

Finish #9: Jonathan Basham, 2010, 59:18:44

March 29, 2010

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My Barkley 100 race report: 2010

–Jonathan Basham

"I know where he's taking us. Take out your map and look at Big Fodderstack. It's got a huge climb and it doesn't seem as if it would add too much mileage." I was convinced that I had just discovered the Bad Thing while standing atop the lookout tower and wanted AT's input. No reply. I could just picture AT (Andrew Thompson) laughing at this text message and thinking "JonBoy thinks he's got it all figured out, just cause he's spent last 6 days running around the fire roads and trails of Frozen Head." Although I wasn't totally convinced that I had figured out the Bad Thing, I was sure of one thing; since arriving at Frozen Head 6 days earlier, I had learned more about the park's interior (peaks, ridgelines, valleys, trails, fire roads and creeks) than I had during my previous visits to the park, combined. And therefore, I was feeling very confident about navigating my way around the Barkley course on the day of reckoning.

You see, my intentions for driving down to Frozen Head two weeks prior to the race were two fold: Primarily I knew I needed to get a solid grasp on the layout of the park. Taking advantage of Laz's advice, I knew the importance of being able to recognize particular peaks and ridgelines so that in the highly probable moment during the race, when I would find myself disoriented, I may be able to recognize prominent landmarks and adjust my direction of travel accordingly; this issue presents itself during my 3rd loop. Second, but not necessarily less important, I believed that camping at BigCove Campground for a few weeks prior, would help me find the mentality that I felt would be conducive to a successful Barkley 100 finish. In other words, I wanted to sleep in the various and erratic weather conditions that are so commonly associated with the Barkley. This would mean waking up in sub-30 degree temps with freezing rain, making breakfast, then leaving the comfort of my cozy camp to train high up on the ridges. I desperately needed to become intimate with discomfort and the feeling of uneasiness. I did. However, I wanted to respect Laz's, as well as the Park Ranger's request of training only on open trails and fire roads within the park, so I never ventured out to Stallion/Fikes, Testicle Spectacle, the Beach Fork area, or the southern bowl/side of Frozen Head Mountain, with the exception of climbing upper Rat Jaw twice. Besides, I thought it only fair that there are just some areas of the Park that should remain a mystery until the day of the event. If I could become familiar with the basic lay of the Park, my chances of learning the remainder of the course during the race would be good...as I believed, so it happened.

Fast forward to March 26th, the eve of the big day. As friends and strangers quickly trickled in to Big Cove, I found myself wandering about the campground reuniting with old friends and meeting new friends as well. The only problem with this was that rather than having no friendly distractions, like the many days prior (as I was for the most part alone), I was now distracted by fun things to do around camp, which did not include packing my gear, food, marking and laminating my map...all things that should have been addressed BEFORE I allowed myself to wander. Here's the irony...I was literally the first camper to enter Frozen Head two weeks prior, yet it was now 11:30 pm March 26th and I hadn't even marked the new course on my map; and I still wanted to spend the 20 minutes that it would take to weatherproof the map. As I looked around Big Cove just before climbing into the back of my F250 to take rest, it appeared that I was THE last person to get to bed. No other LED lit but mine. How did this happen? I was a bit frustrated with myself. In the end, it didn't matter.

Loop 1:

