

HAZEL'S KNEE KNACKER RED BADGE OF COURAGE

Knee Knacker North Shore Trail Run – July 8, 2006

(12 KK training logs and tips – May 21 to July 2, 2006)

For her 50th birthday, Hazel wanted to challenge herself by doing the Ironman Race, as some of her friends have done. However, I told her that it takes a solid year of training in 3 disciplines and she just doesn't have that kind of time. So she switched to the Knee Knacker race hosted by the Northshore Ultramarathon Trail Society (N.U.T.S.) instead.... and got in. I was to be her coach since I did it for *my* 50th birthday challenge. The cut off time is 10 hours instead of the 16 in the Ironman Race. That gives you an idea of commitment in training and finishing. How sad if DNF.

However, in today's first official training run, we discovered some things that made her think again. First of all, her first training run gave her an idea that her slow marathon time is a problem. The group disappeared shortly after the start from Cleveland Dam (to Cypress Lookout & back via the Baden Powell Trail). That means I have to accompany her so that she doesn't get lost in the trails. So today, we went on our own planning to run East on the Baden Powell Trail from Grouse parking lot to Mountain Highway; and then west to Mt. Fromm and up to Grouse Mountain and down via the BCMC trail (or take the tram if lazy!).

It only took about ½ hour ascending Grouse part way and coming down to discover that she has "lazy" eyes & legs. Trail running is significantly different from street running. One has to process a lot of information by the eyes/brain/leg because of the slopes, roots, protruding rocks, gravel, leaves, smooth surfaces, and even snow sometimes. One cannot be "lazy" or be a klutz. Well, her first fall was pretty bad, tripping on a rock, scraping her left arm, bleeding.

Going down a very steep downward pitch towards Mosquito Creek, we discovered that she gets dizzy from vertigo. She even got dizzy looking at the Google Earth site while looking at the new start of the Race (see the neat website: If you have [Google Earth](#), try out this [cool kml file](#).). Like ball bearings, the gravel just sent her crashing down and scraping her left thigh. Covered in dust, it was not pretty.

Maybe it was because of her upset stomach and the shakes before the start of the run, she felt quite discouraged after the second fall. "I don't think I can do it" which I responded, "Don't give up mentally; your body will not move without your mind." In any event, at least for that day, she lost her appetite for running and we simply did fast hiking instead. We returned to the parking lot after 3.5 hours with a distance far shorter than planned. In fact, during the descent to the car, a rock gave way under her and she fell on her bum. This time, only her ego was bruised. Poor thing.

There is a great difference between hiking (one foot on the ground at all times) and running (both feet off the ground at regular intervals). It takes 40% more energy for the latter on moderate levels of exertion. Furthermore, there is a great difference between running on the trail and pavement as listed below:

1. Need more aggressive treads on shoes for trail running
2. Need 2 water bottles (or Camelbacks) instead of one (no fountains enroute)
3. Need to be observant for landmarks as not to get lost (many intersecting trails)
4. Need to navigate over many tripping/skidding hazards (rocks, roots, leaves, etc.)
5. Need know how to go down steep terrains (where most falls occur)
6. Need to know how to "sense" the ground before landing with full weight

7. Need strong tendons & ligaments to prevent ankle/knee twist injuries on uneven surfaces
8. Need to look up for decal signs and look down for hazards as required
9. Need to know when to use fuel gel to prevent "hitting the wall"
10. Need flexibility, strength, endurance, and mental toughness to complete a trail ultramarathon event

These cannot be learned intellectually but only experientially. No one said it was going to be easy. "No pain, no gain" becomes literal as I found out with my own NUTS events. I fell many times on my training runs. It's part of the learning curve. What doesn't break you makes you stronger. Like all-important things in life, setting a goal and reaching it is a measure of success and satisfaction. Hopefully, that will be the case for my dear wife.

Happy 50th year on this planet and may your dreams come true.

John Wong
May 21, 2006

May 23, 2006:

Thanks for many well wishes and words of encouragement. Hazel did much better today, without her stomach upset and the shakes to begin with. Four hours of mixed rolling hills and steep terrain & NO fall!! Amazing change of fortune. No pain, lots of gain. She was running much stronger too.

The new start is much prettier than the old Eagleridge start, which is plagued with lawsuits and civil disobedience. The H U G E trees inside Cypress Park along the Nelson Creek were truly awesome and beautiful. Soon, we crossed over a pseudo-bridge across Whyte Creek and headed towards Whyte Lake, which is part of the watershed area. We have temporary passage. Within ½ hour, the trail joined up with the old Baden Powell trail, which we ascended. We went up a creek bed, through a vast forest, up a scree, then up very steep pitch of terrain, steeper than Grouse Grind. We came to another flatter area where we have to cross another creek, before coming face-to-face with yet another steep pitch until we got to the field of big boulders just below the Eagle Bluff. That took 2 hours from the start and we had lunch before heading back. The breeze was cool and the murmuring water sounds so calming. It was like Nature's Spa. The Old Man's Beard growing on the trees signify that the air is 99% pure or else they don't survive. We just inhaled this essence to clean our lungs and oxygenate our cells. We were rejuvenated.

Going down the steep terrain was a challenge but surprisingly, Hazel learned fast and had no problem today, slow as it may. We hugged the ancient trees once more we went back to the start of the run for a return time of 2 hours. We ran the flat and rolling portions and hiked the rest. We felt strong and I was relieved that Hazel didn't fall.

