put my race number aside. This is not really a DNF, as anyway my mileage is recorded and I'll be ranked with others using my current distance. The second - Didier - takes about 6 hours to take the first position, while I'm stupidly sitting at a table.

I'm definitely broken, even to take a pee, I need to use clutches and get some external help. I'm crying in despair, I feel sorry for Valérie and my daughters, who have done such a great job, I feel like I did not do my part of the job. Maybe if I had not tried to log extra miles last night... Maybe if I had walked more slowly... It's easy to regret, now.

I do not regret the decision to stop at this stage, in the sense that every movement brings me back to the sad reality: I'm broken. In the afternoon, a very strong (very strong!) wind is blowing. The day before, it was already blowing strong (impressive, a tent flew about 100 feet over our heads...) but now it's even stronger. Runners inform me it blows so strong that it defeats any ambition to run on some parts of the track. By chance, our tent is on the only part of the track which is well protected from the wind. I keep watching the race. Half killed by tiredness - I'm in this "cool down" post-race stage - and also half jealous not to be in the party any more.

The day after, at noon, I go and see the race director and the race doctor and after talking to them, I go back on track. I keep quiet. It's just that, I just could not leave this thing going on and not be part of it. I believe I'm the slowest guy on the track now. I limp and it's ugly, but I think I can manage to protect my body and not worse things. I feel a little better than yesterday but running is out of question. With this little limp I still pass the 700k symbolic limit. It's stupid but I'm pleased to have finished the race at 4 pm with everybody, even if I was fundamentally "out". In the end, beautiful victory of Didier Sessegolo, who really deserves it, one needed to be strong on this track.

## Epilog

Of course, I'm disappointed.



My daughters playing the innocent hand role, picking numbers for the post-race tombola.

I still do not know exactly what was my problem, I tend to think it was just a good old tendinitis. Two days after I went to a hospital in Marseille. Seeing me, the doctor thought about kidney disorder, since my leg swelling was kind of impressive. I must admit it was a nice one, coming from the ankle, it was going up my hips, and I could clearly see the mark of my underwear strings printed in my legs. But finally, no, no kidney problem, they were functioning OK. He recommended I should take a rest. Good joke.

Two weeks later, I went and see a sport doctor, who sent me doing a leg scanner and blood analysis, he suspected some stress fracture. With the swelling - still there and pretty big around the ankle - it was not easy to make a diagnostic just with the eyes and hands. Scanner revealed nothing. Since then, I must admit I did not come back to see a doctor. I had the impression to meet lots of sympathetic and willing-to-help people, all telling me to slow down.

Which I did. 5 weeks without running, at all, and most of them I was still limping, any "normal" walk was impossible. Not the kind of injury I could ignore... Hopefully, I managed to stay in a correct shape by cycling. Yeah, cycling, let's talk about it, I've two projects for this summer, the first one [London-Edinburgh-London](#), 880 miles on a bike, end of July. And then, in September [Race Around Ireland](#) even harder with 1340 miles and a hard-to-match cutoff time of 132 hours. So no kidding, I need to be able to cycle "for real" as soon as possible.

As of today (August 2013, 3 month later) I still feel some stiffness in my lower left leg, so I run but I run carefully. I'll check all this out once the season is off, for now I keep going with "moderate activity" as far as running is concerned,

## **The lesson**

If I've got one lesson to remember with this 6-days, it's that you don't fool around with injuries. One can say "mental strength, mental strength", when your body is broken, it's broken. I have a couple of ideas, things to do and other not too do, to avoid this next time. That's also the charm of these races, they take it a bit farther than a simple "run strong" ;)

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## **London-Edinburgh-London report**

### **Paris-Brest-Paris twin brother**

[PBP](#) and [LEL](#) are definitely linked. The former takes place every 4 years, the latter too. Next PBP is in 2015. Next LEL is in 2017. Every two years, one has a good old "more than 1000k" brevet to do over here in western Europe. On the paper, the two events look the same, the elevation is similar (about 12 000 meters, that is 35 000 feet), the distance is a bit longer for the UK version, 880 miles vs 760 miles for the French one. It's different but still in the same category. Concerning weather, one could argue it's better in France, but those who did PBP in 2007 might disagree.

In practice, there are fundamental differences : there's much fewer people in LEL. Even if this year they refused entries (unusual for an event which, not that long ago, had only 250 cyclists registered...) it's still not as "industrial" as the "Brest". Small detail which has its importance too : no signs on the road. And, if you quit, you're on your own. Globally, LEL is more about loneliness and autonomy, while PBP is a great popular event. It could change, but for now, this is how it is.

As far as I'm concerned, the major difference is that PBP represents only 2 nights on the bike, while LEL corresponds to 3 nights on the bike. And this is a hell of a difference.

### **Minimalist - but right - training**

Following my problems at the [French Ultra Festival \(6-days\)](#) I did not trained the way I wanted to. Globally, the second half of May plus June was a plain zero miles logged period, as far as running is concerned (which is very rare, for me) and not much on the bike, since I was afraid I would prevent the injury from getting fixed. So well, on D-day, July 28th, I have cycled only about 2 500 miles since January 1st. To take the start of a more than 800 miles event, this is not exactly what one would expect. Probably just enough, but not more. I do not have the choice anyway, it's that, or nothing.



Getting ready in the camp site at Debden. With my good old tent, which bravely served me for two 6-days and many other (music-related) events.

Concerning the bike, I ride my good old Cannondale Synapse, and carry a little (water-proof!) front-bag with a 7 liters capacity and filled my two drop bags with warm clothes.

### **Early start**

I chose to start early, at 5:30 am, an "option" which was offered by mail and targeted at people aiming at about "70 hours". At the time I read that mail, I thought I was in this category. After my tendinitis from the 6-days, and my shortened training, I'm not so sure I belong to this, but as I had planned family vacation after the race, and needed to be back on wednesday, ideally at noon, if I can scratch half an hour and arrive slightly earlier, it's already a good deal.

So well, we start. About thirty of us. The pace is a little strong for me, but I manage to follow that rythm witjout getting it the red zone. I decide it's a good option to follow that group, at least until the next checkpoint, about 60 miles ahead.

### **Adventure is just around the corner**

What I just love in all those brevets, is their capacity to provide unexpected events. You get out for 300 miles or more, you can be sure "something" is going to happen. Wether it's a flat tire, a mechanical problem, an extraordinary meeting, there's *\*always\** a surprise.

Indeed, after 25 miles on the road, the unexpected stuff is this remark from a guy coming from Quebec, informing me that my rear tire is "falling apart". Wow, I don't want it to blow up, so I stop right away and thank him for the warning. I then figure out my tire is just fine, no problem, no nothing. Oh great, this must be humour imported from Quebec, thanks guy, really! I still try and understand. OK, he must have been talking - I think - about my spare

tire, which I put under my saddle "just in case" and is, this is true, in an awkward position, that might lead people to think it's going to fall... So that was a nice gesture from that guy to inform me. Now, since I'm stopped for real, I might as well fix this potential problem, so I decide to block the tire with the small lock I carry in case I need to shop around for a few minutes, and which is also placed under my saddle.

Very bright idea!

But look, to do this, I need to open the lock, so I need to pull out the key, which is in my wallet, which is in a back pocket, pocket in which I also put my glasses. At this very moment I also wear glasses, but they are sunglasses (I always need to wear some glasses, else I can't see).

Back on the road.

I switch my GPS on. It was off because I was saving batteries, and had no need for it since I was in a formed group with no hope to take the lead, as I was without any doubt not one of the strong men.

So I'm cruising around, and check, just mechanically, that everything is in my pockets. I always check out various things, I think I'm just close to have some ["OCD"](#) and [Valérie](#) sometimes makes fun about this. But as a matter of facts, my glasses are gone. I quickly figure out the various consequences. No "white" glasses -> no bike at night. No night ride -> 4 to 8 hours lost per day. Spanned over 3 days, this is about 20 hours. Almost a complete day off. What a disaster!

I turn back and try and get them. My bet follows: since I've put the GPS on just when I was stopped, the trace should start at the exact place I lost my glasses. And it works. I find them, on the side of the road, ready to be flatten-out by the next truck. I think I when backwards for a bit less than half a mile, and globally, I've lost 10 to 15 minutes. For sure, I won't see the head group again, but at least, I got my glasses.

## **The Loneliness of the Long Distance Cyclist**

I soon get some company, another guy who started at 5:30 am, but for some reason did not follow the leading group pace. We chat. My English is good enough to exchange with almost any English speaker. This guy has some deep cycling history. I leave him just before the checkpoint.



At a checkpoint, as you can see, I'm alone. I would add, alone as usual.

At this checkpoint, very nice surprise: there's plenty too drink, eat, it's simply the long-distance cyclist paradise! I did not really check that point before leaving, even though I would need to find shops myself along the road. But no, everything is here, at hand, and free (slight difference with PBP, here, once you've paid the registration fees, food is free, whereas at PBP, you pay an extra for it, those sayings about Scottish guys being greedy are plain bullshit!). I enjoy this comfort but not too much, as there's some still a long way to go.

Then, I ride on my own. I have no idea how I would have done without the GPS. Nothing is marked on the road, no signs - this, I expected - but in some cases, deep in the country, the road numbers are not even mentioned. This is a real problem. But well, I have the GPS, so I use it.

The great flat section among canals and swamps is not my favorite, but when I reach this bridge across a huge river - as a barely literate French, I have no idea what this is called, after a quick Internet search I think it's the [Humber](#) - I really appreciate the scenery. I enjoy it.

### **Bon appétit**

It's now dark and I ride with my lights on. I go from one checkpoint to another. I did slow down - after 200 miles, it's no surprise the pace is altered - and the now hilly profile does not really help.

I think it's by that time that at a checkpoint - typical context, a school is reserved for us, with its restaurant open - to joke with one of the ladies in charge. She offers me something that did not raise any interest in me but also some "Chinese chicken". I'm about to ask for this but at the last minute I figure out something is wrong: "how can I have guarantees this chicken is really chinese?". Facing my perfect logic, she has to admit that no, this chicken

ain't really chinese, it's a plain English chicken (I've been fooled!), cooked the Chinese way. This being said, the chicken is delicious, in a general manner, everything was really tasty, and there was plenty.

I stop to snooze a little bit, and ask to be woken up at 2:30 am, that's to say 20 minutes ahead. There's nobody, I'm still one of the first cyclists (my early start...) and many riders, I think, try to skip this first night and not sleep at all. After that small break, I'm back again.

The second day will be marked by two memorables feats. First: it's raining. Between almost unnoticeable (but humid!) rain to instant showers, one can, from time to time, see a bit of blue sky. But not too much. Dawn was just unforgettable. The sun went up in a foggy atmosphere, in a hilly, somewhat elevated place, just before Brampton, lost in the middle of the clouds. I'm riding with a Russian guy which is having liver problems (no kidding!) and is not moving as fast as he would like to. He's just as fast as I can go, ha ha ha.

### **Details, the devil is in the details**

Everything could be fine, the rain is OK, the rather poor road surface is OK, but still, I'm experiencing chaffing problems. Like the stupid I can sometimes be, I forgot all my creams in France. I did buy some random stuff in a drugstore just before the start, but well, not that great. And now, after 30 hours, it's all evaporated, I'm dry. Or no, well, I'm not dry, but wet with rain and perspiration, and I'm trying to figure out a realistic way to ride for 500 more miles like this. Everything is doable, for sure, by clenching one's teeth, one can accomplish miracles, but I usually don't enjoy suffering. At some point I pass a little shop, which happens to also act as a Post Office (to give you an idea of how dense shops are in this area...) and knowing no better, I give it a try and stop. Do you have vaseline? He does! I buy three little doses of it, walk a few steps, and spread it between my legs. Wow, that feels better. Here I go again!

### **Hello friends!**

When I stopped, I've been passed by an English guy, Chris, and he decides to ride with me for a while. We occasionally get our own, but still have the opportunity to ride a few miles together. A nice guy.

Then I'm on my own again. The last miles before Edinburgh are quite nice, beautiful landscape, but the road is packed with cars and trucks, and as a side note the surface is quite uneven, more precisely, it costs more effort, on this surface, to reach a given speed, than on a perfect smooth surface. My bike frame is however good enough to filter vibrations and offer a reasonable comfort. Luckily, the wind is blowing in our backs since the start. I do not want to think about the return way to London. Showers + wind in my face + 450 miles already = 10 miles per hour average. Well, we'll see, the wind can disappear, or its direction might change, who knows.

### **Edinburgh**

A long time ago (several months...) I considered doing some extra distance and use my being close to Edinburgh to go and see Alan Young, the unbelievable and awesomely reliable crew of [William Sichel](#). This would have been a crazy idea. And by the way, the Edinburgh control point is one that you must push "until the end" to reach. Those who have been there know that the last miles are worth something.

So well, I don't wait for too long up there, and soon I'm on my way back to London. I think I stopped, on an average, about 25 minutes at each checkpoint. On one hand it's pretty long and inefficient. On the other hand, it's anyway better than what most other cyclists were doing. The proof: I never passed anyone on the road, whereas I was regularly passed by

others, only they where pretty much always the same guys ;)

## **The beauty of Scotland**

So well, I'm on my way back under a persistent rain, no big surprise. I heard there was some unusual heat on the Great Britain in July. I've experienced nothing like this in Scotland, there I got: rain, and wind. Only, the temperature was mild, I must at least acknowledge that. Colder, it would have been even worse. Anyway, it rains, the road is steep. I've had better times. At this stage, I'm resigned, I'll have rain and wind in my face until London, this is how it goes. Too bad, "c'est la vie".

I often meet Yves, a French guy who is moving pretty fast, and is much faster than I am on the road - but I get back on him at checkpoints... - and we chat a little bit. This way back from Edinburgh is just so beautiful. The weather is a pain, but it's beautiful. So beautiful that after leaving a checkpoint, somewhat unhappy to be so wet, rain stops. And the sun just shows up. An unbelievable sun which lights this land with hills and pine trees, little rivers finding their ways trough wet grass and little swamps, it's just a magical view. A postcard I'd say, these few hours before dusk are a miracle. Just for that moment, it waas worth being there.

This being said, it's time to go home...

## **Night in white satin**

On the way back, I enjoy Yves' company, the French man I met in Scotland, and we arrive in Brampton arround midnight. We meet people going the other way, northward, up Edinburgh. Good luck guys!

Here, I decide to sleep for a while. Night is calm and beautiful, one could even have some hope to count stars, let's leave bad weather to those Scotish specialists, and enjoy the British sun!

I take a shower - rare, but given my chaffing problems, I try to keep a minimum of hygiene - I fill my stomach with plenty of good food, and go to sleep. There's a line. I have to wait about 10 minutes that a bed is free (the fact that there are both people going South and North does not help, I think I chose the worst period to stop) and at last, I lie down and fall asleep. I request to be woken up at 2:30 am.

At 2:30 am, I'm on another planet. I was sleeping like a baby. The guy who tries and wake me up needs at least 3 full minutes to help me understand what's going on. Oh, yeah. Now I got it. LEL. 2:30. I'm supposed to ride. I must go again. I would have preferred a long lazy morning in bed, followed with bacon, sausages and all the modern comfort, but this is not for now.

I get ready and go out, happy and motivated.

## **It's a long way**

My happiness and motivation is put under hard pressure when I soon get aware that... rain is back again! Curse those bloody English clouds! So I go again, and it's a very long hill that is awaiting for me, with a little gem in the middle of it, a paved section, very steep (15%, I'd say), slippery (rain!), which looked scary but was, in fact, quite easy to negotiate.

I took the time to change clothes in Brampton, however I'm now wet again, at least on the lower parts of my body (legs...) and this is a problem, for the clothes I'm wearing are "cheap stuff", just old shorts which I put on anyway thinking that they had the big advantage to be

dry. This advantage lasted 5 minutes. Now wet again with this crappy stuff on, trouble starts. Sorry about those gory details, but quite intimate part of my body is just swelling, all red, it hurts, it's ugly. I try and manage this by slightly changing my position on the bike. Later, I'll stop in a drugstore to buy some other cream. I explain I'm having "chaffing issues". The cream is not bad, but I suspect I need more than a simple cream to fix the problem. I imagine the clothes that I have put in my drop bag in Pocklington could help, since they are of better quality. Until then, I have to cope with the pain... Funny enough: the lady in the drugstore gave me some coupon so that I can have a reduction, some pounds off my next buy in their shop. It's very nice to them, but since I probably won't come back until 4 years, I'm pretty sure to lose it.

But let's come back to the hill, once on top of it, I take a look on my left side and see the arrival of some ski station equipment. Wow, this is not the Alps, but I bet in winter, weather is not your friend. During the downhill, I'm disturbed by the sun which is going through the trees, and makes some stroboscopic effect with speed. I fear I'm hypnotised and I stop several times, fearing I would fall asleep. The good news is that now, the weather is good, and it will stay that way until the end. Rain is finally gone.

Just after km 1000, I meet Chris (the English guy with which I took a short ride before Edinburgh) and he has just... broken his bike! A "litespeed" titanium frame falling apart. Hopefully, he has an assistance car, and one is bringing him a spare bike. Good thing this did not happen to me, for I have nothing as a spare bike over here.

Then an English rider, which is in the organisation team, and is with his bike on the course, takes a ride with me. We chat and chat. We talk about funny, original races. This guy knows about the [Barkley](#)! I told you those brevets were filled with nice guys. It's funny because he's worth something like 85h on PBP, but with over 600 miles in my legs, I can barely follow him. It seems to me he's such a great climber. I love this part of the route where we pass under the arches of some ancient castle. Lovely!

## **Unreliable bike**

I do not remember exactly where it happened, but at "some point" my rear derailleur stopped working. Broken cable. Good joke. Hopefully, the hardest climbing was already done. With the help of a screwdriver I managed to block the chain on the 3rd speed, then I could still use my front derailleur. I just hoped the other cable would not break, with both broken, things could have become complicated.

Other problem (lesser problem) my bike started to make strange noises. Some unknown parts - I had never seen those on other bikes, it's related to my using a special Cannondale BBB box - where looking torn if not broken. I spraid oil on that, and it stopped squeaking. Hell, it's not even possible to bike 700 miles without having your bike falling apart.

## **Duo**

About 200 miles from the end, just before the "hudge" (and beautiful) bridge sector, I join Richard Léon - a French rider with an impressive bike history - who is faster than me - he started more than four hours after me - but after all, by now, we're together, and neither he nor I can go very fast, and company does not harm.

He rides without a GPS, with the road-book instructions only. He does not even use a speedometer, no electronics, no nothing. I'm impressed, because he's just so efficient, he does not lose a minute. I also made my navigation "the old way" on other brevets, but never had this efficiency, we clearly do not play in the same field. This being said, my GPS helps us a couple of times, I'm pretty sure Richard would have finally found the right way, but with electronics, and what's more, with two persons checking the other's choices, one makes

much less mistakes.

Night comes again. I managed to change clothes in Pocklington so I feel a little better, even if it's not perfect. To be clear, it hurts and hurts and I know that I'm going to walk like a cow-boy for three days. In [Ireland](#), I should handle that problem a little better. We decide not to sleep at the checkpoint for when we're there, we're not tired enough. I propose we go and sleep "wherever we can" (bus stop, anything) the way we would do on a basic brevet, one with no official checkpoints. Here we go, he agrees, it's not raining anymore, let's use that chance to go a little faster.