The cigarette was lit at precisely 7:12 am on March 27, 2010. I settled in nicely behind AT as the single file made its way up Bird Mtn. By the time I crossed over Bird, I found myself warming up at a comfortable pace along with AT, Dwayne Satterfield, Alan Abbs, Michael Popov, Charlie Engle and a few others. Arrived at Book 1, grabbed my page and off to the next. The remainder of the North section and for that matter, the remainder of the 1st loop went along pretty uneventful yet pleasant...basically the same group of runners swapping jokes and stories. Any time that we entered an area that was new to me, I spoke less and focused more on my surroundings, so as to connect the gaps in my mind. Upon our arrival to the new section (Brushy Mountain State Penitentiary), we quickly made our way through the tunnel, retrieved our pages, and immediately headed for the saddle of Razor Ridge, which we found quite easily. Although the sun was glaring down on clear skies, I knew the warm temps wouldn't last, which was a good thing. I remember David Horton making the comment that there will never be a 100-mile finisher during a hot Barkley. This is true seeing as how hot conditions present the toughest and most physically demanding race conditions for most any runner. But I was confident that we would see typical, miserable, Barkley conditions soon enough. By the end of the Loop 1, I was happy with the day's results and eager to get on with the night. The data recorded on my Suunto for Loop 1: total time=8h50m; ASC 11,549ft; DSC 11,483ft.

AT, Alan Abbs, Jason Poole, and I finished Loop 1 and all agreed to continue as group. We re-supplied and reconvened at the yellow gate to receive our new numbers. Off we went.

Loop 2:

We left the gate at 4:22 pm which gave us about 4 hours before we would need our lights. By the time that we reached Stallion Mtn., darkness was near and we finally turned on our lights. The four of us were still together and moving well, but I began to wonder if our current pace, while good enough for a fun run finish, was fit for a 100-mile finish. You see, if there is one thing that I learned from 2 previous attempts at Barkley (1 loop on both attempts) and 12 years of spectating and crewing AT at Barkley, is that if you are to have any chance what-so-ever at the 100-mile finish, you MUST show up hellbent on 5 loops and let nothing stand in your way; even the camaraderie of being with a solid group of Barkley dudes. This was my year. I had come to Frozen Head State Park with a plan...5 loops and nothing would suffice. I had trained on these mountains for the past two weeks and I felt SOLID. A few days prior to AT's arrival, he and I had spoke over the phone about each of our intentions for Barkley. I was glad to hear that he was going for his 2nd 100-mile finish and therefore was energized to know that we would spend 4 loops hiking together and haven' a good ole' chin wag. Additionally, I still needed to learn or better yet fine-tune my navigation through both the new section and the old sections, which were new to me (Stallion/Fikes and BigHell/Zipline). For this, I had planned on learning on the heels of my best friend and long time hiking partner AT. As we made our way over Stallion/Fikes, our pace lessened a bit, if for no other reason than typical nighttime navigation. While descending Fikes, as a group, we made a poor decision, which cost us a bit more time but nothing to really get carried away over. But as the miles and time past, I began to question, even more now than before, if I was doing what was best for me...for my chance at finishing the 100.

One of the greatest things about hiking with AT is that we, for the most part, know what the other is thinking in terms of strategy, and can deal with most issues before they have a chance to become problems. Although nothing was said, I believe AT could sense that I was getting antsy and that I was having thoughts of separating from the group and moving on; at a pace that was more conducive to finishing the 100. Additionally, I could sense AT's plans (for his attempt at the 100) changing. I knew that I needed to be moving more assertively than our group's current pace, and that he (AT) for whatever reason, was not going to be coming with. As we reached the Book 9 at the Beach Fork, the predictable actions were carried out...sit down, pass the book and tear page, dig through pack for food, empty shoes...and socks...nod off for a moment...WHAM!!! It hit me just as hard as my head nearly hit my knees, which were held tight to my chest. GET YOUR ASS UP AND MOVING!! This was the first time during the race that I had become sleepy tired and I was not about to take any caffeine (I had planned to sleep after loop 2 and seeing as it was less than 2 hours till camp, taking caffeine would interfere with my plans). So I said to my 3 companions, "I'm getting sleepy. I've got to walk ahead." Seeing as how our next move was to climb Big Hell, drowsiness would not stand a chance. I was off and didn't stop until I reached the capstones of Chimney Top and Book 10, the final book of the Loop 2. Although I could see the lights of my old group, I felt it wiser to keep moving at my pace, and on my own. This was the first of two major decisions that I believe ultimately led to my 100-mile finish.