At this rate, she may be OK after all.

John & Hazel

Ps: more trail running/hiking tips:

11. Snack bar containing both carbohydrate and protein is best
 12. Water must be consumed at a ratio of 4:1 to carbohydrate
 13. Ensure the electrolyte is not too concentrated as to cause stomach-ache
 14. Dress to temperature and condition
 15. Regulate core temperature using layering method
 16. Learn to plant foot for up and down terrains
 17. Be careful during spots of sun/shadow interplay
 18. Hold arms out when walking on logs to cross creek
 19. Curl toes in when running downhill
 20. Have plenty of pasta, water, rest, and sleep prior to event
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May 28, 2006

Today's run confirm that her 3-fall day was an anomaly. Hazel did not fall for the entire 5 hours of the run from Lynn Canyon to Cypress Lookout and back to the house in British Properties.

The slight shower made the run cool even as we ascended the steep portions from Lynn Canyon Road as well as from the Mountain Highway. The rest were rolling hill until we were on the Grouse portion again of steeper ups & downs. However, the steepest portion remains from Bonnymuir to Millstream Road. Further on, I was amazed at the new bridges built over insignificant wet spots. In comparison, the two branches of the Mackay is steep and treacherous (no hand-holds), yet no bridge present. The bridge over Mosquito Creek is very nice & the new one over Abelard Canyon (in memory of Lester Barth) is also nice. These were not present when I ran the race and we have to navigate the creek v-e-r-y carefully over slippery rocks with flowing water.

A whole bunch of trees on the sidewall of Brothers Creek cascaded into the creek and a new set of heavy-duty steps were installed. It seems like West Van is maintaining the trail better than North Van even when the traffic is greater in the latter. An exception is the portion East of the Abelard Bridge where the North Shore Mountain Bike Association (NSMBA) did a fabulous job of putting paving stones on the trail for their bike use.

Hazel is quite happy about her prospect: the ability to finish the race at least even if it may be over 10 hours. Time will tell as we train more during the month of June.

John & Hazel

Ps: more running/hiking tips:

21. For both hydration and food, more frequency, less volume is better than vice versa
22. Snack before you get hungry; drink before you get thirsty
23. Endurance is at the expense of speed and vice versa; pace between these limits
24. If you can talk comfortably, you are not working hard enough; if you are hyperventilating, you are working too hard. A balance is needed
25. In order to finish within 10 hours, one must run on flats and slight uphills/downhills; for the elites, they must run even steeper uphills/downhills (5 hour finish)

26. When landing on steeper terrain, choose an uneven spot (e.g.: ½ rock, 1/2 soil) to prevent slippage
 27. Careful not to let parallel roots trap your feet
 28. Keep your feet dry by using Gortex shoes or socks
 29. Use lubricant or tape to reduce friction and blisters
 30. Use visualization of running the trails prior to sleeping
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June 4, 2006

Today, we decided to cover the finish line starting from Cleveland Dam, the halfway point. The weather was again a bit damp & cool – perfect condition for running. The initial part was a repeat until we get to the Lynn Canyon and beyond. We had a chance to really run along the Lynn Valley Road until we turned to cross the Pipe Line Bridge to the Lower Seymour Conservation Area. The \$7B Water Filtration Project is still going full tilt. Someone complained that tax dollars are being spent because a logging company raped the watershed causing dirty discharge into the water!

I think the portion towards and going down to the Seymour River is the least improved portion of the Baden Powell Trail. The steep portions were quite tricky until we get to the actual stairs just prior to the bridge crossing. On the other side, the trail was quite muddy, again, without much upkeep. After Hyannis Drive, the trail was OK until we got to the “Seymour Grind”. This is mentally one of the hardest parts because you are tired by now and the trail is going uphill relentlessly until we get to the Old Buck Trail. This area is poorly marked and one can easily get take the wrong trail.

In contrast, the portion between the Mt. Seymour Parkway and Indian River Road is the best maintained and easiest (slight incline all the way) of the entire distance. After that, we have to go up/down quite a few times to cross over many creeks flowing into Indian Arms. However, nice stairs/bridges were built that weren't there before. It was a relief to finally see Panorama Drive, Deep Cove, and the finish point of this arduous race. We were satisfied that it took 5 hours, even though at that rate, Hazel will not finish her race in the 10-hour allotment because the first ½ is physically tougher than the last half, although mentally the reverse is true. However, she still has almost a month to train!

Our test of snacks was successful: mixed banana chips (potassium & carbohydrate)/peanuts (sodium & protein) with lots of water. The systematic procedure is drinking liquid every ½ hour and snack every hour of running/hiking.

John & Hazel

Ps: more running/hiking tips:

31. Careful about caffeine because it is both a stimulant and diuretic
32. Swing your arms parallel to direction of travel while running for the pumping action
33. Use high glycemic food while running and low glycemic food when not
34. Choose “going around it” rather than straight up/down a difficult spot
35. Always step on the same spot: before rock going down & after rock going up
36. Don't run on wet board unless “wired”, “grooved”, or “stripped”

37. Trail etiquette: Uphill person always yield to the downhill person
 38. Test out your snacks for optimal performance (eg: mixed banana chips/peanuts)
 39. Systematically drink fluid/eat snack at regular intervals to your comfort level
 40. Vary the different muscles used to minimize fatigue
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June 06, 2006

Now that Hazel had learned well how to plant her feet safely on the ground, the next most important test is to see how she has learned the trail visuals in order to stay on course and not get lost. Not only that, she has to run alone as sometimes she will be in the actual race. Her assignment is to run from our home in West Vancouver to Deep Cove within 6 hours.

