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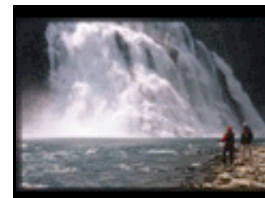
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SEND TO A FRIEND



FEEDBACK



Return to Badwater Ferg Hawke takes fourth in Ultramarathon

By **Steven Addison**
Staff Reporter

Jul 28 2006

Third time is supposed to be a dream. For Ferg Hawke, it must have seemed a nightmare.

Hawke was in Death Valley, Calif., this week, competing in his third straight Badwater Ultramarathon, an epic 217-kilometre non-stop road race through one of the hottest places on Earth.

It's a competition the legendary athlete has twice finished runner-up in – coming within eight minutes of victory in 2004 and setting the fourth fastest time on record in 2005.

However, Hawke – who finished fourth in this year's contest – realized early on this wasn't going to be his day in the sun.

"I didn't feel real frisky. I didn't have a lot of jump," the 48-year-old South Surrey resident said Tuesday.

"I'd been feeling a bit of a bug for the last couple of weeks. I was still feeling the effects. My throat was still sore... and I felt kind of sluggish."

More than 80 competitors began the race Monday morning, starting in three waves. As a two-time runner-up, Hawke was placed in the final wave, which set out at 10 a.m.

Battling 125-degree heat and 20 to 25 per cent humidity, Hawke was within minutes of the leader at the first checkpoint, the aptly named Furnace Creek Ranch – a tiny outpost at kilometre 28. Hawke passed that time-station in two hours, forty minutes.

Twelve hours later, after running the equivalent of two and a half marathons, Hawke entered the third checkpoint. He was now in fourth place, more than an hour off the pace set by the leader.

"I was struggling. I just kept trying to push myself. There were some thoughts of 'Am I going to finish?'"

Still, he soldiered on, distracting himself by counting metal highway markers placed about 75 m apart on the roadside. He'd

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run three, then walk three, then run three more.

By 10 a.m. Tuesday, a full 24 hours after Hawke started, the first athlete had already crossed the finish line. Hawke still had 27 kilometres left, mostly uphill.

Starting in Death Valley, which sits 85 m below sea level, climaxing half way up the highest mountain in the continental U.S., and traversing three mountain ranges, Badwater may be the toughest endurance test on the planet. Competitors must complete the course in 60 hours to be considered an official finisher. Those who cross in 48 hours receive a commemorative belt buckle.

Hawke admits this year's race was unlike any challenge he's faced in his impressive career, thanks to energy-sapping humidity.

"How the body cools itself is through the sweat evaporating from your skin. With the humidity there's so much more moisture in the air and the moisture doesn't want to evaporate from your skin," he said.

Hawke crossed the finish line 28 hours, 45 minutes after he started, accompanied by more than a dozen family, friends and

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Dean Karnazes

Motivational
Speaker,
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crew members. Last year's winner Scott Jurek took top spot again, completing the course in 25 hours, 41 minutes. Dean Karnazes, who narrowly beat Hawke in 2004, finished tenth, in 33 hours, 33 minutes.

Hawke has ruled out a return to Badwater next year.

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