Back in the last few days of the year 2009, Hilary (my wife) and I made a trip to the north country of New Hampshire, where we celebrated the New Year at AT's farm. While there, AT gave me the most valuable piece (clearly an understatement) of information that a Barkley 100-mile aspirant could receive (yes, I'm now revealing and passing this wisdom on to any who chose to listen); he said with authority, "Jonboy, if you are to finish the Barkley, you've got to be your own man." That made all the sense in the universe to me and I firmly believe in those words. This is what I thought of when I left AT, Alan, and Jason at the bottom of Big Hell. If I was going to drag my beaten body around this man-eating course three more times, under the 60-hour limit, I was going to have to do it on my terms, and not on the heels of another.

After descending Chimney Top swiftly, I made haste ascending Rough Ridgewhere I caught my new pal, Carl Laniak. Carl and I had met a few days earlier at my camp. Carl made me laugh so he was easy to like. As I approached, Carl made some comment about my pace and I asked in return if he needed anything...water, calories (He didn't look exactly strong). His reply made me laugh for sometime after. I left Carl as quickly as I had caught him and by the time I reached the road heading in to Big Cove Campground, I caught up with the leader of the race, Jim Nelson. I immediately spoke of my intentions for the race and plans for arriving in camp. With his reply, we seemed to agree and be on the same page. Once at camp, I turned all 10 pages in to, no not Laz, but Rich Limacher (thanks for being awake Rich). Jim and I were sharing a campsite along with AT, and Mike Dobies, which by the way, was conveniently located next to Laz's camp and the yellow gate. I followed my checklist promptly: shower, take care of feet, eat (a grilled cheese sandwich, bowl of warm soup), re-supply pack, 30 min nap. My good friend Travis Wildeboer (who is more of a brother than a friend) had flown in from Winter Park, CO to crew and handle for AT and I. Travis has been a huge part of my life for the past 12 years and has supported me on both my Colorado Trail speed hike and my Long Trail speed hike. Needless to say, having Travis around camp at Barkley was truly an asset and a gift. As I lay my head to the pillow, I hollered to Travis "wake me in 30." When Travis woke me, I grabbed my pack and headed to the yellow gate to pick up my new number. Jim was waiting. Off we went. The data recorded on my Suunto for Loop2: total time: 11h18m; ASC 11,526ft; DSC 11,440ft.

Loop 3:

The time was 4:33am and we were now 4 ½ hrs into day two of the Barkley. Jim and I started down the road and up the long switchbacks of Chimney Top Mtn...the first of the remaining three loops; all of which I will do in the reverse or counter-clockwise direction. Being at the front of the pack with Jim gave me a good feeling. In our previous discussion, Jim had said he was going for the 100 and I believed him. He sounded hungry for another 100-mile finish and I knew that I could learn from him if we could stick together. Jim is another friend whom I highly respect. Jim knows the Barkley course and the park extremely well and I'm