We sleep in 3 different places. First a gas station, somewhat scary, hudge, but with seats. Then some other seats in a public parc. A little better but when we leave... we take the wrong way! Thanks to the GPS which told me we were going North. One should always be cautious when starting again after a half-refreshing sleep of 15 minutes. And finally we find hudge, comfortable seats, covered with some roof, the perfect spot. Only, I mess when setting up my alarm clock. It never rings. Luckily, I wake up naturally after 9 minutes, when I had set it for 10 minutes. Luck does help, sometimes. Richard is very sleepy when I wake him up. This night was hard. At some point, I've been woken up by my bike when it hit the grass beside the road. Scary... Hopefully, night is over.

### **Up and down**

The end was, after all, much less boring than the night, with some nice hills in the last miles. I meet a Polish guy with which I started to chat in the first miles. He speaks a very good French! Richard was quite tired in the morning but now feels better. I'm not very strong, my 3-speed-only bike does not help, but I still manage to move on. Richard is surprised I can go "that fast" with only 2 500 miles since January 1st. I explain him that the 1 600 miles I did running do help too, and make a big difference.

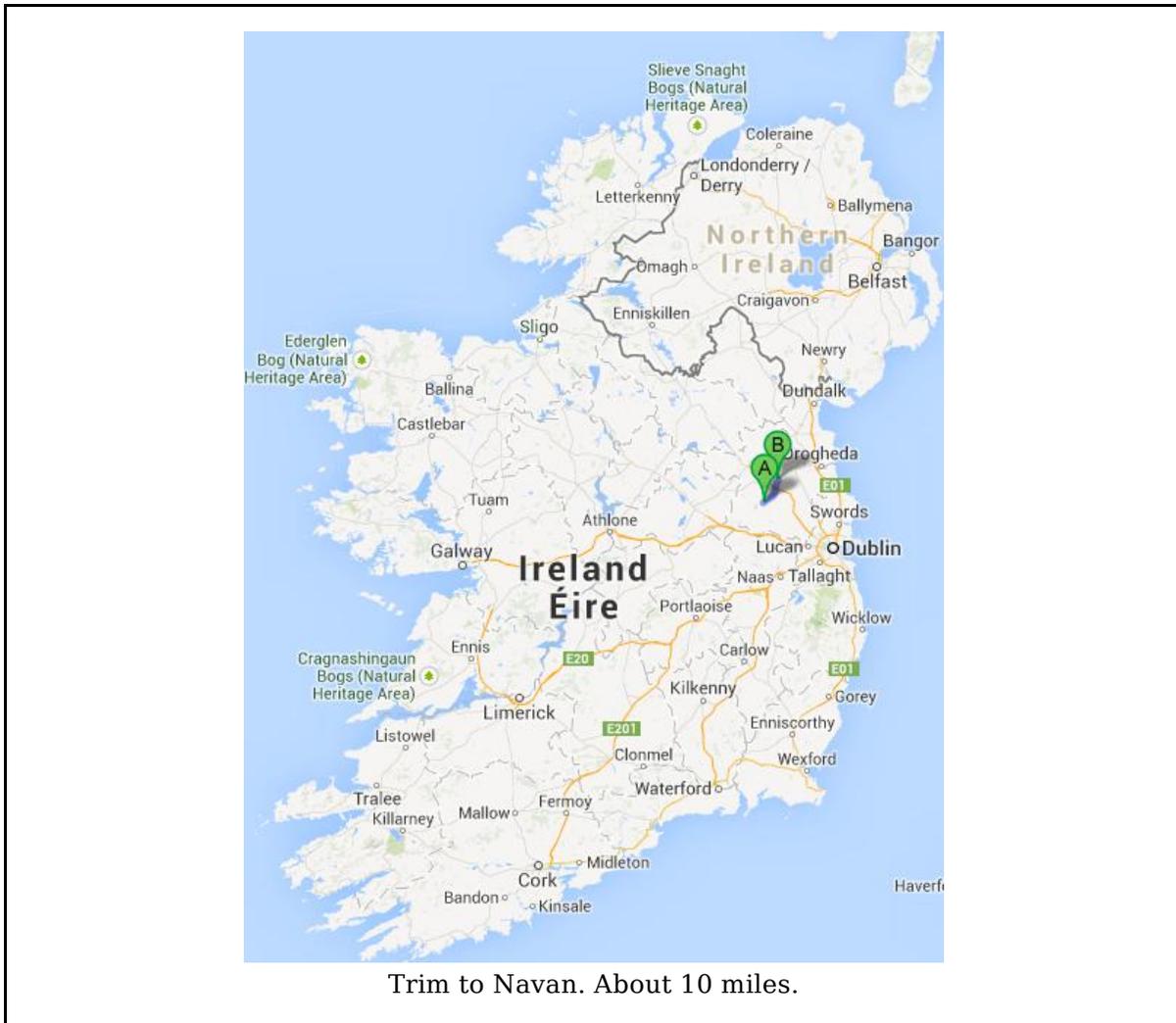
The arrival is just nice and enjoyable. I miss the "less than 80h" limit, but who cares, the spirit, here, is not about absolute performance. And as an example, on the last checkpoint, we spent 20 minutes, when we could have skipped it in 2 minutes, but it was so packed with good, tempting food, that we could not resist. No way we could escape that.

I'm happy to finish under this beautiful sun. The story ends well, a nice story, with an unforgettable route, nice people met on the road, unexpected events just the way I like. Nothing to change, it was perfect!

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## **[Race Around Ireland race report](#)**

### **My 2013 major race**



Officially, for year 2013, I had planned two "serious" races. The first one was a six-days running where I wanted to beat my personal record (501 miles). This one [I failed](#) in May. The second was the [Race Around Ireland](#) with just one simple goal: finish it. It's ambitious to have two major goals within one single year. It can work. But nothing sure. It's possible that during the 6-days, my mind was elsewhere. This Race Around Ireland (let's call it RAI, it's shorter) is indeed a hell of a race. I think it did scare me. I made all sorts of calculus, and all of them drew to one obvious conclusion: finish within the 132 hours time limit was doable, but no more. On the paper, I could barely do it. Because it's not only 1350 miles long (I've seen various distances between 1332 and 1363 miles advertised as being "the distance" so we'll set on 1350) but it also features about 70000 feet elevation. Yes 70k, it's the same as the Italian trail [Tor des Géants](#).



In short, this race with its time limit of 5 days and a half has the same elevation than a trail running race which takes place in the Alps (and with a reputation of "not being so flat") and lasts more than 6 days. Isn't there a probleme here? As a side note, I initially planned to go to the Tor in 2013 (I had been there [in 2011](#) ) but I was not selected, I got it wrong at the lottery. So I pulled out my "B plan", which was RAI. The idea had been around for some time, to participate in an ultra-cyclism event, different from the traditionnal randonnées such as [PBP](#) or [LEL](#). I don't know if some day I'll be on the start line at the [RAAM](#) but I must admit I already considered doing it. In any case, RAI is a required step, and being "Europe toughest cycling challenge", with a rather low finisher rate, it did have everything to attract me. So I signed in.



The real, complete route, following the coast with quite some level of detail, and including a bunch of nice so-called "hills". About 1350 miles. Should these guys be organizing the Tour de France, the later would A) be a race around France and B) be about 5000 miles long.

## Logistics

First thing about this race: you need to organize and plan a lot of things. The registration fee (about 600 euros) is not much compared to all the other expenses I had to cover. Globally, given the race rules and conditions, you need, at least, two cars which two drivers per car. I chose this minimalist solution. No van, no 5th guy. Just two cars, and four people. Then, I let you imagine all you have to do: make one car travel by ferry, rent another one in Ireland (for 8 days!) and so on.

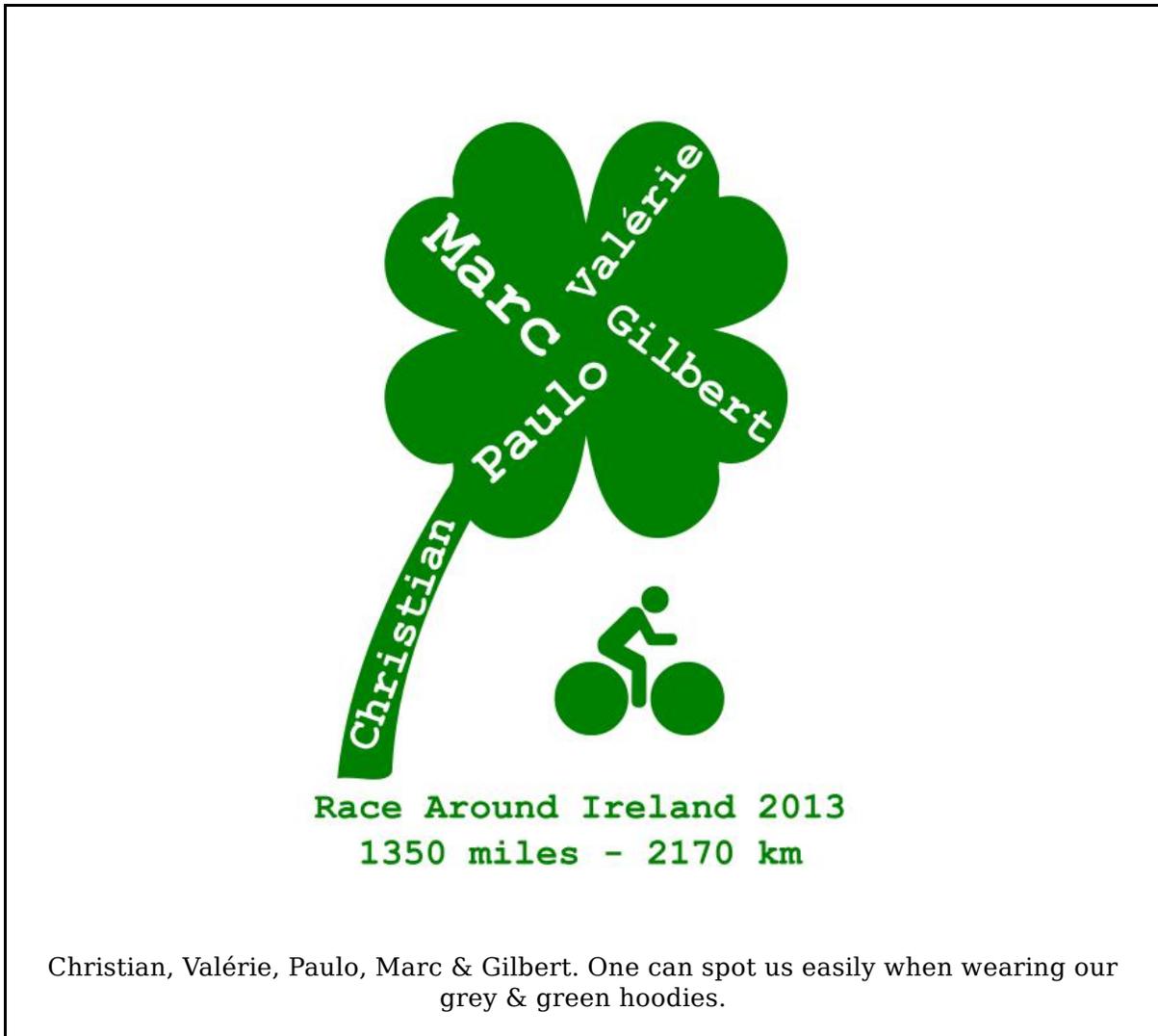


2 bikes plus one pair of spare wheels. What a mess.

## Casting

But the most important thing about race planning is the human aspect, I mean, you have to carefully choose your crew. Let's be honest, I had the perfect team, the exact team I wanted, no second-hand fellow.

Crew chief was my spouse [Valérie](#) which is not a beginner in that domain and has assisted me in many races, including the [deca-Ironman](#) in Monterrey.



Then [Jean-Paul](#), my father, who also knows me very well, knows what an ultra is about, knows what being on a bike is about, and, as a side note, is pretty efficient when it comes to fixing a broken bike.

Marc, who was with me in [Lensahn, 2010](#). I trust him totally to understand what is going on, and be where he's needed. And yes, he's funny ;)



Racers meeting in Castle Arch Hôtel. The whole team is listening (very carefully, of course) the race director's advices.

Gilbert, race director of [Grand Raid 73](#), with many six days and amazing long races such as Trans Europe foot-race as a running background, has also been crewing a lot, including, but not limited to, helping Alex Forestieri on the [MilKil](#) (running across France, 1000km in a row, no stages). Yet another solid guy coming from the mountain, you can count on him.

## Training

Apart from some [long solo rides](#) and [LEL](#) my mileage is everything but impressive. On the starting line, I only have 4300 miles done since January 1st. Globally, RAI represents a quarter of my yearly mileage. Still, I run. I run a lot. Do I know what it feels like to make some significant physical effort for five days and a half? Yes, [I know already](#). And this is a pretty strong advantage.



Trim, the day before race start. A lovely afternoon in the country.

Put it another way, I did 700 hours of sport, all sports included (running, walking, cycling, swimming...) since January 1st. Should I have biked all that time, I'd probably be around 9000 miles or something.

Other important thing to know: I'm still injured, following the 6 days in the Luc, but fortunately the injury does not impair me on the bike. Yet in May I almost did not train at all, and June was quite light too. The theory says this is just so wrong, but I already signed in, so I'll show up, and we'll see what happens.

### **The bike**

I still ride my good old Cannondale Synapse, from 2010. I recently had some problems with brake cables (conflicting with the handlebar bag...) so I fit some new Shimano 600 gear on it (it's supposed to be called Ultra, but I've been calling this "Shimano 600" for years), and what's more, I had the crank bearings changed ([BB30](#), a bit special). Thanks to my local store [Cycles Périgois](#), who did really help on that point.



2 of my 5 tool boxes. Those ones contain the very needed stuff. The 3 others contain "just-in-case" additional stuff.

But on this bike, the 3 things I really, seriously care about are :

- the saddle
- the shoes
- the handlebar

Don't try and search something complicated, they are simple the points of contact with the body. For any ultra distance, it's IMHO the most important. The saddle is a leather model from [Gilles Berthoud](#), the shoes I put thick double soles inside of them to provide extra cushion, and the handlebar is very simple (no triathlon gear whatsoever) but filled with a triple layer of cushioning material. With this, I manage to ride for a long time in a relative comfort.

### **First French racer**

No kidding, I'm the first French man to have registered for this race. This is probably because, anyway, not many people have participated yet. Only a dozen of entrants per year, and it's been around for 5 years only. I'm obviously - and by a huge margin - not the best French rider, but well, we'll see, I'll just do my bet and if it can motivate others, it's just fine.

Before the start, I seldom meet the other racers. Everyone has his (or her) own business. We do meet at the racers meeting on saturday afternoon, but then, it stays sort of superficial as far as I'm concerned. I know nobody yet, and even if my English is correct enough to chat for a while, not being a native English speaker does not help.

### **Respect the rules**

The rules got me tired. I read them all in the ferry coming from Roscoff. It's a thick document of about 60 pages. I tend to like simple concepts such as "go from point A to point B, first guy wins". I think the race organizers are just trying to do their best, preventing the problems and conflicts, rather than treating them afterwards. But the result is quite long to read.

In practice, Irish people are an order of magnitude less boring and strict than these administrative papers. I mean, they do care about what's written there but there's always a solution and my bike and spare bike (Jean-Paul lent me one) pass the control without any trouble. Everyone is willing to help and everything's fine.

The only problem I had where the orange roof lights. I bought some that can be plugged on the cigarette lighter socket. But there's only one of those sockets per car, and I need to plug also the BlackBlox GPS tracker, charge the phones, and so on. So the race organisation kindly gives me the address of a shop where I can find a multi-socket adapter. I buy this, and also buy a kettle supposed to work on this socket as well. My plan is that this way I could have hot coffee almost any time. Back to the hotel I try the kettle plugged on the multi-socket adapter. No, hopefully it's the multi-socket adapter. After a quick analysis, it can only support 10A, while the kettle requires 135W. A bit angry, I put all that gear right in the nearest garbage, including the kettle - I don't want to take any risk that this happens again - and buy another multi-socket adapter. Cold coffee is just perfect anyway.

## Braveheart



The start line is just in front of [Trim Castle] Le départ se passe devant le [château de Trim](#) which, as a side note, was used when making the movie [Braveheart](#) in 1994. I'm mentioning this so that you understand it's just beautiful, the morning it rained - we're in Ireland after all, not Arizona - there's a typical west wind blowing, just add a few knights and the picture

is complete.



Finally, I'm on my way. See you in 1350 miles. Note that even if the weather is still nice, I anticipated "bad things" and have put warm clothes on.

A racer starts every 3 minutes. It's a race against the clock, no drafting, everyone races alone. I give a quick interview, where I explain I'm mostly a runner, but also enjoy riding my bike. Then I start. I feel much better. The last days, weeks, before the race, I was just so excited, and even scared, by this strange challenge. Now the pressure is over, and I only have one very simple task to do: move forward.

### **5 nice hours**

We started with the wind in our back. The course, so far, is flat. I'm just so fresh, untired. So, logically, I move at unreasonable speeds, given my level. Logistic aspects are setting up with time, the grey car (with its steering wheel on the left side, Made In France) is following me 99% of the time, while the black one hops from one point to another, distant from say, 5 to 15 miles.

Less than 3 hours for the first time-station I believe. At this rythm I'd be back on wednesday. Of course I know it's impossible and a bunch of things are going to happen that will slow me down, but at the same time I'm aware that when conditions are so favorable, it's wise to just use that chance and move fast. Still, I don't push the machine too far, saving my forces for later. As usual.

But let's come back to the time-station. What is a time-station, after all? In that case, it's a gas station. Very often, the time-station is a gas station. Sometimes it's a hotel. At the time-station, there's usually nobody. The shop keeper is usually unaware there's a race. We just call the race quarters and say "hey there, Christian arrived at that point!". And that's it. As it's a gas station, it's convenient because one can buy food. And fill the car's tank. But globally, nothing differs between a gas station that is a time-station and a gas station that is

not. Sort of strange, but pretty smart.

It's a good thing I didn't brief my crew too much on "what to do at time-stations". As I repeat it, one needs to adapt oneself to the environment. In France, we would have been searching after bars and bakeries, but here, the most efficient strategy is to use the gas stations, everything depends on what kind of shop you can easily find. Yet another aspect of tourism.

### **The fun is over**

Soon after I leave the first time-station, serious stuff shows up. First, we get our first hills. Then, there's no more sun, and rain comes in. Our first contact with Northern Ireland (UK) is very nice, the landscape is beautiful, and the sea being so close gives a nice atmosphere, I love those wet forests.

A bunch of racers passed me already - I'm one of the slowest ones, and moreover, I start slowly to preserve my forces... - and I passed one or two of them, but globally, I'm now on my own, just alone.

Alone but with a car just behind me. The following car proves very useful when I get a flat back tire in the middle of the night. No big surprise as the road was filled with water and, in some places, dirt as well, including, but not limited to, pieces of tree branches. We put a spare wheel on and agree with Gilbert that it's no use to fix the other one now, if I get another flat right on it would be "no luck", and we'll see what we do. Meanwhile, there's plenty of air tubes in the trunk, so no big risk taken.

Going around Belfast is not so much fun, maybe there was no nicer road than the one we use. In any case, I feel like I'm riding on a way-too-big road, with much traffic, reminds me of N104 which circles around Paris at a distance of about 20 to 30 miles. The following car is much needed. 2x2 lanes, fast traffic, this highly contrasts with the previous little roads in the country and it's a good RAI overview: the route is impossible to describe in a few words because it's so ever-changing and different. From "almost a motorway" to "barely a drivable road", we get a bit of everything.

