

Groovin in the Aspens race recap

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BY STEVIE SANCHEZ
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As the morning sun stretched over Mount Elden last weekend, race participants gathered at the start line for the annual Groovin in the Aspens event. Formally called Gaspin in the Aspens, the event is known to be a grueling test of endurance set amidst the breathtaking landscapes of the San Francisco Peaks. The event offers race distances of 6K, 10K, 20K, 30K and 50K — bringing together runners from all walks of life to share in a common goal to push their personal limits and conquer the unforgiving terrain set over the 18K loop.

As the start time neared, excitement surged through the air. The runners were released to embark on their chosen daunting adventure with the scent of pine and damp earth filling their noses from the recent rains. The first two miles are a gentle climb through fire roads adorned with wildflowers and pine trees, easing them into the challenges that lay ahead.

Some runners exchanged encouraging smiles and shared anecdotes of earlier races — which fueled each other's determination. Others were more di-

aled in and radiated with the goal to win.

Kilometers 4 through 8 marked the transition into more challenging terrain. The trail begins to steepen, and the reality of the race sets in.

It seemed that many runners fell into a solitary rhythm, pushing deep into their reserves of mental strength. Soon, the aid stations became lifelines, offering electrolytes, energy gels and the much-needed encouragement of volunteers.

The mental fortitude of the race became increasingly important as runners tackled the second lap. The rain began falling, and rocky paths turned into puddles

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COURTESY

Stevie Sanchez bikes around providing support and encouragement during the annual Groovin in the Aspens ultra-marathon and trail-running event last weekend.

GROOVIN

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and slippery rocks, with the steep inclines testing not only physical strength, but also mental resolve. Conversations faded into quiet contemplation as runners focused on their breathing and the rhythmic sounds of footsteps on the ground. Camaraderie surfaced intermittently with words of encouragement echoing throughout the trails. The mountain air felt sharp, bracing against the laborious effort of our bodies.

Fatigue really began to set in near the end of lap two, replete with the familiar aches craving for comfort. It was here that the true spirit of ultra-running seemed to unveil itself. Many runners slowed down to acknowledge their struggling companions, offering words of hope and laughter, reminding one another of the shared victories ahead. The power of community shone brightly through the rain and fatigue, reinforcing the idea that this race was more than just a personal achievement, it was a collective challenge.

As the 50K runners endured the final lap, you could feel the cas-

cade of emotions — nearly defeated by exhaustion yet holding onto hope and exhilaration at the knowledge of nearing the finish line.

For all, crossing the finish line feels surreal.

Cheers erupted as each runner was greeted with medals, cold water and the pride of knowing they all journeyed through their limits. The sense of achievement radiated, linking everyone in silent admiration of our shared hardships.

Groovin in the Aspens ultra-marathon and trail runs are not just a test of physical strength, but a beautiful reminder of community, resilience and the triumph of the human spirit. Come join us next year: the mountains await our return.

Stevie Sanchez is a locally raised athlete and business owner who fell in love with endurance sports, especially cycling. He is passionate about providing events to the community that give both adults and children opportunities to come together, push their limits, have fun and support one another.

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