

HIGH COUNTRY RUNNING

Western States, Leadville 100 and Flagstaff memories

BY RICH BOSTON
Special to the Daily Sun

Having left Flagstaff 25 years ago, I've enjoyed following this column, and recently it stirred up memories of my ultramarathoning days.

In 1983, when I entered the Western States (WS) Trail 100, I was a marathoner living in Nebraska, completing two ultras, but not on trails. Working on the Black Mesa Archaeological Project, I lived in a tent and took showers from 55-gallon barrels. I got up before work to do my daily run, and weekends were for long runs.

Once parking my van along Highway 160, I ran 10 miles east, returned to the van for water, then ran 10 miles westward when it started hailing at mile 35. I took shelter under the old Peabody Coal conveyor belt over Highway 160 before finishing 40 miles.

Another weekend, I drove into Flagstaff for

supplies and parked at Arizona Snowbowl. I didn't have a map, so I zig-zagged up the ski slope. It was mid-June and the grass and wildflowers were tall. At the top of the slope, I saw a trail by the lifts and followed it to the summit of Mount Humphreys. The run down was a controlled fall. I was hooked on Flagstaff trail running.

Ready for Western States, I went out too fast and dropped at mile 75. A couple of years later — and much wiser — I earned my belt buckle. This was all long before their lottery and "Golden" ticket entry system.

I moved to Flagstaff in 1990 to attend Northern Arizona University for graduate school and knowing I could fine-tune my ultramarathoning.

In 1996, I entered the Leadville 100 and recruited a crew for the grueling race. My ex-wife, Ruth, was an archaeologist and runner, so I could count on her. Next on my list was my

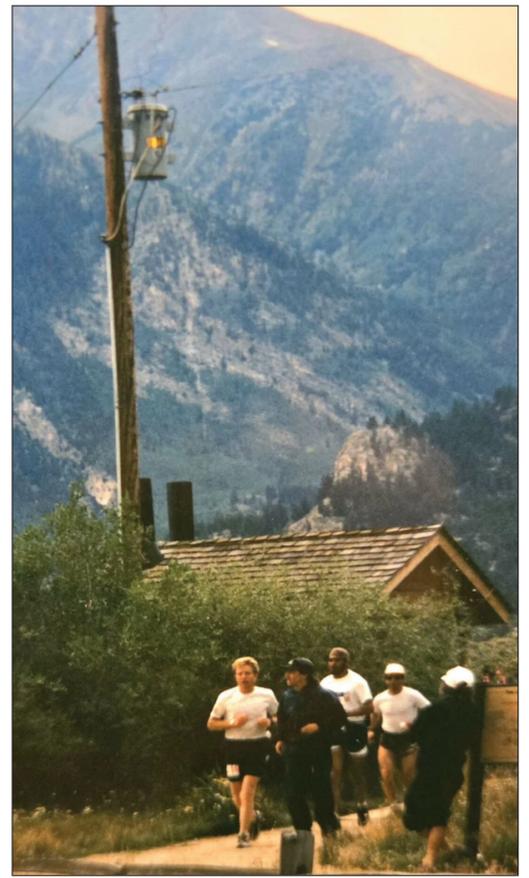
friend and fellow archaeologist, Neil Weintraub. When I asked him, Neil said, "Hell yeah," and volunteered his ex-wife, Shara, a biological anthropologist and runner, too. I remember humoring myself that I created the first all-anthropological crew in the history of ultras. Heck, maybe it still is!

On race day, I again went out too fast. When Neil joined me at Twin Lakes, mile 62.5, I was trashed. As we headed into the overnight hours, we mixed running and walking. When my stomach soured, I told Neil I needed to take a nap. While that normally would have ended my race, Neil's gentle coaxing helped me arise, and our death march continued into the night.