### **Punishment, act I**



Rain, wind, the fun is over.

I think I slept a bit that night. Half an hour I think. Anyway, what I remember is the morning. And in the morning, I've been punished. Already, the evening before, we had an excerpt of "what it can be like when it gets bad", but now it's on a different scale. I'm heading west and a strong (strong!) wind is blowing right in my face. Of course I've already been on a bike with a contrary wind, but this one is sort of unpleasant. Moreover, there are lots of small hills, and one loses speed all the time and needs to push again and again to maintain an average speed. In short, it's hard. It's hard and I'm dead slow. But I can't really help it, it's only the very beginning of the race. Should this be a marathon, we'd only be at mile 5, so let's be cautious. I'm getting battered by wind and rain. The builtin car thermometer indicates 40 degrees fahrenheit. Cold.



The kind of place where I was happy to have a car behind me.

Dawn, the day is back again, I imagine with the sun, everything will be fine again.

### **Punishment, act II**



Rain and wind for miles and miles. Yeah!

Yeah, things get better. They always do, as far as I'm concerned, when the sun is up. But there's something wrong. I see, far away, some "big hills". I ride accross a bridge that is quite exposed and I really would have not liked to be there without my following car. Unless you enjoy taking useless risks and do not care about being alive or not, a following car is a must have on some of those roads.



Malin Head is not far now. It's a hard race, but it's beautiful too.

Then, finally, I come to this part I'm longing for. The extreme North of Ireland, that's to say [Malin Head](#). From a conceptual point of view, once I've been there, I can say "this is done".



No one seems to try and go out for a little windsurf session. How sad, there's some wind today.

Yet, I need to get there.



Now given how steep this is, I need to be careful for I'm moving so slow that the wind could make me fall quite easily.

And then, I've been punished a second time. Wham! I end up on a road which is just perfectly flat - following the sea, a fjord or something - with some wind in my face, but not the same one than a few hours ago. This one is just blowing so strong, I only knew that kind of strength in gusts, but this is different. My speed goes down. 10 mph. 9mph. 8pmh. Yeah right, 8 mph, and it's just so flat - you can trust the sea to be flat. This is just unbelievable, unseen. That wind is blowing strong, constantly, it never ever stops.



You don't fool around with the wind over here. You respect it.

I keep going up to the very end of Ireland, and the route ends up in beauty with a nice good old little climb, in which I must take care not to fall, being battered by the wind. In my back, front, from my left side. Keeping straight in that climb (I judge as being a classic 15%) is a matter of both skill and luck.



It's a wise decision not to face the wind and watch the other way, let it blow in your back.

I thought I had seen it all this night, but was so wrong.



Rather than insisting on eating at the time-station in Malin Head, we more half a mile away to that much more adapted spot, less exposed to the climatic local specialty, AKA "wind".

Yet, the scenery is awesome, and this unusual weather suits it very well, you get no trouble trying out to imagine that this is the "end of the known world".



Look how they bend to avoid being blown up away.

### **Punishment, act III**



The electronic gear in the following car, featuring the câble for the roof orange light, the BlackBlox GPS device giving our position to race headquarters, and an Android

(Cyanogen) phone with Osmand to follow the route.

I leave Malin Head. Now, I get the wind in my back - the right way! - from time to time. Or sideways. I remain very cautious when going downhill, because sometimes the road is narrow. I remember being caught by wind gusts - from my right side - just before crossing a bridge that had stone borders. I need to try and follow a straight line, and this is not the easiest task.

The section on which I was riding at 8 mph, I cross it at 25 mph now. It still rains. The rain is going \*even faster than I am\* and I get it on my back only. This is just crazy, never seen such a weather before.



Same player shoot again: bike + wind + rain.

I'm now heading west again. I'm fed up with going west, I want to go back, the other way. I change my GPS zoom level to see when, at last, we're going to go, if not East, at least South. Having the wind coming from my right side would, even if not perfect, be OK and better than what I'm experiencing now. OK, a dozen of miles and it should be over. Patience Christian, patience. I'm having a hard time, taste the wind, the rain. Curse that Irish weather.

But everything has an end, and the route, at last, goes South. Even, it goes slightly East. I just so happy.



Mamore Gap climb. Epic moment, and hard as well.

This happiness soon ends. I see the Y turn on my left and ouch! What's that? A good old "wall", that goes straight up the hill. I'll learn later that this place is a local curiosity, it's called [Mamore Gap](#), and has its reputation as being quite steep. I shift all my gears "full left", the easiest settings, stand up on my bike, and fight to pass this. Hopefully, I get the wind the right way now, so it's helping me.



Going down Mamore Gap. This is frustrating, for one could possibly go down this at about 45 mph, however you get no second chance and the road is narrow and not necessarily perfectly even. So I choose to be cautious and use my brakes.

At this stage, I think now, finally, I got it. I learnt something. I had planned 1350 miles. I was expecting 70 000 feet to be "somewhat hard". I knew the Irish weather could be a difficulty in itself. But this, honestly, is hard. I know I'll falling back way off my schedule. I had almost dreamed of ending this within 122 hours. Now I know this was a dream. I'll just try and get back within the 132 hours time-limit, tail between my legs, and it will be just fine

Ultra is known to teach modesty, and some lessons are learnt the hard way, on the road.

## **Tourism**



The weather is somewhat improving, and we are almost in a tourist-like state of mind as we approach Boa Island.

Now the route takes us to [Boa Island](#). It's not only a difficult route, it's also really beautiful. I tried to enjoy the ambiance, while the clock is ticking. This island is special, the small bridges that allow us to enter and leave it are just so cute. I imagine this place is great for he who wants to mediate, or write a book. But this is not what we came for.

## **Dodo**

After this long day, rich in unexpected events, here's the second night.



Now you won't pretend again that cyclists are hard to see when it's dark.

And tonight, I decide to go to bed quite early. I've been exhausted by those "not so nice" conditions. My guess is that it would be counter productive to try and fight the sleepiness until one a.m., after such a day. Usually I try and ride in "zombie mode" for some time before going to bed, but given the average road and weather, the "zombie mode" is likely to make me a zombie for good.

With the crew, we agree to stop for a "long night" of two hours and a half. Two hours and a half because this way I'm sure to have a complete sleep cycle (my cycles last about 90 minutes) even if I'm having trouble to fall asleep. Two hours and a half because I need to rest my feet, hands, butt, all the points that are in contact with the bike. Two hours and a half and not more because this is a race, I'm not that fast, and I must be back before the time limit.

Two hours and a half because after my experiences on 6 days and other ultras, I've been able to verify, hands on, that it's a good compromise. No theory can replace real world feedback.

### **You liked it, want some more?**

I think it's in the end of this night that I found out myself following, with some distance, Shusanah, the only girl in the race. I slept my 2 hours and 30 minutes, so, mechanically, I stopped for 3 hours.

And it's at the time-station that we learn the news: the race director, generous and understanding the weather was sort of bad, gives us an extra credit of 12 hours to finish the race. So the time limit changes from 132 hours (5 days and a half) to 144 hours (6 full days, exactly).

This is rather good news. I thought I was able to make it in within 132 hours, but these 12 hours lower the pressure. Cool.

## Connemara



Yesterday the weather was crappy? Today too.

Now we enter this area of Ireland everyone has heard about, and is called "Connemara". I was there about 15 years ago, with a brass band I was playing with, called [Fanfare Piston](#). It was a nice place, sunny and all. But now in September 2013, it's not the same picture. I can easily imagine people living there are not wimps, you probably don't last a long time if you're too weak.



Look how the weather has a significant influence on the local vegetation. Given those hints, I could tell where North is without a compass. Heading South.

Jean-Paul informs me the next section is rather flat. Wow, I still wonder how he imagined this, but what I see, and experience, is not flat. Hopefully, in some hard climbs, the wind greatly helps me. Going downhill is frustrating because the roads are sometimes uneven, and don't allow me to ride as fast as I'd like.



Just another little break along the road.

And in one of these downhill sections, at about 35 mph, I loose my GPS, it just bumps out of its slot. This [Garmin eTrek 30](#) is quite solid after all, it bumps several times on the ground, flies, but looks fine. The screen is barely scratched, just a little mark on the outside rubber. Wow.



It's just an illusion.

Talking about the GPS, I use a model with batteries (to avoid autonomy issues...) and my crew - especially Gilbert - did a wonderful job, changing those batteries whenever it was needed, I didn't have to worry about it. They even managed to fix problems in my front lamps. They were just perfect, everything went smoothly.



Hopefully, these landscapes are definitely worth some side-effect stiffness in my legs.

The route goes on. Nice lakes, and then this climb. Oh, not a very long one, not even a mile long, but it takes me 10 minutes to finish it. I had the wind in my face, I get loads of water in my face (rain...) the road is about 10% grade or more, in French I would call this "une vraie boucherie". Dunno how to translate this, but I end up swearing and using a wide range of curse words. No one hears me anyway, no one has the strange idea to peer out in such a bad day.



The rule of thumb is: whenever some people paint their houses in bright colors, you can infer the sky is usually grey.

It's been about 40 hours I've been cycling under the rain. The common point of view, when one has biked for 4 hours under the rain, is to think this was a hard time, and one deserves some good old rest in the sofa. Now this is not about 4 hours under the rain, but just 10 times more.



Marc enjoying some food at Topaz, which could almost be mentioned as a race sponsor, since they provide so many time-stations.

Just after this, at the bottom of the following downhill, Valérie is here, waiting for us, at the pub. Now that is an idea. I was dreaming of this. A real pub, with real hot food. This is just so good. Yes, I loose some time, and I could maybe have gained 20 minutes by flying by, without stopping. Yeah, 20 minutes, but at which price? Don't forget that we're not even half way, I need to keep going for days.



Enjoying some pizza with Gilbert. Junk-food and ultra-cyclism are closely linked.

The next city is Galway. This is supposed to be a nice place with beaches, people would swim in the ocean here. I suspect nobody is swimming today. We pass the city and plant our tent soon afterwards. By "planting our tent" I mean this is where we sleep our daily 2 hours and a half. Concerning the comfort, this is minimalist. The crew sleep on their front seats, the ones they spend almost the whole day on, whereas I can use - what an advantage! - all the back seats, where I can lie down in my pyjamas. Yes pyjamas, very important, it allows me to quit my lower cycling gear which, otherwise, is a real second skin. I think it's fundamental to let the skin (especially on my butt...) "breathe" a minimum. The rest of the time, my body hygiene follows: never wash, put cream on. Loads of cream, especially, I put some back on everytime I go to the restrooms (else it ends up wiped out pretty quick). This is not what modern standards recommend, I believe it's bacteria friendly, it sounds dirty, but it's fast, cheap, and works. I have no problems, everything is fine, I won't change anything.



I get the most comfortable area, the complete set of back sets. The crew can only enjoy their individual front seats when we stop for a sleep during the night. Comfort is optional.

### **It's raining, snails are out for a ride**

Waking up is hard. I finish the night under the rain. Again. The route is near the coast, it goes up and down. I can't find my rythm. I'm busted, I fall asleep on my bike. And this is only day 3. This is not a glorious day. I need to stop regularly to regain forces and, what's more, concentrate. I know this is bad for my average speed, I see Gilbert understands the situation and figures out I need to speed up, even with 12 more hours, I'm likely to miss the cutoff. But I can't make miracles, I need to stop to be able to ride in correct conditions, I could try and do it the hard way, and risk to fall asleep for good. But I do not wish to take that risk.

At dawn, we are at the time-station, which is an hotel. Had I been there 10 minutes later, I would have been able to take a real breakfast. But now, it's too early, it's not served yet. Well, too bad, I keep going, I do not have the time to wait, the clock is ticking, the margin is small. En route!



A big cup of coffee, and I feel better.

After a night which has been a disaster as far as speed is concerned, I now have an opportunity to gain time back. And also, the weather is... OK! I'd even say it's nice. Is it nice? Yes, it is! This is the end of bad times, now riding my bike becomes what it should always have been: a pleasure.

Limerick. Valérie wanted to see Limerick, she's read an autobiography that relates a miserable childhood over there. The city is indeed somewhat dirty in some areas.



Marc & Gilbert. Expandables.

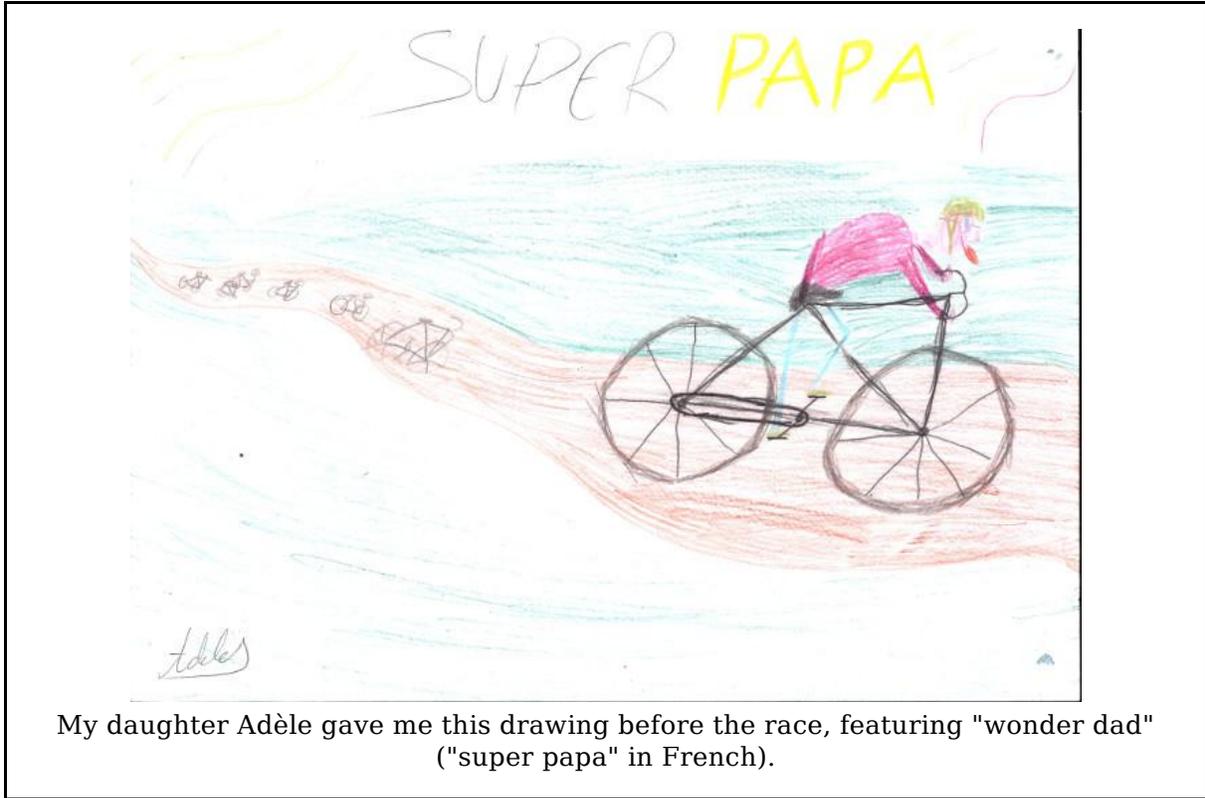
My memories now become blurry, but now I think it's around mile 800, near Waterville (what a name!) that I've been videotaped by an official. That was an epic moment, probably the most western point of the route, this meant that on an average, during the rest of the race, I would have the wind in my back. On an average.

And now I move toward what is, according to race organizer, the hardest section of the race, between TS13 and TS14.

### **From TS13 to TS14**

I admit I almost did not read the route book before the start of the race. Oh yeah, I had a look on the map, I think I saw on [Google Maps](#) that the elevation was harder in the second half, and I saw this message on Facebook, stating that TS13 - TS14 was something that you would not forget. And, one could take a shower at TS14.

My ideal, perfect plan, was to do this at night, and then sleep near the hotel, until the next day.



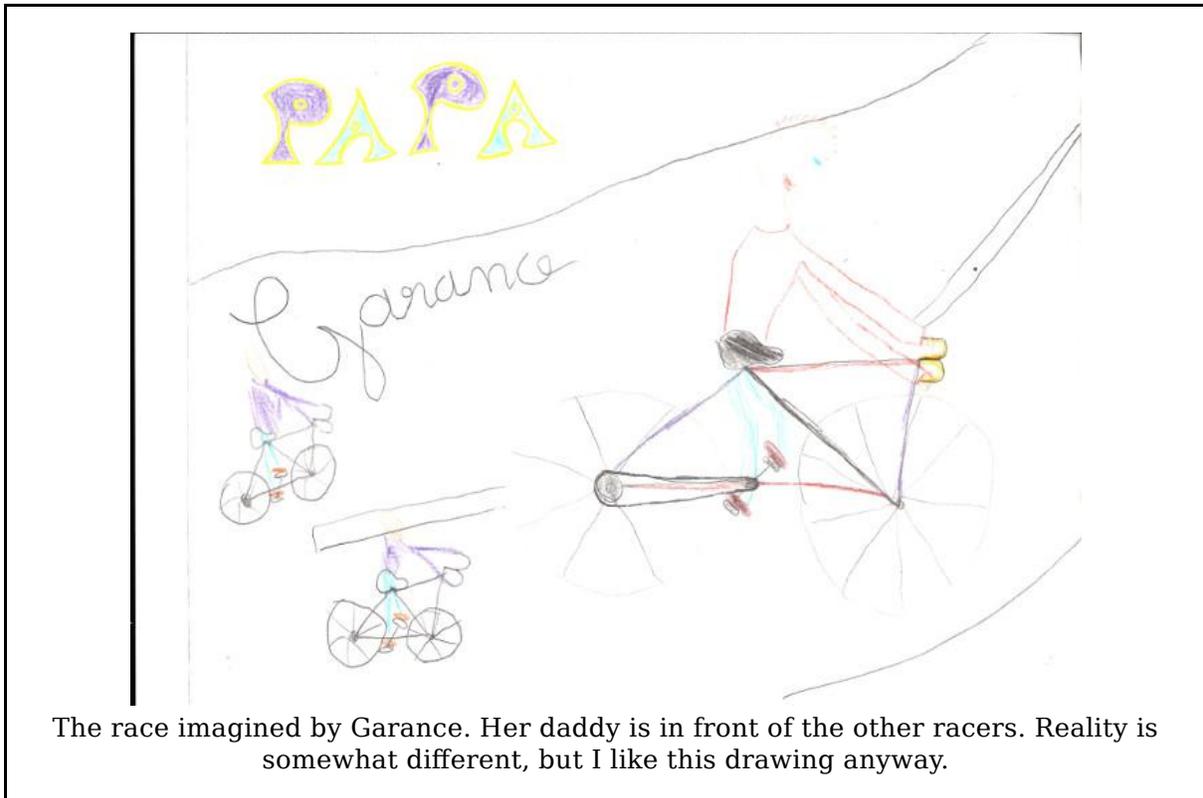
My daughter Adèle gave me this drawing before the race, featuring "wonder dad" ("super papa" in French).

That was the perfect plan. Now, reality. Reality is that once dusk has come and the night is back again, I'm dead tired. And now I enter this section. Rude contact, rather hostile. It's climbing, the road is crappy, OK, I'm done, I stop and sleep. In any case, I'm falling asleep on my bike, so this is not even a decision, rather a consequence, it's impossible to go downhill in that state. Rain stopped, and the weather forecast for the next day is supposed to be good.



Lise has an opinion on what racing on a bike is about: "it's easy, you just need to push the pedals" and "what is important is to finish the race". Wise little girl.