She was a bit restless in the night because she was afraid, not only from getting lost but also from predators – bears and men. However, by daybreak, she was all psyched up to go. She went off while I lazily went on the computer to do my usual email checks and send-offs. After that, I had another coffee to along with the Vancouver Sun. Unfortunately more bad news. That's why some people refuse to read it.

After I changed, the phone rang. It was Hazel. She was having a water break sitting on a bench at the intersection of the Baden Powell and St. George's trails. I told her I was about to drive out to Deep Cove and run west to meet her somewhere on the trail, as agreed ahead of time.

Today was warmer than other days and a short sleeve shirt was warranted. The run up from Panorama Drive was quite laborious because my body had not warmed up yet. However, the creek crossings were nice. I counted 10 bridges, not unlike the beautiful Capilano-Pacific Trail where we trained on many times in the past. It wasn't until the part between the Indian River Road to Mt Seymour Road that I finally got my second wind, just in time to enter the steeper Old Buck Road area with many bike routes criss-crossing.

I got to the top of the Seymour Grind and still no Hazel. I descended to almost the bottom before I saw her weaving up the narrow trail. She's been going for 4.5 hours and I for 1.5 hours. She was going stronger than 2 days ago... a good sign of her quick recovery. Everything went smoothly – no falls, eating/drinking on schedule. She had learned well and her confidence is building up. I can now call her "bright eyes with agile feet." She has mastered the dance with the landscape. The crash course (pun intended) was a blessing in disguise. Now she can take friends out on the trail without worrying about getting lost. At Deep Cove, she was 3 minutes ahead of her 6-hour allotment, just in time to return to take Blaise to his Life Guard duties at the WV Aquatic Centre. Her time is finally at par for this portion of the race. She really enjoyed her heightened self-esteem. She's already talking about the Sunday long run.

John & Hazel

Ps: more running/hiking tips:

41. Always stay in the comfort zone for long distance events; don't accumulate lactic acid
42. Massage and stretch at the onset of muscle cramps
43. Always keep the "gas" topped up; never let it go empty

44. The steeper the terrain, the smaller the step, up and down
 45. For a faster pace, lean forward a bit going up & down (to take advantage of gravity)
 46. Pay attention to landmarks so that on race day, you know you are on track
 47. Too little or too much exercise causes tiredness; find a happy medium
 48. Cut your toe nails to prevent black toes
 49. Focusing on the point of landing will allow your brain to adjust to the terrain
 50. With developed muscles, ligament, and tendons, one can usually recover from a near-fall
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June 11, 2006

Today, we wanted to explore the western route and specifically the higher elevation portion of Hollyburn Ridge and Black Mountain to see if the snow is still present.

We started from our house and it was uphill all the way. Our first ½ hour water break was at the junction of the east-west Skyline Trail & north-south Baden Powell Trail. After that, it didn't take us long to get to the Crossover Trail and later Blue Gentian Lake Trail. We past a lone lady who saw a deer and coyote nearby. We had our snack breaks on the hour. In the cabin areas, it is easy to get lost. A narrow, obscure trail branches off and joins onto the Grand National x-c ski trail. Even at the lower level, there were patches of snow on the ski trails. The snow/ice on First Lake is now gone but the Wells Gray Trail is 50% covered in snow still. We took a pit stop on the Power Line Trail to take advantage of the outhouse.

Anything above the Power Line was covered in full snow. On the Pacific Trail, we wasted a lot of energy and time on slippage and going sideways with our running shoes. The couple in front of us went through a snow bridge and ended up in the creek below. On Romstad, the Trail was getting steeper. For some reason, I was inclined to go left to have a look. Sure enough, it was the connection to the BP Trail. A good thing, we could have easily missed it.

Going down was steep and very difficult to navigate if not for the footprints on the snow. We also didn't make it as far as we would have liked because we had to rush home to get the boys to their doubles team badminton tournament at Parkgate Community Centre at the base of Seymour Mountain. They are sure busy. They had their piano recital yesterday. Sometimes, it makes me think whether parents live their lives vicariously through their kids. One thing I'm sure: they don't have time to get into trouble!

Going back was kind of fun on the snow because we can slide a bit while running. We gained back some lost time going up. Back in the wooded trails, we got a bit lost but found the re-connection to the main trail using landmarks. I was pleased that Hazel didn't fall at all even on the slippery snow. She really has graduated from foot planting. The eggs worked out well. They were tasty and moist. One problem: the new patch of peanuts was not salted and I sweat a lot more this time around. We also forgot our sunglasses and the snow was blinding at times.