thinking I could use a little help learning the course in the opposite direction. We chatted for just a bit, when out of nowhere, comes Blake Wood, and he is moving with authority. As he passes, I think to myself, "That seems more like the pace that I should be moving...and I was probably already chomping at the bit on Jim's heels. Jim sensed this and just as the words are coming out of my mouth he says "you should go" (meaning with Blake) and so I do. I catch Blake and we chat a bit about life. Blake is another Barkley Great and a man whom I greatly admire...you could say that he's sorta one of my heroes. As we reach Book 10 (or now the 1st Book of the counter-clockwise loop) at the summit of Chimney Top, I inform Blake of my intension as he does the same. Again, my new hiking partner and I are on the same page. And, just as with AT and Jim, I see the opportunity to learn from a highly intelligent and experienced woodsman and plan to stick with him through more loops. Descending Big Hell, Blake and I work together taking compass bearings and following faint trails. It's just before sunrise and under dark skies we navigate down the ridgeline using our headlamps. We don't quite hit the Beech tree but Blake is quick to pinpoint our location and within minutes we have our page from Book 9. By now the sun has risen enough so that we can pack away our lights and move more efficiently. As we reach the confluence of the Beach Fork and the start of the bushwhack up Zipline I stop to take care of some dirty business. I tell Blake that I will catch up. It doesn't take me very long, but in those few minutes Blake's pace places him out of sight and I take off like a raped ape. My thoughts, "I cannot lose Blake", "This is the reverse loop and I MUST learn the course counter-clockwise", "I cannot lose Blake". I am scrambling up Zipline on all fours, pretty much red-lining. When I reached a vantage point I would stop and search for movement on the hillsides. Nothing. At this point I realized that I had failed to actually pinpoint where it was that I was going. My map was useless if I didn't know exactly where I was. Fortunately, it wasn't so foggy that I couldn't make out the ridgeline and all the peaks. I had studied that ridgeline for weeks now and I knew could name every hump and ridge. I found Indian Knob directly above me and as Winter would say, "I kept climbin." Within what seemed like seconds, I reach the capstones on Indian Knob (probably faster than it's ever been climbed) and immediately find book 8. If Blake has already been through, his page will be missing. It's here. Words cannot express my relief. Like I said, I did not want to move forward without Blake...or so I thought at the time. I tore out my page, put on all my clothes, ate some food, and waited...and waited. Every other minute or so I would leave the comfort of the cave, where I was sheltered from the bitter cold winds and blown fog, and step out to holler at Blake...never a reply. I did this for 23 or so minutes. Then I began to get cold. I KNEW that I needed to get moving. Not only was I losing heat by the second, more importantly, I was losing precious time. This was the 2nd and final major decision that ultimately led to my 100-mile finish. Again, I thought of those words that AT had said, "You have to be your own man." My decision was made without even thinking about it. I referred to my map, pulled out my compass and took a bearing and was GONE. I wouldn't say that I nailed it, but I wasn't too far off. It was extremely foggy and I just chose an adjacent ridge to the one that I intended...Razor Ridge. At the prison, I grabbed my page from Book 7, made my way through the tunnel and on up nasty Rat Jaw. Once at the tower, I filled my bottles and bladder, grabbed my page from book 6 and tore off back down Rat Jaw. The remainder of the Loop 3 was pretty uneventful. It rained...hard and cold. As I made my way around the course I remained extremely vigilant, taking great care to memorize landmarks and major junctions. With the passing of the miles and as I reached book 5, I began to feel a certain level of confidence...this was something new. Not the confidence, but the level at which I was feeling. My hard work had paid off and I was moving efficiently and navigating successfully. Nothing could stop me now...nothing but time. I reached the yellow gate and the end of Loop 3. Prior to the race, I had planned to take a half hour nap, time permitting, at the end of Loop 3. I had the time. According to my Suunto, the loop had taken 11h 2min. But I wasn't sleepy. I knew trying to nap would be a waste of time and seeing as how it was around 4 pm I had approximately 4 ½ hrs of sunlight left. I opted to continue on and make use of the valuable daylight. It would be ideal if I could make it through Big Hell and Zipline before dark. Travis fed me another grilled cheese and bean stew and sent me on my way. The data recorded on my Suunto for Loop 3: total time: 11h02m; ASC 11,706ft; DSC 11,568ft.

Loop 4:

The time was 4:22 pm, which meant that I had now been running for more than 33hrs...oh, and I had just completed my first Barkley Fun Run. I was feeling pretty good. No major issues. My feet were holding up great and my digestive system was doing its job and doing it well I must add. My psyche and my mental clarity were as lucid as could be. I was doing GREAT! But as began my ascent up Chimney Top, just after Rough Ridge I felt extremely sleepy and took my first dose of caffeine. By the time I reached the summit of Chimney Top and began my search of book 10 my head was in the clouds. I went to get my page and WHAT...no book?!! Wait a minute...this is the wrong capstone. This is it over here...nope. The more that I searched, the more confused I became. "This is ridiculous!" "Blake and I walked right over here to this rock, reached under and here it's supposed to be!" "I don't understand!" Even as I sit here and write, I have no idea what happened up there...that time or the next time that it happened on Loop 5. At one point I became very angry. I actually thought someone had taken the book and it made me hottern-a-firecracker! Once I realized that my emotions were taking over, I put an end to it, IMMEDIATELY.