We sleep in a rather savage place. With daylight, it would probably have been beautiful. I wake up and ride at night again. Rain came back. Bloody rain, I did not need that again. The first climb is "offered" because I can use the "just woke up" effect. But there are two more climbs ahead. And again, I have to fight to move forward. I move so slowly. I end up going downhill at 11 mph (yes, downhill). Indeed, with the narrow road sometimes filed with potholes, fatigue, darkness, rain, it's not my fastest ride. I'm sort of resigned, I just know I need to keep moving, and at some point, this will be over. As bad as it can be, any situation comes to an end. And then, finally, the final downhill section, the sun is back again. Rain stopped.



The race imagined by Garance. Her daddy is in front of the other racers. Reality is somewhat different, but I like this drawing anyway.

I finally have the wind in my back. I'm enjoying that moment, I move at 25 mph without any significant effort, that's a ride! One had to be patient to enjoy that one. There's still a climb, well, a climb and a half, before the hotel, but this is just nothing. Fundamentally, it's good, I did the hard part. It took me ages, but it's done. Just a regret about this area, probably beautiful, and which I crossed in pitch-dark mode.

**Hotel \* \* \* \***



I meet Christian Krause in Sneem. It's rare enough to meet other racers so we decide to chat a bit.

Now, about the hotel. This hotel is ran - as far as I understanding - by a bike addict, a race fan, who offers us a free shower. On the other hand, I got showers for free along the road for 3 days already... No kidding, it was very nice, and what's more, the hotel is a magnificent four star hotel. It somewhat makes me think about the [Shining](#) hotel, without Jack Nicholson.

I do not take a shower. No time for this. But I do take a large breakfast, along with the crew. A hudge full Irish breakfast, with sausages, bacon, scrambled eggs, and that "boudin noir" (what's the English for this?) which I like so much, and is pretty rare in the world (so far, the only countries where I've seen this are France and Ireland).

On the parking area, I meet [Christian Krause](#), the other guy named Christian in the race. He's Danish and very nice. He's experiencing pain in his butt. These are things that happen. I already have my load of problems, which are enough to handle. More precisely, after keeping my hands on the handlebar for a very long time, it hurts. As I write these lines, eight days after the race, my left little finger still hurts. I probably have some nerve squeezed or something. In a general manner, after a race, I wait for 15 days before considering a pain is "a problem", before, my point of view is that it's part of the game, the human body is probably not designed to stay on a bike for a week, it's no big surprise it fires signals now and then.

### **To infinity... and beyond**



Mizen Head, South of Ireland. At last.

The next part is nice, beautiful weather, so nice I can even take of a bunch of clothes. This is a-ma-zing. What's more, the wind is helping me now. A little climb, with a superb view. Caha Pass, that was, I think. With such landscape and conditions, I don't mind climbing, especially when the climb is very even. I'd even say, easy. On the other hand, I remain way behind schedule, my 132 hours target will be hard to catch. Oh sure, I was granted 144 jours, but still, 132 hours would be better. And more convenient for everyone, for instance, we could sleep before taking the ferry or the plane back to France.

On the way to the southern part of Ireland [Mizen Head](#) I meet Valério Zamboni. He must be an hour or two ahead of me. Not much more I think. Good to know, it's always nice to have people not far ahead or behind, it helps remaining motivated. I was in the same kind of position back in the North.

The South of Ireland is a beautiful place. The sun is shining. Let's move on.

## **Saint Patrick**



At time-station TS15 (Mizen Head) we share our happiness. Everything's OK.

The route now takes us North-East. The wind is not as strong as when we were in the North, but it's still there. And globally, it helps. This is a must have, else let's be clear: I was off the time limit. I don't know if I can use the term "luck" to describe my relationship with weather during this RAI, but it's true that now, it's easier.



My good old bike, apart from a flat tire on the first night and some minor electrical problems in the front lights, it just did its job.

I'm resigned as far as the elevation is concerned. Hills. And hills. I just stay zen, and try and do my best.



Every coin has two sides. The days before everything was grey and wet, and one could almost go out and try and make some postcard-class pictures.

We arrive near Cork. It's at this point that a cyclist starts talking with me just after dusk. It's [Mark O'Donohoe](#), who knows the race well. We run side by side. Just the act of chatting a bit gives me an unknown energy. I surprise myself - and my crew - by riding at a good pace in the middle of the night. Mark offers me delicious cookies before he leaves (it's not allowed to ride together for too long, even when not drafting). He's informed me that there's a hill called [St Patrick Hill](#) awaiting for me, in Cork.

I plan to sleep after this hill. Just after the difficulty, and outside the town center.

It's a wise idea. This epic climb, which is right in the middle of the town, is just a real curiosity. Tracing a route that borrows that kind of steep section is both a good joke and a form of mild torture. Hopefully, the road is quite dry when I'm there, so I don't slip. I hear there are some stairs on the sidewalk. I did not take the time to check, but just to give you an idea of how steep this is, Gilbert, coming direct from the French Alps, preferred to stop and then drive the car in a row through it. He did not wish to take the risk to follow me at 4 mph and have to stop / start with a manual gear car right in the middle of it. This climb is the kind of thing that make people bet '[I will climb 100 times St Patrick Hill](#)'. In short, this is a must-see, I'd even say, a must-ride.

## **The long night**

We sleep in our usual dual-car palace. The bike is "secured" on a side mirror with some plastic rings. There's no more place in the cars, they are packed. The idea is that someone trying to steal it would not even notice the rings, and would bump the bike on the car, thus waking up Gilbert, who could just see what's going on.

Nobody tried to steal the bike during the night. As expected.

But what was not expected is that in none of the cars did the alarm clocks wake anybody. Between bad settings and a two-low ringtone, I do not care what went wrong, who cares. By chance, Valérie woke up "by miracle" an hour after the programmed hour. So I "lost" one hour. Well, "lost", this is not even sure, because that way I slept 3 hours and a half. I even had dreams. Total luxury is this context. No whining, the team is solid, the positive state of mind that eradicates obstacles, it's right in that kind of "bad pass" that one can test it.

And the team handles this pretty well. I prepare without wasting time. But not fast enough to prevent Christian (the other one, the Danish) to pass me again. Hey, I just need to pass him again!

## **Last day before the final night**



I eat my second burger while Valérie - always quick to help - fixes some stickers on my helmet.

This almost-last day, is a rather good one. Part of the crew expects me to be in Navan at 12:00 am the next day. They must imagine I plan to play it lazy and sleep tonight. No sirs, a last night is the sort of beast you try and dominate by mere force. This is a race.



One of the race officials on a motorbike. Their presence was much appreciated.

I use the wind, again and still in my back, to move as fast as possible. I better my average speed a little bit. I enjoy the nice weather. The GPS falls and bumps again in a fast downhill. It's still working (hell, that's a really solid artefact).



No time lost with Valérie, she hands me some cakes on the fly, I do not even need to stop.

I complete my junk-food experience, swallow two hamburgers directly coming from the nearest Mc Donald's. I'm hungry. I need calories. Bike without fuel is something I can't do. I and can't be fed with gels and other sport-related food on such distances.

Less than 24 hours to go. I did more than 1800 km already, this is the longest distance I ever did on a bike (during the [deca-Ironman](#) ). Each mile I pile up over this is a personal record. I'm tired, but not exhausted. My base speed is low, but I got no serious problem. Stomach: OK. Mind: OK. Butt: perfect. I mean it, perfect. The leather saddle is just making wonders, it's a miracle. On some occasions, when crossing pot holes, I even put my whole weight on the saddle, to ease up the effort on hands and feet. Hands are a real problem, they do hurt, especially my right hand, I need to pull out my bottles with my left hand, tendinosis is in the air.

### **RAI is a piece of cake**



Near the South-East point of the Island, late in the afternoon, a "race fan" offers us cakes. He follows us in several places, cheers me up. A little like Mark in Cork, he does the same with other races, it's just crazy to realize that in some random places, fans pop up without any warning.

There are few of them, but the quality is there. As for the cakes, they are just delicious, and do bring their load of calories.

### **LSD**

TS19. Only a big, hudge night to pass. Logically, once at TS20, nothing can stop me, it's impossible to give up, this is even more likely when one understands that it's TS19-TS20 that is hard, the last stage is easier.

The climb starts the wrong way. I think I saw a racer ahead. But I'm not sure. I miss a turn and lose the route, turn around, and waste almost a mile. This is too ridiculous. Then I learn there are some grids to prevent sheeps from escaping, and that we should probably step off the bike to cross them. K73 and K57 I think I remember. Valérie and Paulo will wait for me in those areas.

I'm having a hard time. I did a good job today, now I pay for it. One also has to realize this is September, nights are long. Officially, roughly 12 hours. I expect the ever-closer finish line to give me the final push, the secret and unkown energy to magically go through this long night. This works and works not. Talking about magic, strange things happen. I see shapes emerging from the borders of the road. A complete army. There are spades, monsters with long heads. The ferns end up in fantastic sword points, and this never stops, new shapes over and over. I'm impressed by my own brain which makes all this up by itself. The human brain is magical. Apart from this, I'm falling asleep. And this is just so dangerous, one should not waste too much time decrypting one's own hallucination, while riding a bike on open roads.



Loosing my mind. Is that seriously drinkable?

Worried by these alive dreams, I decide to try out a new technique: I talk to myself, aloud. It's very natural, because the lights of the car make project two shadows of myself in the fog (two lights = two shadows). The right shadow and the left shadow. So I can start a nice chat between those two instances of myself. It gives something like this:

- hey Christian, how's it going?
- I'm OK, but this is hard!
- hard but you're doing well, that's a good job Christian

- oh really, are you sure Christian?
- yes, keep going, don't let it go, you won't get intimidated by this little hill that is not even 10% of a real mountain?
- no, for sure...
- so go ahead, just like this, keep going, ever and ever!
- ...

My bet is that talking will keep me awake, a bit like when I talked to Mark last day, this gave me a good kick. But all these techniques have their limits, I still long for a good sleep.

I tried all sorts of things, I sang, tried to mimic animals, but there's nothing to do, fatigue is a strong adversary.

By measure of security, I stop quite often.

I think it's during one of these stops that Gilbert caught me talking of elephants and poles. The big pole and the small one. Yeah sure Christian. Might not be a bad idea to go for a nap. I multiply those small naps. I do not wish to sleep for several hours. Not now, the finish line is close, and if I sleep for a long time I would need to undress, then dress, and then I'm not even sure to completely avoid this "10 minutes in the car sleeping / 50 minutes on the bike riding" rhythm I'm reduced to. 2 hours and a half isn't a real complete night anyway. It's really a difficult decision to make, one could say "if in doubt, sleep", but then, I would still be in Ireland. Other example, when I stopped to tell Gilbert and Marc I had seen a guy on a skateboard (pitch dark, 1000 feet elevation, lost in the middle of hills in the Irish country...) in front of me, I think I did the right choice by stopping. And when I learn that there was of course no guy on skateboard, but that I followed a deer for some time, undulated with it on the road, and given the fact this deer story is what the crew saw, but I did not see it, then I'm dead sure it was really time to stop.

Also, I sweat a lot when going uphill, and I'm freezing when going downhill. The humid climate does not help - we're stuck in a cloud or something - and all my clothes layers are wet.

I'm having a real hard time in those never-ending hills. My back is stiff and it hurts when going downhill, which are anything but rest. Given my state, I must make miracles of concentration going downhill if I don't want to go off the road. So I stop. Again and again. But the good news is I'm still moving forward, getting closer and closer to the finish line. At this rhythm, I might make it, you know. Even if those last climbs prove really hard with my fading body, I got that RAI goal set in my head, I "just" (yes "just") need to keep going, and avoid making a big blunder.

## **TS20**

At the last time-station, before the finish line, I have not been very efficient. Yes, I could have been quicker. But took the time to put dry clothes on. I took the time to chat with the rest of the team. It was dark, I was exhausted, I think I needed some good old cheer-up session. OK, it's no superman attitude, I would love to write down that I passed this TS20 with a knife stuck in my clenched teeth but no, this would be wrong. I was just a poor boy lost in the night, seeking for some help before the last straight line.

## **Memories**



Hey, should I have been here a few hour before, I would have totally missed the view.  
Good thing I was so slow.

As a native French, I often listened to a [song by Bernard Lavilliers](#), a French singer. This song is about young unwise guys, and also about Ireland. And at dawn, what I saw made me think of this song, just as I crossed [Sally Gap](#). How should I explain... Not easy. You need to have been battered for days by the wind and rain, climbed for hours, woken up dozens of times in wet clothes at the back of car at night to ride your bike again, to get the taste of this beautiful scenery, this unique ambiance. A few sheeps wander about, clouds everywhere, but still we can see the hills and have some perspective. And ahead of me, not even 60 miles. I almost did it. I almost did it. I almost did it.



Sheeps seem to really enjoy Ireland, and they do not seem to care wether there are some people driving around. So we'd better be careful.

### **One last shot**

They had told me, there's just one more climb. OK, I'm now used to it I understood the 70 000 feet of elevation are not a legend. I do not care any more, go ahead with your climb, I'm ready for it.

Strangely enough, while until now it really did not disturb me, the following car, featuring DJ Marc and MC Gilber, is a pain. I cannot really tell them. They were so great. They stayed behind me for hundreds of miles, they endured all my little wishes, coffee here, dry gloves there, went through the (probably unbearable...) stench of my dirty clothes drying in the car, skipped the shower in Sneem. They did all this.



Picture taken early in the morning. Now the finish line is just straight ahead.

But now, they just annoy me with their f\*cking car (mine, by the way, and why did I buy such a noisy diesel?) that makes such an ugly and loud noise, and ruins my pleasure. I get even more aware of that as I climb very slowly, and they wait some distance behind. Then for a minute, just a minute, everything is quiet. Just me, the wind, the birds that I start to hear again, and the little clicks of my bike. Then the car is back. Just go away, I don't need no civilization! Of course I said nothing to them, it would have made no sense, I would have never found the right words to say it. I would just have wasted 5 minutes, and probably set up a dreadful atmosphere.

And after all, they are not responsible for this, it's the rules that require this following car. And anyway, they did a perfect job.

I think it's time for this race to finish.

### **1 mile - 2.5 miles - 20 miles**

I read that on a marathon, at one mile of the end, it's done, you know you have done it. I mean, you finish with your mind, with a few rare exceptions, everything is set. For a running ultra, and this is strange, the equivalent distance is 2.5 miles, and this does not really change whether you run a 100k or 200 miles. 2.5 miles before the finish line, you know your final time. On a long bike ride, I'd say it's about 20 miles. At 20 miles, you know how it will end, no more surprises.

And this is what happens. I even manage to speed up in the end. It's not that hard, it's flat and the wind blows the right way. I always wondered what these final sections meant. I mean, no one seriously believes you're going to drop out at this stage. So why do we ride them, if we know for sure it's doable? There's a paradox here, I find. But I need to ride them anyway.

A race official - grey car - drives in front of me between Trim and Navan. Because yes, from Trim (start line) we need to go to Navan (race HQ). The Race Around Ireland, it's a race around Ireland, plus a little bit.

### Off we go



Only 30 yards left. I'm definitely gonna make it, nothing can happen now.

Once I cross the finish line, I feel stupid. I think I'm losing my mind. I should probably have chatted a little more with the two racers that were here, especially Donncha, who arrived quite a long time before. Valério was there an hour ago. He wasn't that far.



I need to pack my things, fit everything in one car, and go back to France, without missing my boat.

But hey, I need to take the ferry now! Indeed, with the extra time for the race, I now must pack my stuff quite quick, put them into my car, and drive to Rosslare. I do not even take a shower, I don't take a chance, I don't want to miss my boat. The next one leaves... in a long time, and I work on Monday.



The board with all racers times at every time-station. Collector.

It's on that Ferry that, finally, I will have time to A) take a shower and B) drink a guinness. After this, I slept 12 hours, non-stop.



Finally, 75% of the crew managed to enjoy a shower.

Would I do this again? For sure! It was a great adventure, something really unusual, frankly hard, but with style and elegance. The only drawback is logistics, it's quite complicated, all in all I think I tend to prefer events where I may not ride so fast but with less complications such as having several following cars and all the things that come with it. But still, that race was something. I won't forget it.



From left to right, Alan, Emmet, Lorraine, Valérie, Marc, Christian, Gilbert and Jean-Paul.

## Year 2014

For 2014, I have two major goals, and what's unusual, they are very close to each other. [Tor des Géants](#) (330km, 24000m D+) in early September and [6 jours de France](#) (6 days, with a goal of "something that looks like 500 miles"). Normally, one does not do two such races with only two weeks rest in between. But well I wanted to go to the Tor. And I wanted to go to the 6 days. So I will go. To both of them.

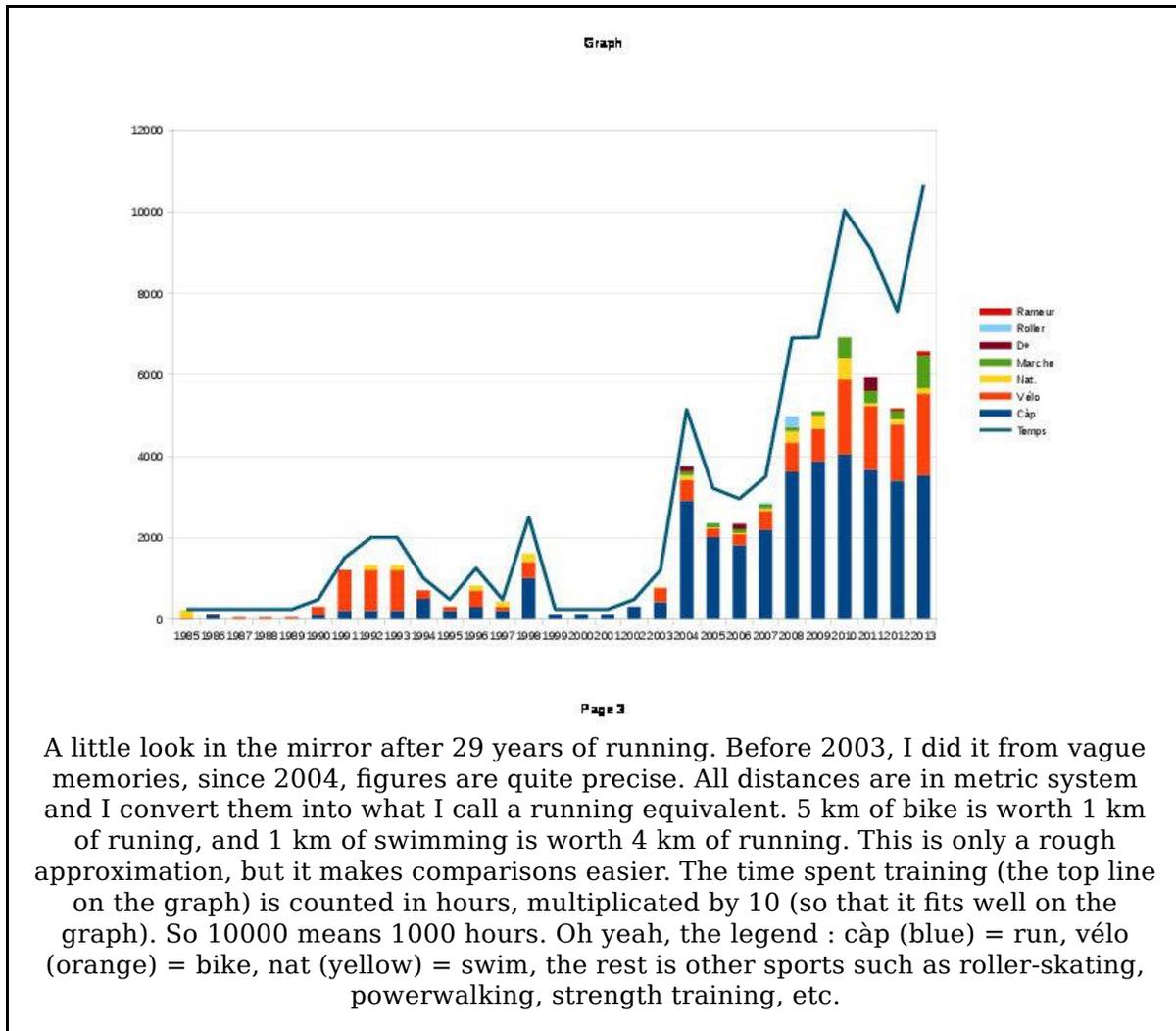
Intermediary goals include [Paris Marathon](#), a solo run around Paris following [GR1](#) (about 350 miles, alone, no race organization whatsoever), the [Défi de Monté Cristo](#) (5 km swim, in the Mediterranean sea), and the [24h du Mans Roller](#) (24h roller-skating, on a track). I decided to try new things out ;)

## Looking back, after about 30 years

It's been about 30 years since I've started running. Well, not quite, a little more in fact. I guess like any boy "without any peculiar problem", I started to run at about age 2. But training with the idea to run faster and faster, this I guess, I started to do when I was about

10 years old.