After Neil handed me off to Shara, we mostly walked 15 painstaking miles, mostly downhill. Shara's chattiness kept my mind off my misery and that paired

with slowing down, I began to feel better. My ex-wife planned to guide me to the finish, but during that last leg, I remarkably recovered, and within the first mile I was running too fast for Ruth. Nearing the 30-hour cutoff, Ruth told me to go ahead. As daylight approached, I got faster. My finish time was slower than planned at 29:20:48, but I didn't care; mission accomplished!

Rich Boston spent eight years in the Marines, including a tour in Vietnam. He was an avionics design engineer and then returned to school to become an archaeologist. He started running before joining the Marines and never stopped. Rich has completed 99 marathons, 50 ultras, one full Ironman and 30 shorter triathlons. Today, he lives and runs in Fruita, Colorado. Rachel Smith is a mom of two amazing daughters, a professional runner and the coordinating editor of this column. She



COURTESY

Rich Boston is joined by his pacer, Neil Weintraub, at Twin Lakes (62.5 miles) during the 1996 Leadville 100.

wishes you all the best in 2026 and asks you to share your running-related story to the column by emailing her at rachsneid18@gmail.com.

EDDEN

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He estimated that he took a total of two and a half hours of breaks — which was probably two hours more than anyone else. It wasn't about being the fastest. Edden was competing against himself and his limits.

Edden planned to run a fast 50 miles so he could walk the final 50 if he needed to. Thanks to him meeting other ultrarunners throughout the race, however, he learned that walking at that point hurt more than running.

"I think the real memories from the race would be all the friends I made along the way," Edden said. "Those memories will stick to me more than anything else in the race."

He recalled meeting someone at an aid station about halfway through, telling him his story about being a 17-year-old running his first race by himself. That same person was waiting for him at the finish line to congratulate him.

Preparing for Coldwater Rumble

Edden's journey to running Coldwater Rumble began about a year ago when he was incentivized to train for a marathon-distance run.

"I had never run more than maybe two miles in my life," Edden said. "I made like a funny, maybe \$5 bet with a friend that I could train from January to March and then run a marathon in under five hours."

He ran an unofficial



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Luke Edden gives a thumbs-up while running the Coldwater Rumble 100-mile race at Estrella Mountain Regional Park in Goodyear Jan. 17.

personal marathon at Buffalo Park. It included stops for food and water. He finished a marathon distance in under four hours.

That was the extent of Edden's running for a little while. He worked over the summer and then transitioned to his senior season of high school, where he led the Coconino boys golf team to its first Grand Canyon Region tournament victory in program history. He also made the state tournament for the first time.

The longtime golfer still had an itch for running. Following the end of the fall golf season, he used it as an outlet to stay busy. He began eyeing 50-mile races in the spring for his ultramarathon debut.

His training process was as grassroots as it could get.

"I was going to try and drop bags around the City of Flagstaff and run around like that," Edden said. "My mom had a friend come by who's a big runner, and he told me he was training for a 100-miler in January."

After a few weeks of training, Edden's mind shifted to the Coldwater Rumble. He signed

up for the race in November, at a time when he hadn't trained since March.

"I really wanted more of a challenge for myself, and I knew I could push myself to do better," Edden said. "I also found that running kind of helped calm me down."

Edden ballparked that his training equated to about 50 miles in November and 80 miles in December. He ran the same trail by his house three to four times per week. The weeks leading up to the race in January were when he really picked up. Edden went on his longest run of 31 miles. He felt terrible and only ran five the next day. He recovered and did another marathon-length run on Jan. 10, exactly one week before the race.

"Going into the race, I really had no idea what my body would feel like after mile 30," Edden said.

By the time he got to mile 50, the sun was starting to set and Edden felt pretty good about continuing. He could have done the 50K race with no problem, so he was glad he chose the 100-mile race.

"I really saw no one out there for like the



LET'S WANDER PRODUCTIONS, COURTESY

Luke Edden competes in the Coldwater Rumble 100-mile race at Estrella Mountain Regional Park in Goodyear Saturday, Jan. 17.