My thru-hikes on the Colorado Trail and the Long Trail had taught me valuable lessons about keeping one's emotions in check. If it's not positive then it's negative...and if it's negative it's a waste of time...and wasting time was not something that I could afford. Another thorough search and ah ha...I found Book 10, took my page and was off down Big Hell. Although I had lost a great deal of time searching for Book 10 (approximately 20 minutes), I regained my confidence when I nailed the Beach tree and Book 9. This one I owe to my good friend Mike Dobies. Before I left camp on my 4th loop, I asked Mike for some pointers on navigating down Big Hell. This was another invaluable piece of advice that I was given. His directions put me precisely on top of Book 9. Mike Dobies is THE MAN when it comes knowing the Barkley course and I owe him much gratitude. Thanks Mike. As I began to work my way upstream and towards the confluence, the sky grew darker. I tried to get one last peak of Indian Knob's capstones before it was too dark. Without referring to my map I chose my drainage and began climbing. As I neared the top I

realized that I had made my first major navigational error. I had climbed the wrong ridgeline; one that put me on Indian Knob's western saddle. Without hesitation, I began running the ridgeline towards the capstones. Unfortunately, my error cost me another 300-400 ft of descent and a bit more than that in climb. By the time I had reached Book 8 it was dark and time to settle in for a cold and windy night. I put on another layer and began the descent towards the prison.

Bam!...nailed it. I exited the woods, grabbed my page and entered the tunnel. As I made the long climb up Lower and Upper Rat Jaw I had a feeling that I was actually going to have an enjoyable night and consequently enjoyable Loop 4. Seeing the full moon hanging over the prison and lighting up the prison yard gave me a feeling that energized my pace...not fear, but something else...something more positive than negative. By the time that I had reached the New River, all the runoff from the previous day's heavy rains had made its way into the New making it extremely unwise to attempt a safe crossing. There was one fallen tree that spanned a section of the river. I investigated and found the tree too slick to cross safely. It's not that I was necessarily worried about getting swept down stream; I simply did not want to fall in and then have to deal with battling hypothermia. So I chose the high water route that Laz made available for this certain situation. You can take my word on this: There is NO advantage in choosing the high water route over the standard route in normal conditions. The route has you scrambling on all fours up a steep ridge through a tangle of Rhododendron thickets until you meet up with the standard route on the first terrace. It takes more time and uses more energy...but it was a guaranteed safe crossing. I began my ascent of Fikes/Stallion. I was a bit uneasy about finding the route and staying on course through this particular section. Although it was dark, I at least had a full moon, which allowed me to see ridges and bluffs...or wait...where is the moon? Sure enough, as always, as soon as I began climbing Fikes/Stallion, fog rolled in decreasing my field of vision by 95%. I pulled out my compass and oriented my direction of travel to approximately 350 degrees. I cautiously but swiftly made my way flawlessly through this section, reached Book 3 and began the North Section in high spirits. I arrived at the yellow gate ready for hot food and a quick nap, again, time permitting. My navigational error on Zipline and searching for Book 10 on Chimney Top had cost me in time. Loop 4 had taken me 13h46 min. As I touched the yellow gate Laz informed me that I had exactly 1hr4min before I had to be out on Loop 5. Just enough time to quickly shower, take care of feet, eat, and sleep...for about 20 minutes I believe. It was good to see my boys, AT and Travito. AT helped me clean up and into bed while Travis tended to my nutritional needs. Thanks brothers. "Wake up. You've got exactly 4 minutes to be gone." AT's words were like fire from the mountain. I was at the gate, "Ready to be on your own" as Gary would say, with two minutes to spare. The data recorded on my Suunto for Loop 4: total time: 13h46m; ASC 11,555ft; DSC 11,585ft.