Since 10 years, I've been very keen on writing down all my training sessions. [I keep them all](#). I recommend you do the same, if you run on a regular basis and if performance - this is always relative - is something that means something to you. For everything that happened before, I tried to collect my memories, it's very imprecise.



What do we learn looking at this data?

- he/she who tells you "I run, but not much, only about 6 miles per day" -> 6 miles per day, on an average, is just a hell of a lot, I waited until [2008](#) to do that, I finished 4 ironmen (2 in [1998](#) , 1 in [2004](#) and 1 in [2006](#) ) without nearing that figure. Just FYI...
- when people say "quantity does not matter, quality does". Yeah, right. Now I just look at figures. In [2008](#) I just decided to go to the next step and made a significant increase in mileage. Result, a good [Spartathlon](#) where I placed first Frenchman, I acknowledge that year the best French guys where not there, but anyway, my run wasn't that bad. Same thing, in [2010](#) I just do some more and add bike without reducing running. Result, [victory at the deca](#). OK, I might have done the same with less training. Maybe yes. Maybe not. But the naive strategy which consists in "running more" seems to work quite well.
- running is the basis. Well, more precisely, it's \*my\* basis. The rest is only "nice-

to-have" stuff, once you get a strong running base, the rest is easy. My bike mileage (6000 miles on "big" years) is just so ridiculous compared to other cyclists with about the same level.

- the rule that says "not more than 15% year-over-year mileage increase" is plain bullshit. Look at the graph, not even closely, you can spot large increases, way more than 15%, and I handled that all right. Else, I have no clue how to go up to, say 2500 miles per year, without having a white beard and great wisdom on D-day.
- having a target, a race to complete, is a great motivation helper. Just see: the increase in 1998 -> [Embrun \(Ironman distance\)](#) , in 2004 -> [Diagonale des Fous](#) , in 2008 -> [Spartathlon](#) , and finally in 2010 -> [deca-Ironman](#). No secret.

And now, what's next? Well, I intend to last. Last, what's this all about? For instance, I'd appreciate to be able to "run gently out there" and ride my bike around in, say... 30 years? Yeah, 30 years more, that would be fine. To be continued!

PS: a little context information, as of 2013, I'm 38 years old.

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## [Tor des Geants race report](#)

### **September 7th, 2014**

I've already been at the [Tor des Geants](#), that was [in 2011](#) . Since then, almost no trail races except the [Sainte-Lyon in 2012](#) (40 miles) and the [trail de l'Inuit](#) (10 miles) this winter. Globally, I'm not very keen on trail races, but the Tor with its grueling distance does have some serious appeal. Just as a reminder, it's a 200 miles race, with 70 000 feet elevation. It's a non-stop race, you might take a nap, but as you sleep, the clock keeps tickling.

As far as training is concerned, I've logged very few elevation feet. Maybe a maximum of 30 000 feet cumulated on 2014, the vast majority of which was done on stairs. I have a sport near home which features 200 feet between the base and the top, and I also happen to train at Montmartre, see "The Aristocats" by Disney to get a mental picture of what this is. This is the only seriously steep place inside Paris, which is ridiculous compared to a real mountain, but is still better than nothing. Anyway, the Tor has many stairs, which are different because uneven and much wilder than my tamed city stairs, but anyway, stairs are stairs.

To compensate this lack of specific training, I have a possibly impressive log of good old flat miles. Including, but not limited to, competitions, solo runs, long bike rides, even [roller skating](#) . In a general manner, I'm well trained. Simply, it's been ages since I took the start of a serious trail race.

### **Equipment**

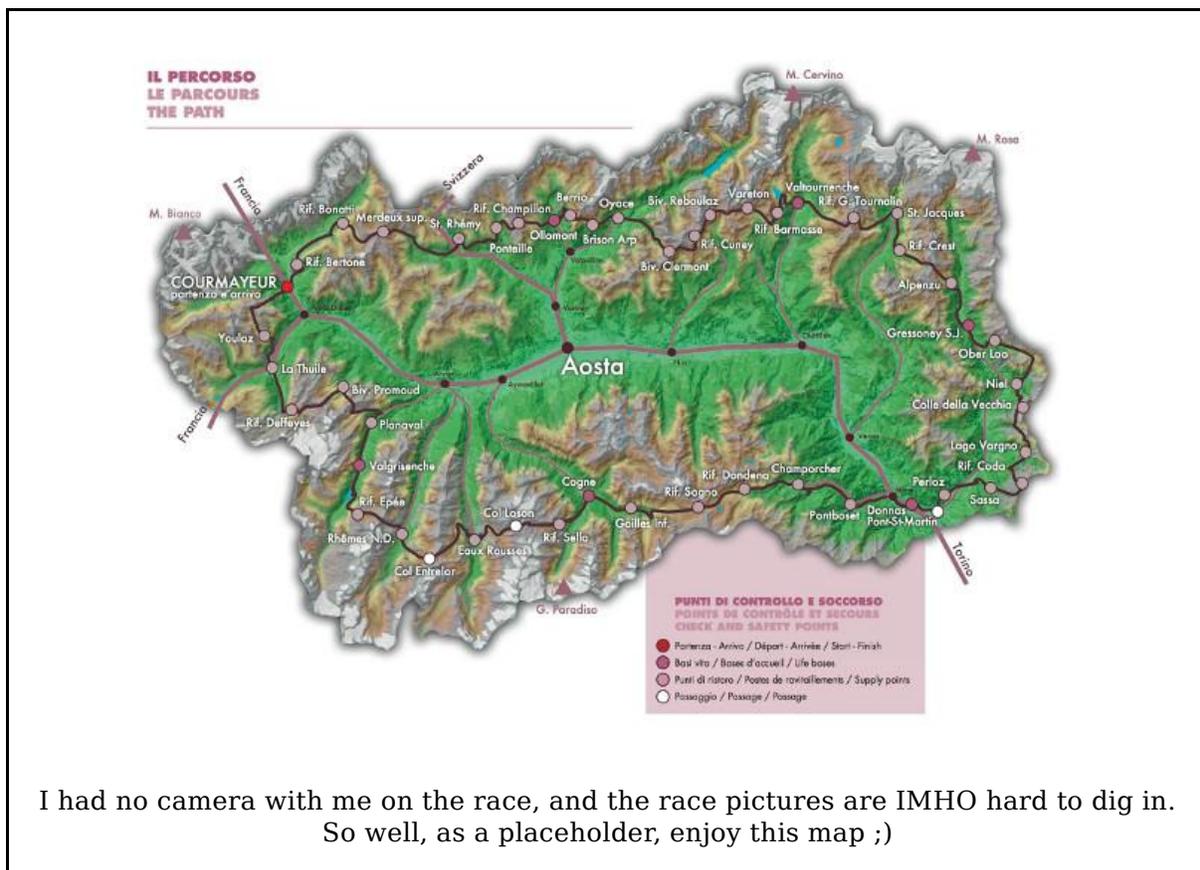
I bought a real Gore-Tex jacket. I used to do everything with cheap thick layers and a windproof/waterproof light jacket. It was not that bad, I went through [bad Irish weather on a bike](#) with that gear, but this time, race rules officially require more. I decide to cope with the rules without any resistance and go to a specialized shop where I buy, for a sum which amounts to way much more than I would intuitively spend, an all-featured jacket, plus the waterproof overpants, plus waterproof glove covers. The full monty.

I start the race without any poles. They are cumbersome. When climbing, I barely use them. And anyways, the limiting factor is much more often my short breath (in altitude...) rather

than my legs which seem powerfull enough. On flat areas, they get in the way of my racewalking habits. And finally, going down, I feel they rather slow me down, they put me in a position in which I'm scared, do not dare to just "go down that damn hill". I still do have poles, but they are well packed in the yellow sport bag that will follow me from one base camp to another. This way I can change my mind later and decide to use them after all.

## Start

The weather is good, everything is fine. I meet a few friends during the first climb. A helicopter is here. It's like a big huge party. After the first pass, I soon remember how beautiful this race is. It's a permanent moving postcard, gorgeous scenery. I look at the glacier far away. I remember 2011, and my first participation. I move quite fast enough, feel great, still trying to to overdo it. My wish is to run this race in a competitive mode, still, it's no use to spend too much energy in the first downhill. I pay attention to the feelings in my quads, they are just perfect. No pain, no nothing, all the feedback I can get tells me everything is going the best way it could.



The first passes are quite athletic. But as it is the beginning of the race and all racers are just so fresh - at least the ones I'm running with - no peculiar problem is to be reported. I'm still hesitating between speeding up and pull ahead with hopefully some better runners, or keep calm and stay in the backpack to save my forces for later. I enjoy the unique landscape. It feels just so great, we're all heading towards a more or less unavoidable extreme fatigue, along with other problems, but no one seems to care.

First base camp is in Valrisenche. Last time I was there, rain was falling hard. Now it's much nicer. I make a relatively short stop, put cream on my feet, eat well, and back to work. I seems I'm ahead of my 2011 times, but I'm not totally sure of that. Who cares?

## Valgrisenche - Cogné

In this section is located the highest path, the highest point, of the course. Before getting there, there's a way to warm up on lower passes that are still worth climbing. I wonder whether I should sleep or not. I think I should. Last time I stopped in Rheme. This year I'm convinced I can make it to Eaux-Rousses before sleeping. This would also enable me to climb Col Loson with a fresh start.

I keep going and indeed, at Eaux-Rousses, I'm tired enough to take a nap. This is complicated because this is not a place you're supposed to officially sleep in. I talk with the medical staff and we come to an agreement: I can stay in a bed as long as I don't stay for too long and move away quickly. Those beds are for medical stuff, this is not a 3 stars hotel. This is very fine with me, I did not plan to have a full 8 hours night with pancakes and bacon for breakfast.

I lose precious time on the refreshment table. It takes time to bootstrap and get the machine on the road again, but finally, I'm on my way to this dreadful Loson. I started by night, sun is up as I climb. On my way up, I meet another runner who is not part of the race. He could not register, so he just cruises by along the official road, stopping from time to time to go back where he started. He climbs almost the whole thing with me.

This climb just frightens me. Last time I ended totally out of breath, thinking I'd never make it. This time I decide to go through it with a slow yet consistent, regular pace. I swear I won't put my ass on a rock for "little break". This gets on my brain. I remember Guillaumet's words "[je marche, je ne m'arrete pas](#)" ("I walk, I do not stop"). For him it was complicated. Snow, old ragged city clothes, no training, no marks on the path. Hey Christian stop whining and get your ass moving! I'm pretty proud to make it to the summit (yeah I know, it's only a pass...) during the morning. Now I can be pretty sure I'm ahead of schedule, should I compare my intermediate times with those of 2011.

I go downhill with a large smile. The sun is shining, I'm enjoying my selfish good position. Few people in the world have 1) the physical background to participate in that type of event and 2) enough time and money to actually do it. I enjoy it as I think I should, this is a big good old present Life is offering to me, and I accept it with great joy and excitement.

This being said, I hate this downhill, as I hate all of them I think. It just never ever ends. I can't stand going down, I get frustrated while doing this. Mechanical and natural laws would have me go down at 30 mph or even more if there were no nasty details such as "human body has no wheels", or "one needs to control one's speed if keeping alive is a non-negotiable point". I know I'm supposed to go downhill relaxed, but everything in this activity seems wrong to me, it's a permanent fight against gravity, each step I take prevents me from doing what nature just begs, that is, reach the center of the earth as fast as possible.

Apart from this problem, I'm still quite convinced my training is all right. Mixing race walking with stairs climbing and some bike is not that bad. At least my quads are just strong enough, and I'm used to walking for long periods.

At the refreshment area, a runner is about to quit. His knee is out of order, he says. Oh. I eat, drink, go to the restrooms, and on the road again. Hey, you forget your "batoni" (poles) yells a race official. I look back at him and explain that I do not have "batoni". I got "leggi", like batoni but made out of bone and flesh with a knee in the middle. I stop making bad jokes and go down for good.

I still hate the downhill but I should try and get used to it, there's a bunch more of it ahead.

30 minutes later, the runner who was about to quit passes me full speed ahead. WTF? I ask him what's going on. "Oh, my knee is dead, but only uphill, downhill I'm fine". We don't share the same idea of a dead knee. I let him pass me, I'm just unable to go that fast, even for 200 yards, with two knees in perfect shape. No kidding.

Going down to Cogne is not much fun, especially this long, flat road at the end. In my craziest dream I pictured myself using my brand new race walker talents to pull ahead. But no, nothing comes. It's sunny, too sunny for me, and I get to Cogne quite exhausted.

## **Cogne - Donnas**

OK, in 2011 I paid a severe toll in the climb after Cogne. Sun, head, no legs, it was a real mess. This year I promise myself I won't get caught twice. So I take it really easy out of Cogne. I walk and tell myself I can speed up later. And then the climb starts. And then I fade out. And then again, like in 2011, but with a slight delay of say, 30 minutes, I end up with no energy, a ridiculous pace, intense fatigue. I just blew up. When I hit the aid station, I decide to sleep a bit. I know what's ahead, and I need a good start to be able to go through this never ending downhill to Donnas.

I'm back on track. Tired, but still in a better shape. This is without any doubt the ugliest point of the whole course. We pass under giant high voltage power lines stuck in the middle of the mountain. Then down an awful dirt road. My opinion is that I'm not doing bad on this downhill, but this should definitely be checked with an official clock.

It's now pitch dark, and I find myself stuck in a cloud, in an intense fog. I congratulate myself to have been clever enough to carry a GPS and an extra lamp. The second lamp allows me to light up the ground while the GPS is a nice companion as it comforts me into the nice feeling that "yes, I'm still on the right path, those miles I put it are done in the right direction". Hopefully there are not many paths in this valley, and we're simply going down through the shortest possible path.

Donnas local speciality is: stairs. Now I'm experiencing the "go down" flavor, but it has variants such as "slippery stairs" or "giant stairs" or "random size stairs". This downhill is really, seriously, incredibly long. With a nice little extra at the end: an extra 500 feet uphill before going down again. I think I'm still ahead of my 2011 times. I wish I could run on the road before Donnas, but it's not possible, I'm done.

I sleep for a full night. Which means, about 2 hours and a half, maybe up to three hours. It's so hot in that place, hopefully I'm so tired I could sleep anywhere. I almost regret I did not sleep outside in a bus stop.

## **Donnas - Gressoney**

Now I'm out for this 4th section. I think I can recall how the beginning of it is, but I forgot what the end is all about. I know it starts with an orgy of stairs. Only this time they go up. Then an aid station on a crest, and then, then I can't remember. But I know for sure is that this section has the reputation of being hard as hell.

I changed my mind and decided to be reasonable. I finally do take my poles and stop trying to be a smartass. OK Mountain, you win. I might after all appreciate a slight help from my arms. My quads do start to fade out, even if not painful yet. And yes, the trail could become slippery...

So well, back to stairs again. I chat with a friend from some time, but we eventually get separated. I feel I handle the first climb rather well. I'm eager to get to lake Foo. When I finally get to it, I immediately spot it as being that ugly powerplant, apparently always under

construction, at least it was already 3 years ago.

Then the next part of the section finally reveals itself. Hey, I recognize it! Yes, it's that part that reminds me of the Ronda del Cims, in Andorra. This implies two things. First, it's nice with beautiful scenery, tons of grass and rocks. Second, it's rather technical and impossible to maintain a regular pace. Even when it's flat, it's uneven, one permanently needs to try and speed up not to be left hanging around at a ridiculous pace. Painfull.

On top of this, it's raining. As I go down to Niel, I fall. Once. Twice. Again and again. I end up on my back, on my side, vegetation stops me from going further down. I wonder what would happen without it? I'm nervously exhausted. I lost all the advance I had over my 2011 times. I loose vast amounts of precious time is that mud. Other runners just pass me, it feels like this is the end of everything. Sector 4 killed me.

And it's not over yet.

Once in Niel, it's still raining hard. At the bar, I order a coffee. Oh shit I forgot about this detail, here you pay for it. 5 minutes to pull out a bank note stuck at the very bottom of my bag. I finally pull away. I have the Gore-Tex on, the weather proof pants, gloves, everything. And it's not that bad, feels like I'm carrying a virtual umbrella with me. Woohoo! That was for the positive stuff.

Now, reality. I climb up like a snail. Everyone passes me. I'm stuck, with no speed. I breath like crazy. But hey, I must move on, so I keep going. Despite the GPS, I manage to get lost at some point, the same way I did last time I was here.

Going down to Gressoney is the final punishment. I'm really fed up with this rain, this watery area where I'm lucky if I don't get blisters. But as I say, in the mountains, anything can't last for a very long time. The worst downhill, the biggest climb, rarely last more than 6 hours. So finally, after some time and patience, I get to Gressoney.

I take some time to put my clothes the right way so that they can dry out while I sleep. Then, hey, I sleep. I think I need a good old rest.

## **Gressoney - Valtournenche**

I wake just a few minutes before my alarm clock rings. This is a good sign, it proves I've been through a complete sleep cycle. I don't waste time in bed and get up right away. I waste precious minutes, maybe up to half an hour, getting my drying stuff packed in the bag, counting them, verifying everything is fine. I'm not an organization wizard. With a crew, I guess I could make this pit stop an hour shorter or so. But well, I'm alone. And I think it perfectly suits the spirit of this race. The mountain, the runner, a little logistics, but not too much.

This fifth stage was quite enjoyable three years ago. Two athletic climbs and that's it. Landscape rather beautiful, with a slight tendancy to be clearly awesome. I'm doing quite well in the first uphill. First downhill too. I'm still very slightly ahead of my previous times, but really not much. I take a long look at the beautiful Matterhorn (AKA Cervin in French). Wow, impressive.

Now let's go for a second climb that takes me, if I remember well, to col Nanna. Still hard, and it didn't get easier with time flying by. Elevation is killing me. Above 7000 feet, I have no breath any more. And passages above 7000 are not rare. I see wild animals. Nice ones. Do not look so wild as I can get really close before they decide to go away. Beware of humans you animals.