John & Hazel

Ps: more running/hiking tips:

51. Stay to the middle of a snow trail; the sides have more hollows below
52. Bring sunglasses, cap, and sunscreen especially for snowy terrains
53. Bring/try out the Yak-Tracks (fitted on running shoes) for snow trails

54. Bring toilet paper and know your outhouses, especially for females
 55. Know your water stations. Carry at least ½ litre or more water in between
 56. Using moleskin, tape up blister-prone areas of foot
 57. Some people take Tylenol or Advil for inflammation. Check with doctor first.
 58. Know the new starting point/route well due to the Eagle Ridge construction
 59. Watch out for new route on Cypress due to Olympic construction
 60. To recover fast from endurance events, use combine protein & carbohydrate asap
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June 13, 2006

Today was a crazy day. It was coming down in buckets just before 7am. "Do I have to go?" came to mind. That's why we have goals and objectives. We just do it without question. However, after I spilled my morning coffee, I knew it was going to be a tough day!

We started at Westport Road just below the #1 Highway and follow the Trans-Canada Trail North towards Black Mountain. As before, we enter the Baden Powell trail after ½ hour and we continue to climb with few exceptions of flatlands. After the scree came the first of 3 very steep sections; then before and after the rock boulder section. Hazel did OK at the boulder field until her feet got trapped between 2 rocks and when she pulled to release, she left some precious DNA behind (ouch!). Good thing I got some band-aid handy. After that, she was not doing as well, especially the last steep section. It was actually quite scary. The Eagle Bluff turned out to be all right. The Bluff was clear but the sun could not penetrate the thick fog below. We could only see the water in the distance.

Then came the crazy part. We start hitting snow and some parts of the trail were under water from the melting snow. We had to bushwhack and go around these newly created ponds. It was tough and time consuming. All our times got thrown out the window. For the second time in her training, Hazel was discouraged. I told her that the trail would be better on race day (yeah, right.) Further on near the Cougar Lakes, we had to navigate around deep mud. Once in a while we would miss and get our shoes muddy. Further still, the collapsing snow created quite an anxiety, not knowing when you will drop down to your crotch. At times, we have to search for red decals. In fact, we got lost and wasted much time. We ended up on a new ski run (?) before we could re-orientate ourselves again.

We continued down an old ski run and saw that the Baden Powell Trail was closed due to Olympic site work. In fact, the worker told us that the blasting would happen soon. We scrambled down to the parking lot and headed over to the dining building. A long blast signalled 2 minutes before the discharge. The workers all took cover under the roofline of the building and watched. Who could blame them? One just died yesterday while blasting at another Olympic venue, Callaghan Valley near Whistler. Ka-boom!! It was indeed a spectacular blast with TNT powder and rocks flying everywhere. It was a blast to watch it first hand!!

We had a leisurely lunch since our times are all weird. Tiredness must have been written on our face as a workman offered to take our garbage to the bin. Enroute home, we took on a new trail which was quite steep but pretty. By the time we got home, 6 ½ hours had transpired. We climbed over 1000 metres on the Black Mountain Grind and came down about 700 metres along the 20-kilometre route. We were due for a hot shower and a good rest!

John & Hazel

Ps: more running/hiking tips:

61. The first ½ km is very likely anaerobic because the oxygen has not circulated well yet
62. On a steep downhill, the vertical component can give you knee problems; the horizontal component will tend to make you fall down
63. Both too hard or too soft surface saps your energy
64. Careful on loose rocks on the scree; stay on the right hand side up the boulders
65. For stability on steep terrain, use all fours (like a mountain goat)
66. To avoid getting bushwhacked, don't follow too close to the person in front
67. In running through narrow trails, careful not to get impaled
68. On snow, stay away from tree wells and rock wells
69. Don't get your leg caught between 2 rocks
70. Carry some band-aids for a quick fix until you get to a first-aid station

June 18, 2006

Today, the entire group was doing the ¾ KK from start to Lynn Valley. We are doing the same except at a later time. This is the third time we have attacked Black Mountain, the most difficult part of the race. I decided to let Hazel go ahead of me to simulate the race conditions where may be alone most of the time. She had no problem. Even the steepest portion didn't scare her anymore. However, she is still slow at the big boulder scrambling area leading to Eagle Bluff. I told her to take the cracks rather than the smooth boulders for better footing.

Above Eagle Bluff, the trails on the Cougar Lake areas have less snow and the ponds have receded for an easier passage. We didn't get lost this time around. The black footprints on the white snow were quite noticeable. Nevertheless, it took about 3 hours to get to the top of Black Mountain. From there, we followed some deep groove parallel tracks in the snow and away we went down. It was a hoot!

When we got back up to the Gondola, the rest was all downhill to the parking lot. No blasting today so we didn't stay as long at the cafeteria. The melted snow uncovered a new entrance to the "Hollyburn Grind" from the parking lot up to the end of the patrolled Romstad X-C ski trail. With the snow melted, the trail was full of roots and much water. It was not an easy uphill climb. Coming down Romstad was similar, many parts became a swamp and we have to bushwhack again and it was time consuming.

At the end of the Grand National Trail, that was the last we saw of any remnants of snow. There rest were all down hill to Cleveland Dam. This part was so easy compare with the black monster at the beginning. This was so until the "Mini-Grouse Grind" portion. It was mentally tough because the legs were getting tired. Towards the ¾ mark, the trail was getting darker. We should have started earlier. When we ended, 10 hours have transpired. Two things were evident, we can last the allotted 10 hours time, and Hazel cannot finish the race in that allotted time. We will try again Tuesday for the last time and see if we could better this time, with an earlier start. I told Hazel the trail would be better on race day.

