

Laboring Leadville

Last week, at the halfway point during the Leadville 100, my goose was cooked. I had just traversed the infamous Hope Pass and with its passing my energy level was nonexistent. My college friend, Dr. Steven, and I were running this event together. We were both exhausted. The aid station was an oasis – we were assisted there by Jodi and Ludi. They are both accomplished ultra-runners and experienced crew. Instantly, they took command of what I deemed a dire situation. They provided nutrition, hydration, massage, encouragement and just plain good energy. The impact was effective. Next, Andre stepped in. Andre Chaves – Founder and Director of the acclaimed [DOWN TO RUN](#) is 160 lbs of liquid nitrogen. He’s fast, mentally cognizant of anything that’s occurring, and strong. Andre’s disposition is inspiring. He conveyed a kindness that made me feel connected. He is genuine in his commitment to making a difference. When Jodi said, “It’s time to get moving,” somehow we answered the bell.

The race was on, 50 miles to go with the force of Andre (a cross between a Clydesdale and a panther) leading the charge. The race was difficult. The climbs, the descents, the falling and getting back up all exact a toll on the body. Our goal was to hit intermediate targets, in this case make it to the next aid station roughly 10 miles away. It was a race from aid station to aid station.

Andre never wavered in his enthusiasm. He’d say, “You are doing great; you are running well.” I would look up at him and smile. My thoughts to myself were more along the lines that he must be crazy. Minutes turned into miles and miles turned into more miles. The weather changed from cold to colder. Each section of the route seemed different than its predecessor. We crossed hills, mountains, creeks and rivers. Our sneakers were wet, then dry, and it was dusty and smoky. It was necessary to change footwear along the way. Each aid station was a grand occurrence. In the wee hours of the morning, after being awake for over 24 hours, our crew became celestial. They made every decision and I complied. Andre said, “Let’s finish this race and get a belt buckle.” I didn’t say a word, yet responded by moving forward. 90 miles were behind us. I told Andre that we never have to do those miles again. The last 5 miles were on normal terrain. We picked up the pace and soon crossed the Leadville 100 finish line - it was over.



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