For me, Loop 4 had not been the miserable "death march" that seemed to have plagued the previous 8 100-mile finishers. Reading their race reports, they all seem to have agreed that each of their Loop 4 was the nightmare loop and Loop 5 was "actually pleasant." Loop 4 was my pleasant loop, complete with full moon, clear skies and ideal cool temperatures. This could only mean one thing...my nightmare Loop was bound to happen and there was only one loop remaining.

Loop 5:

At exactly 7:10 am on March 29, 2010, I was sent off on my final loop to the sweet sounds of redneck hollern' (courtesy of AT and Travito) and Laz's Swiss cowbell ringing off the walls of Big Cove Campground, signaling the start of Loop 5. Again, and for the final time, I choose a counter-clockwise direction of travel. It was this direction in which I was forced to learn the course, alone, beginning on Loop 3. It was never more than a quick thought as to which direction I would choose to do my final loop. As I made my way down the camp road leaving Big Cove, the remaining wounded Barkley soldiers bid me "farewells" and "Godspeed". Very few individuals had ever made it this far and it was an honor to be one of the few. I was moved to say the least. I made haste up Chimney Top's switchbacks with a renewed strength. I went through my mental checklist, as I had done so many times before. Everything was in the clear. I was good. I reached the capstones and immediately went for Book 10. BUT, IT WASN'T THERE! "You have GOT to be kidding!" Not again. Ok...stop...think...this happened the last time you were here. But this time I would burn over 30 precious minutes before I would find the book. And it didn't help that the fog was so thick, the tops of the capstones were hidden. At one point, I was convinced that, for whatever reason, the book was no longer here. "Move on and just explain to Laz that I was at the exact spot and the book was not there. Surely he'll understand." He can come check for himself and when he gets here he will see that I was right. But if I'm wrong and I'm simply walking past the book because I've been running for 49 hrs, then I'll be disqualified. "THE BOOK IS HERE JB. GET IT TOGETHER AND FIND IT!" Oh yea, here it is. I gather my emotions, and turn my focus to my next challenge...a foggy descent of Big Hell. Thanks to Mike, I nailed it. I get my page from Book 9 and begin the ascent of Zipline. I pay extreme attention to my surroundings and my direction of travel. At the upper confluence and crossover, I refer to my map, take a compass bearing and choose my path. It proves to be the correct choice as I hit the capstones of Indian Knob and Book 8. On the descent into the prison, I made yet another navigational error. I descended the wrong ridge and my correction came and no small expense. I had to climb approximately 400ft to get back to the correct ridge. Once on Razor Ridge and easily found my way down to the prison and Book 7. As I begin one final miserable scramble up Rat Jaw, my mind starts to slip, just a bit. The saw briars' bites are now beginning to break my concentration. By this point in the race, the path, regardless of where you choose to walk, is beaten and slick as you can ever imagine. At times, the most effective way of gaining any sort of ground is by actually grabbing the wretched beasts and using them to pull you upward. Saw briars are incredibly strong...go figure. It takes me 7 hrs to reach the summit of Frozen Head, which means I now have 5 hours to finish the loop. This discourages me. I think to myself "I have 5 hours to descend RatJaw/PigHead, climb up and over Testicle Spectacle, cross the New River, climb Fikes/Stallion (in the fog of course), and cover the North section." It's not whether or not I can physically do the miles...it's the small amount of time that I