John & Hazel

Ps: more training/hiking tips:

71. To extend endurance, use a work:relief ratio of 10 (running/fast hiking) : 1 (walking)
72. Going up uses more the gastrocnemius; going down more quadriceps muscles
73. 2nd wind seems to come faster when the lung is forced to open, then a slower pace
74. Different activities solicit different muscles; seldom used ones will tired easily
75. Muscle strength comes from muscle fibre breakdown and rebuilding repeatedly
76. The running motto is: Eat to run and run to eat.
77. Order of importance for fuel: oxygen (stay aerobic), water, and glycogen (blood sugar)
78. The heart muscle uses these 3 fuels to beat continuously for an average of 3 billion contractions in the average life expectancy in Canada.
79. Supplementary fuels required for muscle contractions are Potassium, Sodium, Calcium
80. Breath in the living oxygen to clean the lungs; sweat out the toxins to help the liver

June 20, 2006

After hearing the birds chant their gratitude for another daybreak, I got up around 5:30am to make coffee, eggs, and wheat germ. I was able to send all my group study emails before 6am. I got an email back from my son in Toronto telling me to go back to bed! He said at my pace (KK training), he rather work than be retired. ☺ Hazel haven't had a good sleep before each training day because she was worried about running alone in the trail, as well as not being able to finish the race in 10 hours.

To give ourselves a break, we decided to run the last $\frac{3}{4}$ rather than the first $\frac{3}{4}$ of the route, thus leaving the Black Monster for another day. That made a whole lot of difference. For the first time, Hazel was able to jump the trail as if she was going through an obstacle course with kangaroo boots on. "What a nice day!" (she was feeling good) I said I promised to bring sunshine to her life. ☺ Sunshine makes everything sweet. The fact that Hazel can do two 35 km outings in 3 days shows that she is not going at her full capacity and thus can recover faster.

In the X-C ski trail area, I saw 2 adults holding a boy in the distant. Hazel contested that it could be a girl. As we approached closer, we burst into laughter. The "boy/girl" turned out to be a wheelbarrow with something sticking up. We may feel younger but Mother Nature knows better. In the deep woods, I can see the expanse of life from a seedling to ancient groves. I can also see the reflection of human life when I look at the bark/skin, cuts/burns/battle scars, mistletoes/fungus/disease, rotten log/corpse, and so on. It's a big canvas and every dot or streak is a lesson. In the silence, I was absorbing images all around and composing an essay in my head as I move through it.

At the Cleveland Dam, I saw my old friend Betty who used to be in my Y-running group. While my speed has going down, hers has going up, winning the Grouse Grind in her age category among other races. She reminded me that she walked up the Nancy Greene Way when I was doing the Knee Knacker 10 years ago for my 50th B-Challenge. She also said another group member, fast Heather just came back from running the Boston and finished the last $\frac{3}{4}$ in 7.5 hours. No wonder Hazel needed more time to do the same distance.

On the East side of the Grouse gravel lot, the whole place was filled with trucks and shiny new trailer homes for the movie stars and crew. They were shooting "*The Shooter*" with Danny Glover & company. The smell from the kitchen made us feel hungry. However, it

wasn't until we get to Mosquitoes Creek before we woofed down our eggs and snacks. Then it was time to bid Hazel a good run on her own to simulate more race conditions.

As she continued her way to Deep Cove another 4 hours away, I ran back to my house about 5 km West. The "reverse grind" (Millstream to the Dam) was steep and quite tough. The area around the Millstream sub-station, however had a profusion of white daisies and purple lupine that were stunning. It made the uphill struggle worthwhile.

As I got home, I saw that my garden had become an orphan. Weeds galore. Between planning for my Peru trip and this Knee Knacker training, I didn't even have much time to smell the roses. Maybe Jeremy is right about my pace. Good thing it is my choice. Besides, next Sunday is the last long training run and my Peru trip planning is almost done. Furthermore, the kids will be done with their final exams tomorrow and they can help out.

After shower and a late lunch, Hazel called from Mt. Seymour Parkway and said that she will be in Deep Cove in ½ hour. Wow, she *is* doing well today. I got there, picked up a couple of the famous Honey Donuts, and saw her waiting for me near the trail's end. Her total time was about 8.5 hours, a much improvement over her previous times, but looming at the opposite end, the Black Monster waits.

John & Hazel

Ps: more running/hiking tips:

81. Recognize the unique marking decals and ribbons used for your specific trail
82. To avoid tripping, lift feet higher when passing over higher obstacles (rock, root...)
83. Using the same muscle will tire you out more than using varied muscles
84. We often have to hug boulders going up and hug trees going down
85. The correct way to run downhill is not a straight line but weaving and jumping obstacles
86. If you feel your ankle twisting, quickly let the other leg assume most of your body weight
87. On a trail, you can eat and walk, but don't drink and walk with head tilted back
88. You can pick up a rock or stick when you see a bear, but don't run
89. Always listen to your body and pace/gauge accordingly
90. Don't damage the environment; don't litter

June 25, 2006

Hi again John,

Yes, there are cut-offs for each quarter:

9:00 am Cypress (3 hrs)

11:00 am Cleveland (2 hrs)

1:30 pm LSCR (2.5 hrs)

4:00 pm Panorama (2.5 hrs)

Your race course volunteer shift will be from 7:30 am - approx. 11:00 am when the sweeps come through your position on Bonnymuir and release you.