I try and put my brain at work, and during the last downhill, I finally get it. Yes, the

upcoming section, the 6th, is the one that got me last time and caught me dead tired. Almost all by night, with rocks everywhere, the vast majority of the path being at a rather high elevation. I try not to think too much about it, I have a hard enough job coping with present problems not to need to think about the future ones. I go down to Valtournenche.

There, it's like a big party, lots of people, we're in the middle of the afternoon. I think it's wise to go and see to podiatrists, because at the beginning of the race I "strapped" my right foot "big toe" for I feared an ugly blister would spread on it. Now a few days later my feet got bigger, they are swelling. Which, in itself, ain't a probleme, except the toe is too tightly strapped now and blood has some hard time to flow by in that area. The doctor sees that and explains me that my "strapping" is now doing more bad than good. She offers to rework it, which I obviously accept. I'm just a little scared as she cuts through the old strap, which is just so strong and tight. Meanwhile, I exhibit a good old cough, which is a consequence of fatigue and elevation I guess. To some extent it sounds like my lungs are falling apart. She (the doctor) worries about this. I calmly explain that if we're to go through a process of enumerating all the problems I have, we might as well spend the night on it. I came for a foot problem, well, more precisely, a toe problem, so let's fix that problem and if there are others, I can handle that at next aid station, or probably even later, or maybe never if some magic (time does magic sometimes) fixes it.

I sleep half an hour, I know what kind of hell is ahead.

Before getting out of the big tent, an old Italian helps me. He's just so kind, he finds out everything I need just before I can even mention it. He gives me my poles, gloves, avoids me having to pick up stuff from the ground which, as the race goes by, seems to be lower and lower. He helps me a lot until... ARGHHH! He shows me my shoes, with the laces totally untied. I'm quite disappointed, I never tie/untie my shoe laces, I tie them once when I buy the shoes then usually just leave them that way, unless of course there's a problem. But basically those were perfectly set from the beginning of the race, and now I need to find the right setting again. I thank him with a smile because there's nothing else to do, and settle myself to find the perfect tension again. And here we go, on the road again!

## **Valtournenche - Ollomont**

A local walks the first few miles with me. Then I'm alone, by myself. I feel that now I'm late compared to the last time I was here. Where did all that time go? Yes, I slept in Valtournenche, but... My conclusion is that this was an investment, now that I'm even and rested enough, I can handle that hard night all alone, and will kick this out easily. Yeah, piece of cake. I feel strong.

The climb up the barrage is still a pain. Wow. Once up there, daylight is really fading out. It's chilly. Clouds are everywhere. I pack my stomach with cake and other goodies, and leave the aid station on a dirt road.

A mile later... shit! My poles. I forgot them. King ass hole is back on stage. I use them so rarely that I don't immediately realize when I don't have them. And I suspect I'm going to need them now. So I go back. It's dark. My motivation is under serious attack. I get my poles back. I walk, in a sad mood, on the ugly dirt road for the third time.

Soon after the point where I had realized my mistake, I discover that not only did I waste half an hour going back and forth, but additionally, I missed the trail and am now off the official route. I need to go left, I can see trailers on the real path which is not far, but I'm definitely not on it. Damned. I cut down through the grass to get back on it. I must admit I did not have the courage to go back again on this dirt road to find the exact spot where I should have left it. Officially, this can be considered as cheating. Oh, well.

Then, further in my self-demotivating spiral, comes an intense fatigue. I go left, right, stumble. OK, I hate this part. I decide to take a quick 5 minutes nap, set my watch to ring soon. 10 minutes later I wake up. I did not hear the watch. It's raining now. Did I seriously pay and took vacation to get to that point?

I reach the aid station in a zombified state. It's pitch dark now. I know what's still ahead, a serie of passes with almost no place to sleep. I need to stop here. Problem, it's packed. Well, yeah, there are only two beds here. Seeing my great (!) shape, the italian guys controlling this station make a proposal: would I accept to sleep on a couch? A couch? No kidding, I'm the guy who can sleep in winter (well, French winter, not the Canadian one) outside on a sidewalk. No doubt a couch is the perfect comfort I need, it's even well above my requirements. Three years ago I had slept a few miles away, outside on the grass protected from the wind by some random rocks.

I sleep just so well. Waking up is a hell of a job. It's cold now. I feel like doing anything but hike arround at night. But well, I guess I have no choice.

The GPS is usefull to comfort me in the fact I'm not going a random path. I go through the most remote part of the course, as I judge it, which is called Col Terray. I'm exhausted again. This pass separates two valleys which are basically filled with rocks and rocks and rocks. No nearby submit that I know or notice that would justify any hike around that area. It might even exist only for the Via Alta. But even being tired, this is a great experience. I mean, I'm torn between a wish to be anywhere but here and enjoy modern comfort, and the fact that this is a totally unique place, remote, wild, and I'm alone there with my headlamp and good old legs. This is pure excitment, sort of an adventure you know. Ultrarunning is hard but has its good hidden parts.

I finally reach that aid station where I slept in 2011. I sleep again this year, as I move slowly and have no energy. Once or twice, I just woke up while walking, making a last-minute (rather, last-second) move to fix my balance and avoid a stupid and possibly dangerous fall in the dark. The situation is not as bad as in 2011 as my lungs feel better and I'm not really sick. So I sleep very well.

After I wake up, I meet Michiel Panhuysen, another Barkley junkie who happens to be here too. We chat a bit and leave the place together. I pull ahead for some time but he comes back soon and eventually passes me, as the brief power-up I got from my super nap fades out in the morning.

As daylight is back, I meet a photograph who shows me wild animals he's seen in the mountain above. This is just magic, unforgettable. OK I'm missing the race from a competitive point of view, but the scenery, the ambiance, is just above most of the things I've seen yet, and I'm not in such a bad position. Only 50 miles to go, life is beautiful.

I start going down to Closé early in the morning. Curiously, I enjoy this downhill. More curiously, it happens this one is one many trailers dislike. I, for one, find it quite easy, but I suspect the fact that what precedes it so hard for me, makes anything that follows a piece of cake. During this downhill I spot a heavy blue vehicle that is probably used to make some sort of road-work (or rather, "river-work") over here, but the question is: how did it get there? I'm trying to build up explanations, but none of them fit.

Now it Closé. Full-featured brunch. And I forget my poles again. Hopefully, this time, I only waste a hundred yards or so.

I climb at a very cautious pace, I fear the sun punishes me if I start out to fast in the heat.

Going down to Ollomont, I meet a French Senator (a Tor Senator is someone who finished all

the editions of the Tor, since its beginning). We chat. He's a very nice day, I forgot his first name. We must have been pretty much together for the whole race as I can recognize his spouse, I've seen her several times at previous aid stations.

## Ollomont

Ollomont, as a major aid station, deserves a dedicated chapter.

Reaching Ollomont means you're really likely to make it. Unless you do something real wrong as breaking a knee or an ankle, or jump out of a cliff, there's no serious reason to give up and not reach Courmayer. I personally consider once I'm in Ollomont, the rest is a pure formality. Needs to be done, but perfectly doable. What, two passes? Piece of cake!

Now this is not the real reason why Ollomont is so special. Ollomont is an aid station which is not an aid station. It's a restaurant. A waitress comes and asks what you might have for lunch. The table is set in a typical friendly, traditional way. You have pepper, salt, mustard, beer if you want. And whatever you order comes in about 3 minutes. Here is the trailer's paradise, I've found it. People take care of you, it's just so... you know I'd feel like drinking white wine and enjoy the scenery and the Italian sun. Unfortunately, this is a race and I must go.

## Last section

Now, this is all about climbing one pass before climbing Malatras, which is the very last one. I recall it's a tough one, but they are all difficult so this is not a great change. North wind is gently blowing. At least it won't rain. I have plenty of warm gear to wear. I feel great, the cold wind can blow at will, I don't fear it.

At this very moment, I just feel so happy, and in harmony with the Mountain. This cold wind pleases me, I can feel it around me, as I'm climbing at a regular pace. Could I go faster? I think I couldn't, it seems the tuning is just right. I'm gently moving in that friendly Italian country. Happiness, you know. I do acknowledge I'm wrecking up all the chances I have to make a "good race" but I'm succeeding into achieving some other goal.

Downhill again, and this ever-lasting flat area before reaching Saint-Rhemy. I chat with an Australian girl. She's very nice. But I'm married, and what's more, I need to... well... I have to leave her to go and shit in the woods. Some things just can't wait, no matter how nice your companions are.

I think I could get some nice fast miles in this area. I've been interested in race-walking lately, so I imagined I would walk fast even if I could not run. On the paper, this did make sense. In practice, I certainly can't run, but do not walk fast either. As a sad proof of this reality, loads of trailers pass me as I painfully walk between 3 to 4 mph. This is depressing, I can not even hope to follow them. I spend the whole section desperately trying to find some imaginary place I could sleep in, be it only for 5 minutes.

The little details that kills it all is my water bag which is... getting old. I have it since 2004, I had on pretty much all my trails since the [Grand Raid de la Reunion](#). There's no blatant hole in it but it's dripping water and my clothes get wet. When I wear the Gore-Tex it's OK but if I only have regular "non-waterproof" gear, it gets all wet, at least on the right side. This is a pain. But the very fact I notice this is a good hint that globally, I'm not working the right way, something is going wrong. I usually don't pay much attention to that kind of details.

Once in Saint-Rhemy, I'm too tired to eat. I go to sleep for say, an hour, without even filling up my stomach before, I'm not strong enough to pile food in it. I sleep really well. I'm woken up by a nice lady, and get up.

Hey Christian, go for it, it's soon over! Malatras, and that's it.

I leave the place in a better shape than when I came in. The GPS helps me on some occasions, 3 years ago I thought I was lost a dozen times. I climb rather alone, as at this stage of the race, there's really some distance between runners. I realize this area is the entrance of a gigantic tunnel under the mountain.

I give myself an intermediate point to reach: Tsa de Merdeux. Which is where I expect the last aid station before the dreadful Malatras. By the way, I have a train back to Paris to catch tomorrow evening, and certainly do not want to miss it!

Meanwhile, I plant a shoe in the path. There's mud, and with my shoe laces being very loosely tied, the shoe stays in the mud while my right foot steps a little forward to land in some more mud. The sock is covered with mud, and it takes me more than 5 long minutes to manage to get the shoe out of its new natural bed. What the hell is that? Was not I supposed to be on my way home? And here am I with my hand in the dirt, in the middle of nowhere, it's pitch dark, cold, I'm exhausted and oh boy... I'm still lucky enough to have a pair of dry socks in my bag along with some cream to be put on my foot.

Tsa de Merdeux, a 7000 feet elevation. I see nothing. No trace of any live being, only some cattle, but no humans. Where has the aid station gone? What's going on? Last time I almost missed Bonatti, I certainly do not want to miss a control point on this side of the mountain, uphill. I spend some time going round the building but there's really nothing I can see. I need to go home anyway so I go back hiking in the mountain.

I walk. Rather slowly now. I'm sort of depressed you know. Stressed, too. Where's that cursed aid station? Maybe I'll have to go to Bonatti just straight? Why not, after all it's cold so there's no need to drink a lot and I have enough water and food to make it.

I walk.

I walk.

I walk.

Then, finally, yeah, aid station! It's a refuge. I learn afterwards that it's brand new, has been opened this year. It's located at almost 8000 feet elevation. Quite a long hike from Tsa de Merdeux.

Everyone looks exhausted here. Trailers sleeping on tables. A miserable picture. I decide to leave that depressing area. I slept in Saint-Rhemy, there's no point in wasting more time on sleep now, I believe I can make it through the night.

Now come on Malatras, I'm here! Just one minute after being out again in the wild, I'm seized by the cold wind. I put the weather-proof pants on. Perfect. Same deal than at the Loson. Slowly, but without any stop. Meanwhile, water freezes in the tube going out of my bag. I can't drink for the rest of the climb and have a proof that it's not hot outside as well.

Christian Mauduit ufoot@ufoot.org	Alt	Dist		100:00		110:00		120:00		Lim
		Cumul	Inter	h:m	d h:m	h:m	d h:m	h:m	d h:m	
Courmayeur	1,224	0	0:0	Sun 10:00						
baite Youlaz	2,051	12	11.8 2:52	Sun 12:52	3:09	Sun 13:09	3:26	Sun 13:26	Sun 13:26	
La Thuile	1,458	17	5.3 0:49	Sun 13:41	0:54	Sun 14:03	0:59	Sun 14:25	Sun 14:25	
Deffeyes	2,500	27	9.6 2:15	Sun 15:56	2:28	Sun 16:32	2:42	Sun 17:07	Sun 17:07	
Pronoud	2,017	33	6.5 1:01	Sun 16:58	1:07	Sun 17:39	1:13	Sun 18:21	Sun 18:21	
Planaval	1,517	43	9.9 2:27	Sun 19:25	2:42	Sun 20:22	2:57	Sun 21:18	Sun 21:18	
Valgrisenche IN	1,662	49	5.6 0:49	Sun 20:14	0:54	Sun 21:16	0:59	Sun 22:17	Sun 22:17	
Valgrisenche OUT	1,662	49	0.0 2:27	Sun 22:42	2:42	Sun 23:58	2:57	Mon 01:14	Mon 01:14	Mon 07:00
Chalet Epee	2,366	57	8.3 2:27	Mon 01:09	2:42	Mon 02:48	2:57	Mon 04:11	Mon 04:11	
Rhemes Notre Dame	1,738	65	7.6 1:38	Mon 02:48	1:48	Mon 04:29	1:58	Mon 06:10	Mon 06:10	
Eaux Rousee	1,654	79	14.6 4:05	Mon 06:54	4:30	Mon 08:59	4:55	Mon 11:05	Mon 11:05	Mon 19:30
Rif Vittorio Sella	2,585	94	15.0 4:05	Mon 11:08	4:30	Mon 13:30	4:55	Mon 16:00	Mon 16:00	
Cogne IN	1,531	102	8.0 1:38	Mon 12:38	1:48	Mon 15:18	1:58	Mon 17:58	Mon 17:58	
Cogne OUT	1,531	102	0.0 2:27	Mon 15:06	2:42	Mon 18:00	2:57	Mon 20:55	Mon 20:55	Tue 06:00
Goilles	1,830	107	5.3 0:49	Mon 15:55	0:54	Mon 18:54	0:59	Mon 21:54	Mon 21:54	
Rif Sogno	2,534	117	9.3 2:27	Mon 18:22	2:42	Mon 21:37	2:57	Tue 00:51	Tue 00:51	
Rif Dondena	2,151	124	7.2 1:38	Mon 20:01	1:48	Mon 23:25	1:58	Tue 02:49	Tue 02:49	
Chardonney	1,450	130	5.8 0:49	Mon 20:50	0:54	Tue 00:19	0:59	Tue 03:48	Tue 03:48	
Pontboset	791	139	9.2 2:02	Mon 22:53	2:15	Tue 02:34	2:27	Tue 06:16	Tue 06:16	
Donnas IN	330	149	9.7 2:02	Tue 00:56	2:15	Tue 04:50	2:27	Tue 08:43	Tue 08:43	Wed 02:00
Donnas OUT	330	149	0.0 3:16	Tue 04:13	3:36	Tue 08:26	3:56	Tue 12:39	Tue 12:39	
Perfoz	663	154	5.1 1:13	Tue 05:26	1:21	Tue 09:47	1:28	Tue 14:08	Tue 14:08	
Sassa	1,385	161	7.4 2:02	Tue 07:29	2:15	Tue 12:02	2:27	Tue 16:35	Tue 16:35	
Rif Coda	2,224	166	4.5 2:02	Tue 09:32	2:15	Tue 14:18	2:27	Tue 19:03	Tue 19:03	
Lago Vagno	1,686	172	6.5 1:13	Tue 10:46	1:21	Tue 15:39	1:28	Tue 20:31	Tue 20:31	Wed 12:00
Niel	1,573	187	14.4 4:05	Tue 14:52	4:30	Tue 20:09	4:55	Wed 01:27	Wed 01:27	
Loo	2,364	194	7.0 1:38	Tue 16:31	1:48	Tue 21:58	1:58	Wed 03:25	Wed 03:25	
Gressoney IN	1,329	200	6.6 1:13	Tue 17:44	1:21	Tue 23:19	1:28	Wed 04:53	Wed 04:53	Thu 01:00
Gressoney OUT	1,329	200	0.0 3:16	Tue 21:01	3:36	Wed 02:55	3:56	Wed 08:49	Wed 08:49	
Rif Alpenzu	1,788	207	6.9 1:13	Tue 22:15	1:21	Wed 04:16	1:28	Wed 10:18	Wed 10:18	
Rif Crest	1,958	216	9.1 1:38	Tue 23:53	1:48	Wed 06:05	1:58	Wed 12:16	Wed 12:16	
St Jacques (Ayas)	1,780	223	6.2 1:38	Wed 01:32	1:48	Wed 07:53	1:58	Wed 14:14	Wed 14:14	Thu 14:00
Rif Grand Tournalin	2,535	228	5.1 1:13	Wed 02:45	1:21	Wed 09:14	1:28	Wed 15:42	Wed 15:42	
Valtournenche IN	1,526	236	8.6 2:52	Wed 05:38	3:09	Wed 12:23	3:26	Wed 19:09	Wed 19:09	Thu 21:00
Valtournenche OUT	1,526	236	3:16	Wed 08:54	3:36	Wed 16:00	3:56	Wed 23:05	Wed 23:05	
Rif Barmasse	2,175	241	4.4 1:13	Wed 10:08	1:21	Wed 17:21	1:28	Thu 00:34	Thu 00:34	
Vareton (Torgnon)	2,352	247	6.8 1:38	Wed 11:46	1:48	Wed 19:09	1:58	Thu 02:32	Thu 02:32	
Bivacco Rebolaz	2,585	252	4.6 1:13	Wed 13:00	1:21	Wed 20:30	1:28	Thu 04:00	Thu 04:00	
Rif Cuney	2,656	257	4.7 1:13	Wed 14:14	1:21	Wed 21:51	1:28	Thu 05:29	Thu 05:29	
Bivacco R. Clairmont	2,785	261	4.5 1:13	Wed 15:28	1:21	Wed 23:13	1:28	Thu 06:57	Thu 06:57	
Closé	1,463	271	9.7 2:27	Wed 17:55	2:42	Thu 01:55	2:57	Thu 09:54	Thu 09:54	Fri 13:30
Berio Damon	1,942	280	8.9 2:27	Wed 20:23	2:42	Thu 04:37	2:57	Thu 12:51	Thu 12:51	
Ollomont IN	1,396	283	3.7 0:49	Wed 21:12	0:54	Thu 05:31	0:59	Thu 13:50	Thu 13:50	Fri 19:00
Ollomont OUT	1,396	283	0.0 3:16	Thu 00:29	3:36	Thu 09:08	3:56	Thu 17:47	Thu 17:47	
Rif Letey	2,433	288	4.3 1:13	Thu 01:43	1:21	Thu 10:29	1:28	Thu 19:15	Thu 19:15	
Ponteille Desot	1,830	293	5.8 1:38	Thu 03:21	1:48	Thu 12:17	1:58	Thu 21:13	Thu 21:13	
Saint Rhemy	1,519	303	9.7 2:02	Thu 05:24	2:15	Thu 14:32	2:27	Thu 23:41	Thu 23:41	
Merdeux	1,919	309	5.8 1:13	Thu 06:38	1:21	Thu 15:53	1:28	Fri 01:09	Fri 01:09	Sat 08:00
Rif Bonatti	2,033	321	11.6 4:55	Thu 11:33	5:24	Thu 21:18	5:54	Fri 07:03	Fri 07:03	
Rif Bertone	1,940	328	7.6 1:38	Thu 13:11	1:48	Thu 23:06	1:58	Fri 09:01	Fri 09:01	
Courmayeur	1,224	333	4.3 0:49	Thu 14:00	0:54	Fri 00:00	0:59	Fri 10:00	Fri 10:00	Sat 16:00

I had planned three different scenarios. One a 100 hours, one at 110 hours, one at 120 hours. I started on the 100 pace and ended up in 120. This is not the right way to do it.