Finishing Coldwater Rumble

When Daniel Diaz, an ultrarunner with Peak Life Now and a friend of Edden's mom, told Edden he was running Coldwater Rumble, he had never heard of it before.

Edden did not have a set time in mind to finish all 100 miles. He just told himself he was going to do it.

"The one thing I told myself going into it is that I would not quit on the mental battle," Edden said. "What I really heard was that the physical battle is there. Your feet will hurt, your knees will hurt, but what will hurt more is your mind."

The final 8 miles were grueling. The sun was rising again and Edden was freezing from the night. He wore pants and a cotton sweatshirt during the night. His pants didn't fit in his running bag, so he had to tie them around his waist and keep the sweatshirt on.

"I really saw no one out there for like the

three hours it took me to do those last miles," Edden said. "I was in so much pain from the sun hitting me. Everything from my feet and my knees, I couldn't even run."

He ran out of water with about 4 miles to go, all while sporting a thick sweatshirt in the Valley heat.

By the time he got to the Horse Thief aid station, the final one before the finish line, Edden could not get food down.

"It was a pain that I never felt, but it was also like I've never been more proud of myself before," Edden said.

The achievement started to hit him once he saw the finish line on the horizon. He picked up a heavier jog for the first time since running out of water. Edden's dad and sister drove down from Flagstaff that morning at 8 a.m. to come see him finish.

At the moment, Edden said he had no plans to do another one anytime soon.

"I told my mom when

I was taking the last lap, 'If I ever tell you I'm signing up for one of these ever again, please take my phone from me and burn it. Do not let me ever do it again.'" Edden said.

He relayed that same message to his dad when he saw him at the finish line. After taking some time to reflect and recover, Edden remains open to doing another race eventually. Edden will return to work in March before starting his freshman year at Northern Arizona University in the fall.

"I would go back for the people," Edden said. "I wouldn't go back for the run. I wouldn't run it again, but I really loved meeting the people. Like, you meet the coolest people out there."

Edden plans on being an assistant coach for the Coconino golf team as a way to stay around the sport. Time will tell what happens next in his ultrarunning career, if he wants to run another race again.

LOCAL

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Division, lost to No. 19 McClintock Thursday night. Shifting back to the 4A Conference tourney, Salpointe Catholic reclaimed the top seed in the state.

Walden Grove entered the 4A play-in round ranked No. 15 but shifted up the bracket due to losses by three

teams ranked above it. The Red Wolves ranked just ahead of Flagstaff's Grand Canyon Region rivals Mingus Union and Lee Williams

Wrestling

Riding five individual title winners, the Coconino Panthers surged to a team victory at the Division III Section One tournament last weekend.

Coconino, which saw

an impressive 13 wrestlers advance to the DIII state tournament set for this weekend, finished with a score of 262 to topple runner-up Cactus Shadow, which scored 193 points, and third-place finisher Agua Fria at 127.5 points.

From the featherweights to the heavyweights, the Panthers owned the mats hosting at Agua Fria High School on Saturday. Xavier Vega

contributed 23.5 points to his team's championship effort, winning his 106-pound weight class with a technical fall in the final round, Thor Kirkham added 24 points courtesy of his title at 120 pounds and Logan Zebrowski produced 25 points on the way to claiming the crown at 165 pounds.

Joseph Stewart locked horns with a Cactus Shadows wrestler in

the final round at 144 pounds and won by a 6-4 decision, contributing 22.5 points to Coconino. Wrestling at 215 pounds for the Panthers, Gavin Moran pinned all his opponents on the way to taking the top spot of the podium and recorded 26 points for his team.

Isaac Cattanach (285 pounds), Michael Dries (150), Monte Skinner (113), Ryan Welborn (126) and Treston Crane

(175) all came away with silver medals for the Panthers. Kaden Clinger finished third at 157 pound, and teammates Boden Kazlo (132) and Daniel Villas (190) punched their tickets to the state tourney with their fourth-place results.

The state tournament takes place this weekend at the Arizona Veterans Memorial Coliseum in Phoenix.