Bonnie, Volunteer Coordinator
2006 Knee Knacker

This email was both a disappointment and relief for Hazel. She was courageous but perhaps too ambitious. Most people do the ½ KK before doing the full distance. A friend told us that his friend finished the Ironman race under the 16 hour cut-off but failed to finish the KK under 10-hour cut-off. Hazel's problem is two fold: her fear of heights and of falling (now getting much better), and inadequate training (just 2 months), which is too late to do anything. Oh well, if nothing else, it will keep her fit for our August Machu Picchu 4-day trek.

Today, her goal was to go as fast as she can as if in a race to see if she can meet the cut-off times at Cypress parking lot and Cleveland Dam. It was a hot day, not bad in the shades but brutal in exposed areas. We found that we have to drink a lot more water than the ½ hour interval as noted before. The heat bothered me more so than it did Hazel.

Hazel wasn't going to give up the race without a fight. Even at the start at West Port Road, I can see her steely resolve. She's been visualizing the route the whole week and she had a dream that she was going to finish the race. By the time we connected to the Baden Powell trail, we have already cut-off 5 minutes from the previous week. At the scree, 15 minutes; at the top of Eagle Bluff, 30 minutes where we had a quick lunch. We maintained similar speed at the Cougar lakes area because the snow and mud were still present, although a lot less. The boardwalk became visible for the first time leading to Cabin Lake.

We got to the top of Black Mountain in 2.75 hours. A big improvement. On the way down, Hazel took a tumble on the snow but she got up quickly and ran some more. She was on a roll no matter what. Mud, puddle, we don't care anymore. Time is of the essence. By the time we got to the Gondolas, it was 3 hours plus 4 minutes. We ran all the way down the ski trails continuously to the parking lot in 14 minutes giving us a 3:18 duration time. I believe with the trail improving every week, she would be able to meet the 3-hour cut-off time. It was quite satisfying to see her shave off more than 2 hours from the first time she did this ¼ not that long ago. She said she loves her personal trainer (even sleeps with him)!

Now the next challenge is to get to Cleveland Dam in two hours, perhaps a harder task because she is not that fast on the downhill. However, even with some snow, she was able to get up to the upper Romstad in ½ hour. Now for the first time, the actual BP trail beside the Romstad is exposed most of the way, and that gave us more advantage because Romstad is now covered with thick bushes. Below the Power Line, there was no more snow to be seen and we were able to run more than before. I had to wash my face/head in a stream to cool down.

Once into the forest again below the Grand National, we were losing altitude fast by jumping obstacles in the trail. Hazel was getting the hang of it. However, it was a long ways and going down/coming up steep creek banks such as Brothers Creek slowed us down somewhat. By the time Hazel got to Cleveland dam, it was 2:40, a whole 40 minutes over the cut-off time. We have to do this first ½ one more time on Tuesday to improve the time even more.

John & Hazel

Ps: more running/hiking tips:

91. Do not wear sunglasses in the shaded trails
92. Drink more water in hotter days (every 20 minutes)

93. To cool off, wash face/head with running creek water
94. On hot days, re-apply sunscreen if necessary
95. On steep parts, breath more deeply to get more oxygen in to the lungs/cells
96. Once in a while take a deep breath and exhale completely to clean the lungs
97. visualize the entire trail everyday before starting off
98. 4 key criteria: safety (foot planting), staying on trail, conditioning (fitness), & skills
99. The 6 S's of sports training are: stamina, speed, strength, suppleness, skill, and spirit
100. Have at least one start the same time as the race

June 27, 2006

The birds' chanting woke me up again at 5:00am to welcome the dawn. We wanted an early start to avoid running in the heat. Today, we decided to focus on the second ¼ 's time from Cypress downhill parking lot to Cleveland Dam since her downhill skills needed improvement.

We now have to pay for parking at Cypress. The earthwork for the Olympic snowboard/free style run is well underway. A whole strip of the hillside is now bare. Inside the trails, they are dryer and we waste less time going from side to side to miss the mud. At the twin plank bridge, I asked Hazel to use one plank because they had different harmonics. With the warmer temperature come the bugs and spider webs. It was like Lilliputians trying to capture Gulliver. Hazel got the bulk of it as she was in front setting the pace. It was annoying for her. (Next morning, her right face was all swollen from a spider bite. Ouch!) At the Upper Hollyburn Grind, the shrunken snow terrain was different again.

We can run most of the trail adjacent Romstad. In one portion, the mud covered her socks. The S-word seemed appropriate. Most parts, the ground was more solid as was Hazel's leg muscles. Like the marathon clinic group I once led, the transformation of the peoples' physique is remarkable. Going down the Pacific Trail, I demonstrated how she could do the ¼ in 2 hours or less by flying down the hill full tilt as if there was no tomorrow. This old goat's got a few steps left yet (it's coming back with all this training). Unfortunately, Hazel's got to take a Tylenol for anti-inflammatory for her knees. On the uphill portion, I asked her to walk since it is not Boston Marathon's Heart Break Hill.

Meeting the Skyline Trail, we know that the worst part is over. This part in fact is a rolling hill terrain and perfect for running. The ground was soft and rebounding. As we have memorized the course, we don't read signs anymore. We even went down and up the steep Brothers Creek crossing without stopping. It was mind over matter. Speed is directly related to courage and inversely proportional to fear.