Going through Malatras at night is one pleasure I enjoy. It feels great.

Now the downhill afterwards is both easy and fun. I meet the Ollomont Senator again. At some point, as we have the "Grandes Jorasses" ahead, along with a clear sky and a full moon, we switch off our headlamps. Unforgettable. One needs to go through the previous 180 miles to really enjoy this, but hey, no kidding, this is just so great. We switch the light back on, it would still be quite ridiculous to twist an ankle now.

I do not miss Bonatti. There I meet my friend Gideon who's having an early breakfast. He finished the race yesterday. How come he's so fast? I admit I did not do a very great job this year but he is just... 24 hours ahead. Trail races remain a mystery for me. A mystery I need to investigate, and I certainly still have things to do in that domain. But I also have a short term objective which is: finish this race.

I try and motivate myself to get under 120 hours. In theory this is easy given the time it is as I leave Bonatti. In practice, well, having run a few ultras in my life taught me to be very cautious with all those tasks that look too easy.

I walk and jog, ideally optimizing my pace. I find this last section quite long and boring. At

least it's an easy hike.

During the last downhill to Courmayer, I think I hear a runner closing down to me. Poles sounds scare me. No, he won't top me on the finish line! I speed up. The machine is OK with this. Hey, cool. OK no one really cares about one place, what the point in being 109th, 110th, or 111th? Well, probably none, but I still enjoy racing, whatever the level, it's fun, and that's it.

So I try and keep going strong. I feel great. This is the morning, and the sun always help me. I'm even likely to gain a place, there's a runner ahead! I decide it's quite ugly just to pass him now, one mile or do before the finish line. So I stay behind but wait, he's calling me and... it's Michiel! So I slightly speed up again and we manage to finish together.

He's tired and happy with his Tor des Geants. Apparently, he's had a hard and good time. I feel I'm a spectator. I watch him finishing. I don't realize I'm finishing myself. I just feel good, ready to go, what's the point in finishing now? Like in 2011, going downhill helps me a lot, I have energy, strong will but... to late. I missed something I guess. This is not such a big problem, there are many worse things in life that not being totally satisfied with a race result but when I think about it, spending a whole week away from my family for this? Huh.

## **Bilan**

Now I need to become a better trailer, there's something wrong. The easy answer is "hey Christian you never run in the mountain, no surprise it does not work on D day". Maybe, but there's more than that. My quads, at the end of the race, are tired but they clearly do not hurt at all, almost fresh. My stairs training was not such a bad bet. I have a powerfull engine, I feel I'm motivated enough, but for some reason on race day (err, well, week) I enjoy the landscape and nice people just to find out, at the end of the race, that it's over.

Other point: I promised myself to go back to Frozen Head State Park if I could manage to finish the Tor under 100 hours. Now it's clear that in April 2015, I stay in France.

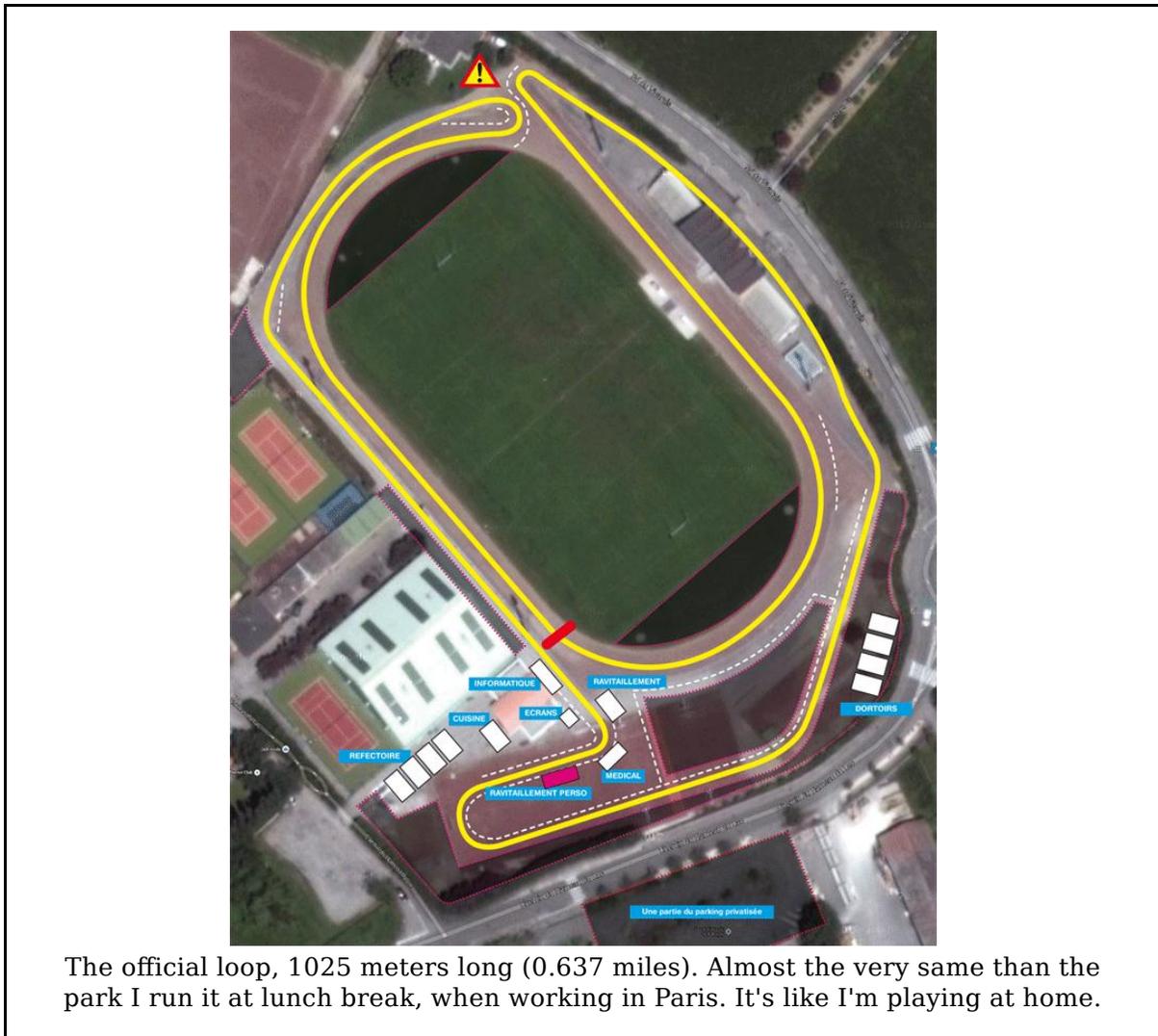
And finally, as I'm writing these lines, I'm done with the [6 jours de France](#) (a regular 6-days race on a small loop, which I did walking), and wonder about my non-capacity to "push it hard" during trail races. There's something. Something about security. In the mountain, I sort of imagine I need to remain in control of what's happening. On a track or a small loop, I can get as exhausted as I want, there's barely any risk. If I'm very tired, I can just stop wherever I am, there are no possible bad consequences. But still, some people manage to be competitive in the mountain, so there's probably a way to do it. Only I haven't found it yet.

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# **[6 jours de France race report](#)**

## **Why racewalking ?**

I'm not a total beginner as far as the 6 days format is concerned. For instance, I did one already [in 2010](#) . This year, race director [G rard Cain](#), who can definitely be considered "Mr 6 days" in France, has had a very hard time organizing the event. It was initially planned in Nice. Then Villefranche sur mer. The data changed too, from May it shifted to October. I imagine this has been a probleme for many runners, especially those that are crazy about running and plan their races well ahead.



The official loop, 1025 meters long (0.637 miles). Almost the very same than the park I run it at lunch break, when working in Paris. It's like I'm playing at home.

I, for one, was at the [Tor des Géants](#) a few weeks before. And following the various cancellations, I'm also registered for the 6 days [Across the Years](#) in Phoenix, Arizona. Between those two events I need to make some room for the 6 days in Privas. I soon find out it's impossible to pack the three of them : Tor des Géants, 6 days in Privas, 6 days in the US, within 4 months. I have a good physical condition, but I do have limits, like anybody else.

So an idea pops out in my head: I can go to Gérard's 6 days, because it's a friend, because his races are always great, because I can't let him down but... I will walk it and not run it. There's a special category for this, with official racewalk judges. I bet walking is less destructive than running. Les shocks, slower overall rythm, I should, at least in theory, take a smaller load that during a regular 6 days ran "full speed". Besides, there's some logic in doing this as my interest and participation in racewalking events is increasing, for instance I did a [24 hours in Saint Thibault des Vignes](#) last year, and appreciated it.

And finally: 6 days racewalking is a very rare format. Maybe the opportunity to do it again won't materialize soon again. So I'm set, I will walk in Privas! Anyways, I had planned to work my walking technique as generally speaking, it's wise to know how to walk fast when "running" long distances.

So I'm going to see what I'm worth on 6 days, that's to say 144 hours, walking. The

difference with runners is that walkers are not allowed to run while runners can walk. The rest of race rules is the very same: clock is tickling all the time. You might stop but as you stop, others are very likely to keep going. I target 600k (370 miles) and won't come back home without them.

## October 19th 2014

I made the trip with the whole family (spouse + 3 cute daughters) and rented a van (through [Le Bon Coin](#) of course! A web site with classified ads, somewhere between Craig's list and eBay, which I happen to work for). I anticipated cold nights, not very compatible with kids aged 7, 9 and 10 sleeping in a tent. I still do have my own small tent, planted right close to the track.



Walking is simple, (almost) everyone can walk, you know ;)

After the race is started, I soon find the real race is among walkers. Let's be clear, I deeply respect my runner friends, but this year, great French runners where not there. Olivier Chaigne -> did not come. Thierry Delhaye -> not here (he has no performance recorded on days, but has logs on ultra triathlons and regular 100k which do mean something). So well, the race is soon neutralized by the powerfull Israelian Kobi, who can just show out who the boss is. I wish there were some other competitors of is class or above, so that he could have some good company. But well, I concentrate on the walkers, after all, for this week, I belong to this new family.

The first three did make some damage. Stéphane, who I do not know personally, but is a great walker, is stuck during the first night. Back problems, after a quite impressive start. Bernardo, who won last year, collapsed during day 2. I think the local weather, at this season, did not fit him, and besides this, he was not as well trained as other years. 6 days does not leave much room for compromises.

## **Alain & Christophe**

Quite soon, three walkers take the lead of the walking race. Alain Grassi, me, and Christophe Biet. I try not to focus too much on race positions, but I still get a glance at it every 12 hours.

Curiously, I'm more intimidated by Christophe (3rd) than by Alain (1st). Indeed, Christophe is a machine. No kidding. He's rustproof. If he walks 4 mph, then over 20 hours he's done 80 miles. Period. Impressive. I fail to understand the miracle behind my being before him on the race board. Alain has a different style. A great walker, powerful. With a single stride he goes 8 inches farther than I would. Not only are his legs very long, but his stride is incredibly efficient. Now I'm in the middle of all this, walking for less than 2 years. The best card I can play is my being used to various ultra distance events. But as far as walking technique is concerned, I might as well pass my turn. But who cares, I'll just give it a try, and see what happens. What's the risk after all?

## **24h**

After almost 24 hours, I take a look at my mileage. Wow, I'm about to pass the 24h point with almost 93 miles. My personal record on 24h is about 103 miles. This sounds like plain suicide. I decide to slow down. Maybe it's even too late. Damn, I'm so stupid. I \*know\* one should never race for real before day 4!

Follow two complicated days, Tuesday and Wednesday, where I need to navigate with raw estimations between two extremes: on one hand I need to save forces for later. My theory is simple, the strong Thursday guy has great chances to win the race. Not the one who is first on Thursday. No, I mean, the fastest moving guy on Thursday, the one going strong. On the other hand, I need to log enough miles not to be excluded from the race. If on Thursday I'm in great shape but 70 miles behind: it's over. Now this is just pure 6 days science, and this is why those races are beautiful, you need to "do it right".

## **Mistral**

Mistral is the name of local wind, common to the whole southern-east part of France. It blows from the north. And it's a strong wind. Let me be frank : each time I did a 6 days, there's been a wind story, with tents flying all over. But hey, living this instant when you wonder whether the race is going to be plain cancelled is... something. Hint: it never happened yet ;) As far as I'm concerned, I play the most selfish card with the "I'm an ass hole and keep logging miles while others are in panic mode helping each other" attitude. My spouse [Valérie](#) offers her help. This makes feel a little less guilty. Those who were sleeping under the community tents had some really hard time.

Mistral did make other victims than our tents. It did put race organizers under pressure, and got on the nerves of some walkers and runners. I, for one, really do not care. I must even admit that I enjoy walking with the wind in my face. It makes me feel strong, at each step I can push on my toes and feel I'm alive. I suspect this is even easier to do walking than running. In other words, I have the same equipment than at the Tor des Geants, I'm ready for mountain conditions at 9000 feet elevation. The race being held in October, I planned everything as if it could be real cold. I have good gear and am ready to handle temperatures well below freezing point. It could even snow, I don't care. And let me just mention that this

year, in France, autumn is almost a virtual, endemic season, it seems summer is never ending. If I had something to complain about the weather, it would rather be "too much sun and heat in the afternoon" more than anything else.

### Next generation



Lise, my 9 years old daughter, has done 10 laps (10k) with me. I suspect I'm going to get her an official race number with chip and everything for the 24h at Across The Years, Arizona.

Lise, my 9 years old daughter, decides to walk a few laps with me. 1 hour and 40 minutes later, she's done about 10 of them. Time flies by! She's quite good at it. I certainly do not want to force them (my kids) to do anything painfull and/or bad for their health, they are free to exercise or not. I claim to be a responsible parent who do not uses his children to power up his own dreams. If I want to go far and fast, it's my problem, I do it on my own. But hey, Lise has this little thing that makes you appreciate "distance", she features this ever-lasting contemplative patience that carries you way in the distance before you even figure out you got there.



In good company with Gildas (violet jacket), a young triathlete with a bright future, I tell you!

Other context, other child, Gildas, a local boy, walks a few laps with me. He's a triathlete. At his age? Wow, cool! When I was his age, there was no way I could do this, you had to be 16, period. Times change, and sometimes things get better. We exchange about sport in general, this is quite cool.

### Contrepèteries and male humor

Later at night, we get together with Alain (Grassi) and Patrick, joking around while walking. We exchange good "contrepèteries". I dunno wether this "litterary" figure exists in English. It's about mixing sounds in a sentence to transform it into something dirty, typically about sex or anything you would never tell in front of your mother. Edit : I just checked the [Spoonerism](#) on Wikipedia, and honestly, what I read there does not fit for a real "contrepèterie". The latter must really something you can't mention publicly if you're engaged in politics, it \*has\* to be something you can be caught saying and be therefore considered bad mannered, rude. I hope you get it. This is loop humor you know, after too much time spent on a track, brains get weird.

What is plain ununderstandable is how Patrick manages to follow us. Let me explain: Patrick (Pierre) had one of his legs broken into parts. He can walk on it during normal "civil" life. But during a 6 days he has to protect it. So he carries a hudge external prothesis, he can slightle bend his knee with it, but that's all. He carries that gear lap after lap. He will end up the race with a total of 282 miles. And a big smile. I don't know if those figures mean something to you, but they do to me. He needs to regularly stop because of his peculiar condition. With 20 years less and two valid legs, that man would be a serious 6 days animal. Meanwhile, at night, with his asyetric stride, he manages to follow both of us, Alain and I, who are technically the race head. Think of it before finding a good excuse not to register for a 6 days.

## 72h

It's wednesday morning. Alain Grassi is having problems. During the night, he talked about quitting. I explain his team (4 guys crewing him) that they'd better motivate him back again, else they'll experience what my kick in the butt feels like. Well, this is not exactly what I said, but it is exactly what I thought. It seems the weather, wind and cold, are a problem for him. It seems to me that a little rest and warm gear could fix that. I offer him to stay in my van, which is free during the day, and has a heater.

Alain is back on track in the morning. Hurray! But a couple hours later, once again, he's in trouble. No more motivation or pleasure. I respect his choice. Alain is a great athlete who, unlike my lucky little self, has to permanently fight disease. Most mortals would, in his situation, have quit not after 72 hours, but more likely after 72 minutes.

This is how I get in first place, if one considers walkers only. It happens during the afternoon. This is moderately good news, I would have 1000 times preferred to beat Alain the right way, this is just not fair, and not my style. I sadly watch him packing his tent. As I tell him a last goodbye, we take a look at the first runner, who does not look in such a great shape any more. 8 mph laps are over. His victory might not be that easy after all. Well, we'll see.

I end up the day in a rather cool mode. I listen to quiet random music until late in the night. I'm just zen.

## The race

I sort of fear thursday. It's the most important day. I hesitate between lighting the fire in the morning, or wait until the evening. In practice, I'm getting tired, no matter what I plan. I try and watch facts with some distance: everything is going well, looks like things are under control. I did not watch very closely my mileage, but it looks like I'm able to do almost 70 miles per day. Which seems quite "OK" to me.

I give myself this thursday to "get into the race". And I'm into it. I just tuned my pace. At the beginning of the race things were a little messy, at least technically speaking, but now my walking technique is paradoxaly getting better I think. I keep quite straight enough. Walking is not that hard. Just put your leg forward and straighten it before the impact on the ground. Keep it straight until it passes the "vertical" point under your body. Then finally, push hard on your toes, as you can't fly in the air, you need to use the whole stride to its maximum. This is for the lower body. The upper body is simple too. Lock your head and shoulders so that they move as little as possible. Then swing your arms fast. They give the tempo. And to compensate all this, you need to losen your hips and butt, they should naturally move as your legs keep straight and your shoulders go straight. At least, this is how I understand racewalking.

I use and overuse my MP3 player. I carry a hudge rugged Android phone, waterproof, shockproof. Its weight is way above the average but it's still convenient. I also have real headphones, also quite weather resistant, in which I can build my own bubble, where nothing from the outside world reaches me. Just me, my shoes, and the track.



From time to time (but rarely, I can assure you) I stop for a quick power nap of 5 to 15 minutes.

On this thursday evening, I'm dead scared to be caught back by sleepiness. I sleep about two hours and a half since the beginning of the race, except the first night during which I only cooled down for an hour. Two hours and a half is both a lot and very few. It's the guarantee to have a complete sleep cycle (mine last between an hour and a half and two hours), but it's also three hours and a half outside the track, including the "bootstrap" process. But something happens, which is going to make all my fears vanish.

### Walkers and runners

At the end of the afternoon, I'm about to pass Kobi, the first runner. Then he stops to put is national flag up, the latter suffering bad treatment from the wind. I decide I can't pass him while he's stopped. I just wait until he's back on track, then speed up, and do show him that obviously "hey, you know, I walk, but I go faster than you runner!". It's dead stupid, I know, but Kobi appears to be a "player" and he gets the signal. He speeds up too and gains one lap over me. One lap and a half. Then I gain terrain again. We play cat and mouse (at least, I, for one, do) all night, and time flies by. I'm having great fun, I'm like a kid, just going crazy. Hell, that's a race, there's no way I can get bored!