have to do it in. AT, Travis, Wouter, and Mike “Drago” Popov, are there to do a little motivating...Wouter spitting out orders, “come on JB, move, move”. Seeing my comrades lights a new fire under my ass. I tear out my page, fill my bottles, and literally tear off down Rat Jaw. My new goal: Camp in 5 hours. On that descent, Rat Jaw does things to me that will always remain...both physical and mental scars. At this point, I am what you might say, “running scared.” In other words, time is my greatest fear at this point. Any and all flat and descending sections are done at a running pace...I am MOVING! The entire TS section takes less than 30 minutes. Once I reach the New River, again, I opt for the high water route that Laz provided. As far as the weather conditions, cloudy and foggy weather have created ideal running temperatures and I am thankful. Warm enough so that you’re not losing calories just trying to stay warm, but cool enough to wear a long sleeve and tights without the constant on/off process. I begin climbing Fikes and it’s not long that I have my first vivid hallucination. I had stopped to dig some food out of my pack and as I stood there looking forward, I noticed an individual to my right. This fella was short in stature, almost miniature, and wearing camouflage snowboarding pants and matching jacket, sporting a buzz-cut with those tinted-spectacle-type goggles that used to be an urban fad, and he was strapped to a snowboard, facing my direction with his hands on his knees. It was as if he were peering over the cornice to scout the stash below. Now, I knew what I was seeing was not real, regardless of the fact that it appeared as clear as me standing there. What this represented to me was my mind was beginning to slip and at this point in the game, I absolutely could not afford any mistakes. So I gathered my attention and pushed forward. I checked my time...get moving. Again, I ran every chance that I had. I had no idea how much running a person can do climbing the Fikes/Stallion section. I managed to make it through the section with not a single navigational error. I had Stallion burned into my mind. I continued my aggressive pace on through the Garden Spot and didn’t let up one bit until I reached Jury Ridge with two hours until the 60-hour cutoff. From here, I knew I could run/walk it in just over an hour. From the Garden Spot and on in to camp, I had my hallucination experience and I just embraced it. I was still in total control and so I allowed myself the pleasure of mindless wondering, when hallucinations run wild. After all, this was part of the fun in running through the woods for 59 hours on less than 1 hour of sleep. I saw Master Yoda peering over a boulder field as I crossed a certain stream...Honestly, I really did. For the most part, the hallucinations were mild shape shifts in black. Coming down the final 100 yard stretch was something that I cannot put into words. I touched the yellow gate at 59hrs18min.

As I sat in a chair at the yellow gate, my friends, supporters, heroes, and mentors surrounded me with joy and curiosity in their eyes. They wanted the story and I was eager to share. What meant so much was the fact that so many had stayed to see me finish. To hear Laz say, “all of us who witnessed your performance at the Barkley have been elevated in some way”...now that speaks to me. I learned a great deal about myself, and life in general at the Barkley. I won’t go into all that. What I will say is that in order to finish the Barkley 100, you must be your own man. That means taking huge risks even if success seems bleak. Barkley is nothing but risk. I didn’t want to separate from Blake on my 3rd loop simply because I was afraid to fail. However, making the decision to continue on my own ultimately led to my success. One other bit of information that I learned over the years while watching my heroes turn “hot laps” at Barkley: The runner MUST embrace that which he fears the most. I know...as cliché as it sounds...but it’s the one absolute at Barkley. You will get eaten’ alive by the saw briars...there is no way around it. You will have to navigate a night-time loop...and then another in reverse...there is no way around it. You WILL have to navigate a loop alone...there is no way around it. You will spend many hours hiking in wet and cold conditions...there is no way around it. Do you see the pattern here? Simply put, there are some aspects of Barkley that you cannot get around...these are the primary reason why most runners quit. Therefore, if being uncomfortable is inevitable and the only way out is forward...through the misery...then we must embrace it. My best friend AT taught me that. I made this belief my race philosophy. I am 100% honest when I say this, not once did I think about quitting. As a matter of fact, it took a while for me to realize that I had been one of still a select few to complete the 60-mile fun run. Stopping at the Fun Run mark never appealed to me. When I showed up at Frozen Head on March 15th 2010, I had one goal: 5 loops in less than 60 hours. When I finally departed Frozen Head on March 29th 2010, I had completed that goal. I became my own man.

–Jonathan Basham

April 4, 2010