Near the end, she was getting a bit annoyed at my incessant coaching. I said not only do I have to open doors, but windows as well. She said she was just trying to focus on doing her best. The 2:28 finish was an improvement but not as good as she had wished. I said with the trail still improving and with more practice, she will again be borderline case for this portion of the race.

John and Hazel

Ps: more running/hiking tips

101. Rolling hill running is less tiring than flat because of different muscles

102. Use the hard/easy method as a training strategy
103. Wear new socks and ventilate shoes after use to avoid fungus growth
104. For a sweaty person, wear sleeveless-T and bandana
105. Always take advantage of gravity by slightly leaning into it
106. Going down, you are not stepping with full weight due to the forward momentum
107. Breaking less going down creates less skidding
108. One leg automatically compensates the other when injured
109. Tighten your shoe lace going down hill to prevent a black toenail
110. Best to go to the bathroom prior to the race

July 2, 2006

For those who have put up with this tedious monologue, your wish has come true... this is the last (12th) of the training logs (may 21 to July 2) I am dishing out. The training is worst than the race! If too long, one can get burnt out just from *reading* about it.

Today, being the last training run, we decided to take a leisurely hike up to Black Mountain, do a big loop at the top, and then come down again as a way to get comfortable with the most difficult part of the race. However, even at the end, there are always surprises.

By now, each nook and cranny seems to be familiar. Like clairvoyance, we know what is coming up before we get there. The trail was still until we got up to Eagle Bluff, where many were visiting from the parking lot and return. It is the most beautiful spot because we not only see the normal southern view, but also the western horizon as well, in one span of an eagle's eyes.

On top 99% of the snow on the trails are not gone. Some mud remains but will also solidify by race day in this summer heat. The only excuse for poor performance would then be self. Half way down to the Cypress parking lot, we decided to try the "alternate summer trail" to get back to the top for our loop. It was longer and filled with gnarly roots than the direct route up the ski trails. We had lunch at the top of the Bluff again. It was getting hot at high noon.

After lunch, we thought we could avoid the direct sun radiation on the bluff portion, the boulder fields, and scree by trying the Donut Trail, which we have never been on. We back tracked for about 10 minutes and started down the ravine. Soon, we came to another (donut?) lookout but not as spectacular as Eagle Bluff. It doesn't resemble a donut although it is more private. Then the fun began. The trail below appears abandoned, as many parts were overgrown. Although tagged with red dots, I had to clear much debris along the way for Hazel to follow. Then the cliffs came. There were three sections: sheers drops as a rock going down takes a while to come to rest. Worst, there were few handholds, using the littlest of outcrop rocks and roots, blueberry bushes, and occasional overhead branch to hang on to dear life. The dead branches were dry and unreliable. Like a handclap in the forest, they snap easily and we were there to hear it. At some points, I have to give Hazel handhold and foot planting positions for each step of the way. It was brutally slow. When it leveled off and finally joined back onto the Baden Powell Trail, we noticed that it took an hour longer than had we gone the normal way. However, we now had gone where we had not gone before.... A road less traveled. I can see why it is abandoned.

From there back to the car at Westport was a breeze although 8.5 hours was much longer than what we had planned. In any event, Hazel has a whole week to recover and she “enjoyed” her adventure. She has become a true survivor. She said if she doesn’t finish within 10 hours, she will for sure next year!

John and Hazel

Ps: more running/hiking tips:

111. A yin-yang coupling (male-female) seems to provide more energy for training
112. Taper off as you approach the race date; don’t over-train
113. Very important to eat well, hydrate well, and sleep well the last week of recovery
114. Recall the many unique vegetations such as a flower within a flower
115. Remember when the birds sing soprano and the water murmurs alto
116. Sometimes, you can hear the silence and see the insight
117. It is normal to be both physically and mentally fatigued after the race
118. Be nice to the volunteers on the route; ask for help when required
119. Volunteer on the race course when not running to give back to the community
120. #1 tips: have fun!
121. (Here’s one we learned during the race: train with the group at least once at each portion so that you will know the route changes)

Note: these tips are from my own experiences, which may be different from yours. Try to record your own and use accordingly to your best advantage. Enjoy the journey as well as the destination. See you at the start, package pick up, and banquet. Good luck and best wishes!

July 8, 2006

Number 8 is the luckiest number in the Chinese culture. When you have 2 of them (88) as your race number and still can’t finish, then it is not meant to be. You can’t go against the mandate of Heaven. That’s the way it was on this much anticipated race day.

The night before, we finally got to meet our race director, organizing committee, and the 90 fellow “virgin” runners who hope to finish this grueling race. We were told there are 200+ volunteers to look after 200 racers and the course marked with stripped ribbons. If you don’t see one in 2 minutes, then you are lost. John got his visi-vest and stop sign for his marshalling and Hazel got assurance from Kelsy and Greg that they will give full support for Hazel’s cut-off time decision.

4:30am came quickly after a light sleep. Hazel tried to eat some breakfast but it was too early. I sent out an email to some friends about the day’s KK events. We got to the start at 5:30am and there were many people lining up at the potties, maybe from the nervousness. Hazel chatted with some friends and I talked to Steve Kanters from Bellevue, Washington. I recognize the Pike’s Peak race t-shirt and we reminisced the good time we had. After some photos, the crowd disappeared into the forest when most people are still asleep.