After all that fun, Jean-Michel, the second runner, pops out on the track. He might have been there before but I did not notice him yet. I explain him that I warmed up his adversary, he might keep going and continue the chae. I'm sort of done, you know.

After the race, people that were on the track that night would tell me that I looked just soo exhauste. Additionnally, ununderstandable words and sentences were pouring out of my mouth. This is 6 days too, there's a time to save one's energy, and a time to fire the engine and check out what's inside.

My tactic this night is debatable. Purists might argue that I'd better have done my race instead of focusing on the runners. Nonetheless, by playing stupid games all the evening, I piled up a significant number of good old solid miles. I end up the night at a slower rythm, I cool down. I want to go to sleep when I'm ready for it, not in full action. Tomorrow will be an important day: Friday!

### **Alain Grassi's back**

I wake up with stiff legs. Worse than the days before. Let me just give you a picture of it. In the morning legs are just two bone sticks. During at least half a lap, that is, more than a quarter mile, everyone passes me as if I was not moving at all. These &\*\$%\*\*! race rules require the leg is straightened when touching the ground. This complicates everything. I awkwardly carry my legs around an plant them every feet or so. It's certainly ugly to watch, it's painful to do it. So I try and get a smooth movement as soon as possible but this is easier said than done. Hopefully I'm winning the race and this has the nice effect to make a lot of things easier than they really are.



With Claudine Anxionnat, who is about to break a ladies record, all categories. Impressive. Someone I'm proud and happy to have met.

Christophe fights hard against sleep deprivation. He walks great but probably lacks a little experience on that peculiar point. I hope, and do not doubt he learnt a bunch of things

during these 6 days. I do think he can perform very well if he solves this problem. Meanwhile, I pulled ahead. Well ahead enough that I realize and am informed that I can possibly beat the race record, which belongs to Alain Grassi. Alain who stopped after three days and is now back with his record to beat, of 702 km (436 miles).

A great fatigue goes through my whole body and mind.

Because I know, for sure, I should not afford to sleep if I want to get the record. Well, there's a slight possibility that I could sleep, but I just don't believe in it, it sounds too hard and risky. I fear the waking up process, what if I just can't start again? With this racewalking technique, I can't just hop around the way I please. And also, I'm curious to know how it feels to go through a complete night (the sixth one...) without sleeping. Sometimes a choice needs to be made. I won't sleep. Maybe power naps, but no complete two hours and a half night. Straight to the end.

Since thursday 4 pm, Valérie gives me, regularly, a complete summary of the difference in mileage between me and the other runners. Because, yes, I look at runners mileages, and not only walkers, this way it's much more motivating. I sometimes feel like I'm the only one *\*seriously\** chasing Kobi. It's probably wrong because Jean-Michel Pion is really close. But well, I draw motivation from any available source, and this one is quite valid.



With Gérard Cain, race director. Next year will be the 10th anniversary of his great 6 days. Without him, none of this would ever have happened. Thanks Gérard.

Everything goes fine until the evening. Then, having suffered from a sun a bit too shiny for me in the late afternoon, I hit a wall. No rythm. I need to do a little more than 60 miles in 24 hours. On the paper, looks so easy. On the track, things get harder. I fell behind the symbolic 3 mph limit. I try to get back on track using music and all sort of tricks. It lasts a lap, but no more.

I stop for a little nap, not the big one, just a small nap. My estimation is that 45 minutes could do it. Claudine Anxionnat, who passes by, tells Valérie "30 minutes, no more". I listen to Claudine, she's right, this is not a vacation camp, it's a race after all. I'm walking again. But still wrong, under 3 mph.



4 days after the race, right foot is still swollen. One can clearly see the traces of the blisters I got on top of my toes. This is because of walking and pusing on toes at the end of the stride.

My feet hurt, my joints are rusted, my muscles stiff, like an old man. I decide to stop at the medical tent to have my feet inspected. Quite ugly. Since the beginning I handle blisters by perforating them with a needle, put cream back on it and call it a day. The problem is that in addition to the traditionnal "under your feet" blisters one gets on long ultras, I get those typical of walkers on the side of the heel, and what's more annoying, little small blisters on top of the base of my toes. This is because I bend my feet at the end of each stride to push with my toes. Those are a pain. The race doctor confirms what I was suspecting, the swelling on the right foot is the consequence of a local infection, things could get bad. They treat all that, try and sterilize the whole mess, and put cream back on, a foot per doctor. Sounds like I'm a car in Indianapolis, the tires of which are being changed by blazing fast operators. Only I'm a car with a top speed of 4 mph but let's put those details aside. At some point in the creaming process, I wake up suddenly. The doctors wonder what's happening... I'm just very ticklish and they reached the sensible parts of my feet. This is just funny. I feel better.

It's soon midnight, I leave with my teeth clenched, telling myself that if I'm about to get some record, I'd better be prepared to make some effort to deserve it.



Little story: I had to ask for some sugar in emergency mode as once up there, I felt I was about to fall on the ground. Huh.

And it does work. The machine is on again. After 3 or 4 very difficult hours, I can walk almost normally again. I can maintain 3 mph and speed up if needed. I explain Valérie that the runners hunt is over. I've had a first warning, I should not mess everything up. I'm going to just go to the end steady but quiet, with the 702 km symbolic mark as a unique target. Let's not multiply the goals, a long night of hard work is waiting for me. I just need to make yet another 12 minutes lap. And yet another. Don't let it go.

Patricia helps me a lot through the night. We make a bunch of laps together. Of course Valérie helped me a lot too, she stayed awake almost the whole night

And Claudine. Incredible Claudine. She catches me at the end of the night. She knows I'm having a hard hard time trying to go as fast as possible. She tells me to follow her the way a cyclist would typically do. I do follow here. She's a hell of a machine, unstoppable. I soon find out going that fast I won't go far but I keep on following her. I try and tell her to slow down a bit but can't catch my breath. We walk something like two laps this way, which will stay forever printed in my mind. A very nice chunk of pure sport. Our speed was, if you think of it, not that impressive (8 minutes laps?) but on the track I felt like we were just so fast. Thanks Claudine, thanks again.

This night is real hard. I took another 5 minutes nap, I was just fading away. I remember someone, seeing me having a hard time, told that I had almost already won the race, that the record was not such a big thing, that I should take it easy. Yes and no. What would Alain say now? "Oh well, it's hard, too bad". Sorry, it does not fit. I must go.

At some point, I think it was 6:30 am, I cry and weep like a little boy. It's strange but this does not slow me down, I still walk. So well, a mile is a mile, and I keep going, but this is weird.

## Soon finished

As the sun goes up, the end is close.

Cl.	Clas	Nom	Prénom	Sex	Clas	Tour	Distance	Fin	Temps
1	107	OREN	Kobe	M	C	711	729 175	693	729888
2	7	MAUKAT	Christian	M	C	682	709 790	360	710950
3	19	PKON	Jean-michel	M	C	689	706 623	361	706986
4	105	BEFFANO	Jean	M	C	673	690 233	356	690761
5	104	ITALIAN	Massimo	M	C	660	676 900	536	677436
6	102	NOTARANGLO	Michèle	M	C	660	676 900	536	677436
7	62	REHMS	Jean-claude	M	C	653	677 773	589	672364
8	82	CHEVLON	Bernard	M	C	631	647 175	179	647354
9	89	BET	Christophe	M	M	623	638 974	363	639940
10	9	SARTAT	Gulbenko	M	C	621	636 263	951	637876
11	15	DREAN	Jean-michel	M	C	614	629 750	804	630514
12	29	FARET	Edouard	M	C	611	626 671	0	626696
13	81	CHEVLON	Mimi	F	C	610	625 650	179	625829
14	68	ANXONNAT	Claudine	F	M	604	619 500	776	620276
15	92	GABRET	Guy	M	C	599	614 371	137	614572
16	21	BRUNSCHANG	Philippe	M	C	598	613 350	0	613388
17	60	MANE	Christian	M	C	587	602 073	829	602004
18	20	BETALLE	Sigier	M	M	586	580 550	0	580550
19	45	WALLAETS	Jean	M	M	586	580 550	861	581611
20	100	CARTIER	Emmanuel	M	C	555	575 523	75	575050
21	78	BAUDNOT	Laurent	M	C	558	572 350	699	573049
22	59	EMONIER	Philippe	M	M	557	571 323	591	571816
23	93	BRUARD	Olivier	F	M	556	570 300	840	571146
24	108	PIERRE	Maria	F	C	553	567 233	172	567387
25	84	VINCENZ	Dominique	M	C	551	565 175	709	565884
26	23	MAFEAU	Danielle	M	C	541	554 923	835	555760
27	52	BECK	Jacques	M	C	534	547 750	207	547957
28	30	GLIARD	Claudio	M	C	528	541 600	619	542570
29	55	COULIRON	Sylvio	F	C	527	540 571	82	540637
30	95	SAUTEREAU	Christian	M	C	523	538 473	177	538662
31	35	CORRECOR	Francois	M	C	519	532 374	235	532610
32	90	CASPER	Alan	M	C	512	525 200	132	525232
33	114	HUGMANN	Martina	F	M	509	522 121	380	522670
34	28	PRUKNER	Jaroslav	M	M	507	520 073	833	521008
35	26	MARSON	Francois	M	M	505	518 023	496	518481
36	67	RABRAC	Peter	M	C	503	515 975	602	516277
37	46	TOURNE	Chantal	F	C	502	514 950	180	513130
38	8	SCHIFFER	Christoph	M	C	501	512 823	305	514868
39	12	BDET	Jean-Luc	M	C	501	513 923	863	514788
40	112	MAOK	Baran	M	C	497	509 823	286	510111
41	61	MORIS	Jacques	M	C	493	505 725	866	506011
42	73	FRIEDMANN	Danielle	M	C	490	502 650	434	503084
43	3	PIGANO	Sylvain	M	C	490	500 690	113	500690
44	72	PETAYON	Fredrick	M	C	489	501 623	200	501825
45	14	VELLY	Christian	M	C	489	501 623	119	501744
46	113	HEBERT	Philippe	M	C	489	501 623	102	502637
47	13	BERGAMINI	Richard	M	C	489	501 623	100	501725
48	48	THEBAULT	Jean	M	C	488	500 600	914	503134
49	6	SAVELLI	Michel	M	C	477	489 233	624	489959
50	70	VITRAC	Michel	M	C	475	487 273	937	488232
51	41	GRAND	Serge	M	C	474	486 250	300	486500
52	24	COULARD	Dominique	M	M	467	479 073	929	480004
53	40	AMITA	Serg	M	C	466	478 050	810	478860
54	56	LEMANER	Serge	M	C	465	477 023	932	477927
55	50	SCOTTA	Greg	M	C	465	477 023	200	477225
56	94	JALLENE	Viviane	F	C	462	473 950	300	474250
57	110	VISTORIELLO	Olavio	M	C	454	465 750	536	465886
58	32	CHMOR	Tommy	M	C	450	461 650	178	461828
59	83	GORR	Stephane	M	C	450	461 650	100	461760
60	1	ECHÉ	Dominique	M	M	444	453500	929	456429
61	58	PIERRE	Franck	M	M	443	454 473	100	454573
62	71	ZANNI	Christian	M	C	440	451 400	113	451713
63	103	BOREL	Lise	F	C	436	447 300	700	448000
64	74	PHILIPS	Daniel	M	C	435	438 023	859	436844
65	88	KLUKA	Peter	M	C	421	431 923	85	432010
66	3	CORNELLE	Dennis	M	C	408	418 600	631	418631
67	65	PAQUER	Gilvo	F	C	408	418 300	828	418778
68	86	POUPON	Stephane	M	C	402	412 450	48	412488
69	86	ENSH	Diane	M	C	399	409 374	227	409902
70	87	LESCURE	Francois	M	M	393	405 273	626	405771
71	4	BRUQUET	Lapinou	F	C	394	404 250	108	404336
72	38	LARDIER	Marie	M	C	383	402 200	48	402248
73	111	RETELLA	Arn	F	C	384	394 000	929	394929
74	11	VAUTIN	Franck	M	C	378	387 850	480	388330
75	49	BOUARD	François	F	C	378	385 800	0	385 800
76	34	CORMIER	Mélie	F	C	363	372 473	230	372705
77	31	GRASS	Alan	M	M	367	371 450	0	371450
78	78	JOASSARD	Franck	M	M	362	371 450	800	372250
79	53	SHARD	Tommy	M	C	359	368 373	929	369304
80	63	OLIVAN	Aurélien	M	C	359	368 373	929	369304
81	80	CORNICION	Laurent	M	M	356	365 300	379	365679
82	23	DUBOIS D'INGHEIN	Carherine	F	M	354	363 250	436	363706
83	54	WESTON	Kyle	M	C	350	359 150	929	360799
84	75	RABRAU	Yves	M	M	344	353 000	930	353930
85	36	JOE MOIRA	Bernardo	M	M	339	347 873	119	347894
86	22	SEOL	Santiago	M	M	307	315 073	119	315194
87	51	TSCHANN	Xavier	M	C	300	307 900	200	308100
88	43	PIQUER	Jean-Benoit	M	C	294	291 500	0	291500
89	97	VAUD	Christian	M	C	284	271 000	41	271041
90	2	ANTONE	Christophe	M	C	185	200 273	377	200645
91	109	MARAS	Jean	M	C	184	189 000	0	189 000
92	77	BURGER	Alan	M	M	182	186 450	122	186572
93	47	DESI	Geoffard	M	C	146	150 000	863	150010
94	64	EVESQUE	Jean-claude	M	C	123	126 473	0	126 473
95	17	PALLE	Stephane	M	M	74	76 250	0	76250
96	18	THEUREL	Francois	M	C	39	40 373	181	40386

The final race positions. There's still one runner in front of me. I still was sort of lucky that no real strong runner came, this way I can manage to be 2nd overall, which would have been plain impossible in the past 4 years for instance.

Daylight always gives me extra energy. And here, no exception, the morning is just great. I face a "make 13 miles in 7 hours, and you break the record" challenge. Half a marathon in 7 hours. This is ridiculous hey? But from my position, it's still a challenge. Those who've done a 6 days trying to go as far as possible know what I'm talking about. Distances and time get distorted. And just, one detail: the only thing I want is sit on a chair and have cool cocktails for at least an hour. Something I could not afford for more than 28 hours. Hopefully, this is soon all over.

I also must take care not to be injured, as on December 28th of this year, that is, about 10 weeks ahead, I have another 6 days to complete. And this time I will run it, not just walk. So I really really do not want to end the race completely wrecked.

The record is beaten at about 1 pm. I thought it would never happen. Valerie is excited and filled with emotion but I'm not. I had my breakdown earlier this morning now I'm stable. I keep going.

It's strange, but not a big surprise, once the target is behind me, my rythm drops dramatically. Only two laps per hour! I finally manage to get to a more respectable pace, something that looks like 2.5 mph. Not great but enough to pile up a few extra miles. He (or she?) who will try and beat the race record again will need to do these extra miles too, just for fun ;) There's another symbolic record I could reach, at 742km (464 miles) but this is really too far. I might have been able to go a little faster at the very end, but no way I could do 20 more miles. Next time... ;)



Should I keep one picture, it would be this one. This is how miles are scored. Just walk and pile them up, one after the other.

## Finish

I just want to congratulate Jean Wallaey's who ends up with a very nice and fast finish, few racers being capable of doing this. Also Claudine, with her 620k (385 miles), the record and everything. Congratulations!

I'm also very happy to have offered a second place to the walkers community. This is not a pure coincidence, I did work to get that. I hope this can make some runners think about how useful it is to run full speed when a walker can do 440 miles.

## Next

Now I need to rest. I came for 600k, and got much more, so I'm just happy. Next race is in December. There I will see if 10 weeks is enough to recover. Meanwhile, these 6 days in Privas were a blast.

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## 2015 forecast

2014 is not over yet, but I'm looking forward to 2015...

Au programme :

- Dec 28th 2014 - Jan 3rd 2015 [6 days in Arizona](#) (never know where to put this one, is it 2014 or 2015?) I'm already registered at the [6 days](#) and two of my daughters will participate in the [24 hours](#) ;)
- Jan 17th - 18th 2015 [Ultra Raid 28](#) (70 miles trail, mud + bad weather = guaranteed fun)
- Feb 28th - Mar 21st 2015 24h in Bourges, racewalking (registration not opened yet, but I'm positive I'm going to participate)
- Mar 14th 2015 [BRM 200 Bourg](#) (130 miles cycling brevet)
- Mar 29th 2015 BRM 300 Vesoul (190 miles cycling brevet)
- Apr 4th - 5th [24h running in Saint-Fons](#)
- Apr 12th 2015 [Paris Marathon](#)
- May 2nd - 3rd 2015 [BRM 400 Angers](#) (250 miles cycling brevet)
- May 8th - 9th 2015 BRM 600 Bethunes (370 miles cycling brevet)
- Jul 24th - 26th 2015 [Triple Ironman in Lensahn](#) (7 miles swim, 335 miles bike, 78 miles running)
- Aug 16th-19th 2015 [Paris-Brest-Paris](#) (760 miles bike ride, AKA "PBP")



Now for the rest of 2015, I don't know yet...

But, for 2016, I've found a brand new elevation-junkie meeting, a new "concept" that pushes it a step further :

- Jul 2016 [Transpyreneas](#), not really an ultra-trail, maybe closer to a "raid", with a raw distance above 610 miles, and something like 160 000 feet elevation. 160k+, 160k-. Time limit should be 400 hours. Huh.

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## [Personal records](#)

Here are some of my PRs:

- [Half marathon - 1h21'45"](#) (Paris, 2010)
- [Marathon - 2:52:22](#) (Paris, 2010)
- [100km - 9:08:33](#) (Millau, 2012)
- [24h - 138 miles](#) (Saint-Fons, 2014)
- [48h - 245 miles, 1st place](#) (on a treadmill in Evreux, 2012)
- [6-days - 504 miles, 3rd place](#) (Antibes, 2010)
- [6-days \(walking\) - 441 miles, 1st place](#) (Privas, 2014)
- [Spartathlon - 30:41:51](#) (2008)
- [Diagonale des fous - 32h27'07"](#) (trail with 88 miles, 27000 ft elevation, 2004)
- [Barkley Marathons - DNF, quit on loop 2](#) (2011)
- [Tor des Géants - 117:46:55](#) (trail with 206 miles, 78000 ft elevation, 2011)
- [Paris-Brest-Paris - 58:??](#) (765 miles on a bike, 2011)
- [Race Around Ireland - 138:42](#) (1350 miles on a bike, 2013)
- [Triple-Ironman - 41:58:20](#) (Lensahn, 2012)
- [Deca-Ironman - 199:09:29, 1st place](#) (Monterrey, 2010)

As a side node, you can take a look at the [statistics on D-U-V.org](#), which give a nice third-party view of what I've done up to now.

Those figures mean nothing to you? It does not matter. Figures are not that important. Think about the St Exupéry's Petit Prince. The best race is the one from which you get best experience, it's not necessarily the fastest one.

PS: do not use my times to build up an "equivalent times" table. Depending on the years, the quality of my training, my shape on race day, the mileage varies. Being under 3h on the marathon does not give you a finishing ticket for [Spartathlon](#). And conversely... ;)

PPS: yeah, Barkley is tough, less than 30 miles in 26 hours, that is not even 1.5 mph on an average.

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