I went home, made some coffee, had breakfast, and read the morning paper before going over to my Bonnymuir St. station before 8am. A few minutes later, a North Shore Rescue guy came and joined me. At 8:07am, two guys flew by us enroute to Cleveland Dam. Hazel was still going up

Eagle Bluff at this time. What amazing speed! It was a long time before the third man came into view and 8:40am before the first woman came by, still going very fast. I had a couple of visitors wanting to take photos of their spouse.

After about 3.5 hours into the race, the deluge of runner came. I had to stop quite a bit of traffic during the next 45 minutes. By now, it was OK to add music to my cheering sign: "Way to Go, Knee Knackers and Hazel!" The Eagles Greatest hits were blaring loudly out of my car speakers. One woman said she loves the Eagles as she soared beyond my sight. I never had so many thanking me for coming out for them. Someone had to quit due to injury and another limped past me in agony, not knowing if he was going to make it. Down to the wire, Hazel came with a bunch of sweepers. She would be the last person to make it to the Cleveland Dam.

After the sweepers went pass, I drove to Cleveland Dam to meet up with Hazel, not knowing if she needed a ride home or not. When I saw her, she was going up the Nancy Greene Way.... She made the first two cut-off points!! I parked my car and walked her up to Grouse Grind entrance. She told me she made it to the Cypress parking lot in 2h:47m, her fastest ever and got to Cleveland Dam at 5h:07m. Greg let her through even she was 7 minutes beyond the cut-off time. That is still her record time. She was pleased with the results so far. However, she had a couple of bad falls scraping her thighs, stomach, hand and shoulder. More red badges of courage! Dirt got impregnated under her skins as she tried to break the fall with her hand. She looked as if she came off a mud-wrestling contest. My poor wife.

She said after the Nancy Green Way, the mini-Grouse Grind was pretty tough and she didn't get her second wind again until the Mosquito Creek. I went home to have lunch before heading out again to Lynn Valley with the promised Frappacino from Starbucks. When I saw her, a sweeper was with her again like a personal guard. It was almost at the cut-off time. To my surprise, she was directed to go left towards the Varley Trail instead of right, my old route. I parked my car near the pipeline bridge and waited for her at the opposite end and we took a short hop up to the Lower Seymour Conservation Area pavilion, the ¾ mark aid station. Even when she was willing to, she was told she could not continue because she was 20 minutes beyond the cut-off time, not even with the race number off because of liability reasons.

To my surprise, I saw my old KK running partner, Bill Beatty sitting despondently nearby. He had a personal best time of 7h:30m but not today. Getting up at 3:30am to catch the bus, the afternoon heat, and inadequate training in California (since 1999) made him dead tired.

Hazel was glad she made it this far at the 35 km mark in a time of 7h:50m. At least now she can go home and have a hot bath before going to the banquet. We helped picking up a couple of "Race-in-Progress" sandwich boards before heading home.

Hazel felt much better after her bath. By the time we got to the Parkgate RecCenter, there were hundreds of people sitting on the dinner tables, watching the slide show, or reading the results. It was a tight race between North Vancouver's world-class triathlete, Mark Bates (5h:08m) and another former record holder, Peter Findley (5h:12m) from Kamloops. The women's battle was between NW's Suzanne Evans (5h:18m) and Lisa Polissi (5h:27m), the queen of running from Queensland, Australia, who two weeks ago, demolished the entire field including the top male in Squamish's Fat Ass 56km Stormy Trail Race. That was an awesome feat!

We sat with Bill and met another younger couple, Dave and Julia. One year after the KK race, Dave and his buddy ran the entire 75 km West Coast Trail in 1 day (13.5 hours). The record is a ridiculous 10 hours by the legendary Frank Wolf. Most people hike it in 4 to 7 days!

The food was excellent. We had our fill of steak, shrimp pilaf, noodles, cooked mixed veggies, salad, and desert. Then it was time for draw prizes and awards. There were a lot of applauses for the race committee including race co-founder, Enzo Federico and his wife, Francine Hong, and race director, Kelsy Trigg and her husband, Jeff Trigg plus all the 200+ volunteers, and of course all the finishers and participants for this 18th edition of this amazing race. Quite a few were inducted into the 10+ Club (total 21 people). These are the diehards who come back year after year for more punishment. It is human to face challenges head on! The human spirit is indomitable.

Steve, the Pike Peak racer said he came in at 108th in the 50% percentile. He said he was happy and vow to come back next year to beautiful BC's North Shore. His wife and the baby seemed to be in agreement. It was an amazing day for the 202 racers (a new record). Hazel was one of the 12 who didn't finish but I was pretty proud of her achievement in just 6 short weeks of training transforming from a marathoning flatlander to a gnarly grinder. The median time was 7h:37m, the 2nd slowest on record. The course record of 4h:42m by Kevin Titus of Whistler stands!

Watch out 2007! I overheard Hazel whispering to her friend o the phone that she will be back next year to kick ass! She's already talking about the Chuckanut 50 km Race and others. She's befriended a few partners-in-pain already. Sadly, when the adrenaline is running high, she doesn't say she is doing it for me anymore.

My reward for coaching her? Losing 6 pounds in the 6 weeks of tough training, even with muscle gain. That's just the icing. Spending time with Hazel is the cake.

John & Hazel