

Pikes Peak Ascent: Aug. 21, 2010

Notes:

1. Overall—Just like in 2009 conditions on race day were close to ideal. It was 70° at the bottom and 50° at the top. Of 1800 total entries for the Ascent, 1715 (95%) made it to the finish line. This is an even higher success rate than in 2009.

2. My Race/Analysis/Plan for Next Year—I am not happy with my 4:30:16 time. Besides recording a personal worst performance I failed by a wide margin to make it into the top half of all finishers. I crossed the line in 990th place out of 1715 total finishers which puts me in the 58th percentile. To get into the top half of the male runners you needed 4:11:56 (six seconds faster than in 2009); to get in the top half of all finishers 4:20:12 (2:41 slower than in 2009) was needed. In the 60-64 year old category I did tolerably well by finishing 22 out of 58 (top 38%). I was 7:34 slower than in 2009 and a whopping 9:23 slower than my best-ever 2005 clocking.

So, what went wrong?

The answer is pretty much everything. My splits for each leg except A-Frame to Summit were personal worsts. I had a particularly dreadful pull up to No Name Creek and this haunted me for the rest of the race. Traditionally I do very well on the Start to No Name and No Name to Barr Camp legs. I build up a big cushion versus my 4:14:00 goal time and this sustains me as I struggle with imperfect acclimatization on the top half of the course. This year I was at least 5 minutes off my normal pace at No Name and I lost another couple of minutes getting to Barr Camp. At that checkpoint I was two and a half minutes behind the Pace Calculator estimate for a 4:14:00 finish and fully 7 minutes slower than what I needed for a performance that was on par with my previous efforts. I was painfully aware that I had blown any hope for a good time and lost another 4 minutes versus my typical time on the Barr to A-Frame leg. I absolutely cannot believe that it took me 1:00:41 to make it to A-Frame! However, I salvaged some pride on the Summit leg and recorded a 1:18:01 which was just 2:08 slower than my best.

While doing the race I felt stymied by the crowd. I had a very difficult time settling into a comfortable pace and felt like I was fighting the pack almost all the way. It seemed as if the person in front of me was always a step too slow and passing yielded little reward because it would just put me behind someone else who was going too slow. Unlike in previous years when passing opened up a gap that I could cruise, this year the effort seemed disproportionate to the gain. Consequently, on the narrow and steep sections of the course (Hydo Street trailhead to No Name and Barr to A-Frame) I just settled in and went with the pack. My splits reveal that these legs are where I lost the most time.

In reflecting on the race, my conclusion is that I spoiled my chances in the first mile and a half before ever setting foot on Barr Trail. I slow-jogged on the roads leading up to the trailhead and this put me behind at least 500 Second Wave runners two thirds of whom I would eventually pass but who in the meantime would act as human roadblocks. When you hit the W's section of the trail behind 500 runners no good can come of it. The W's are narrow and steep; many of those who ran hard to get to the trailhead start running out of gas and anyone behind has a frustrating time trying to pass. I soon gave up and placidly accepted the pack's pace. A more aggressive attitude may have helped somewhat but congestion on the route was so awful that I think the die was already cast and that there was no recovering from my cautious start.

I am still convinced that I can do this race in under 4:15:00. Doing so requires two things. First, I have to run hard to get to the trailhead in the top quartile of the Second Wave runners. If I can do this I'll be among those who are most likely to do well in the race and, hopefully, congestion will be much reduced. Second, I absolutely have to make a bigger investment in acclimatization than I have in the past. Instead of arriving on Wednesday and doing acclimatization hikes on Thursday and Friday, I've got to plan on arriving Sunday and doing four solid training sessions on the mountain during the week. One should involve a trip all the way down to Barr and two should involve round trips to the A-Frame. I can taper down with a hike on the top two miles of the course. Doing two trips to A-Frame prior to this year's race was a confidence-booster and yielded tangible benefits. More altitude training will greatly improve my prospects for success.

3. Clothing/Equipment—The weather was beautiful so I did not have to think too much about what to wear. I used pure running gear (nylon shorts, zip-neck long sleeve top, Nike running shoes) and carried my minimalist fanny pack. This year the pack worked fine. All I toted was a credit card, cash and a small feeding bottle. I pre-loaded seven GUs into the bottle and diluted the GU with water. This worked pretty well and I downed most of the brew during the race. It was a touch too thick so I think that next time I'll use six GUs rather than seven. Also, I should have worn short sleeves. After the first half hour I was too warm and regretted wearing the cold weather shirt.

4. How I Felt—I did not work particularly hard on the jog to the trailhead and once I got there the pack dictated the pace. Ascending the W's is never easy but the frequent logjams assured moments of rest along the way. I was expecting a disappointing No Name split but never dreamed that it would be as bad as 1:16:26. I was disheartened upon seeing it and knew that this was not going to be my day to shine.

On the pull up to Barr Camp I ran a bit more than last year but brooded about my awful first split. There was less congestion but plenty of jockeying for position, passing and being passed. My time to Barr Camp (55:08) was not a disaster but

my elapsed time of 2:11:34 was bad enough that I effectively resigned from the race at that point.

For me the trek to the A-Frame was fairly easy. I placidly accepted whatever pace the pack gave me and was punished with a perfectly dreadful 1:00:41 split and 3:12:15 elapsed time. I knew that my ET was more than 10 minutes slower than last year's but was not very surprised by the fact. At that point in the race my only goal was to finish and I knew that I was headed for a worst-ever clocking.

Nonetheless, I was fairly enthusiastic on the A-Frame to Summit leg. Having practiced the route on each of the previous two days it felt familiar and not at all unfriendly. I knew that there were plenty of long cruising sections in the last 3.1 miles and felt confident about my ability to finish the leg in 1:25:00 or better (the day before Germaine and I did it in a relaxed 1:23:38). As usual I had episodes of mild cramping in the calves but this was no big deal. I also experienced a touch of cramping in the thighs while ascending the 16 Golden Stairs. Happily this did not amount to much either.

When I finally arrived at the finish line I saw that my good effort on the final leg (1:18:01) salvaged something on the day and prevented my time from entering truly embarrassing territory.

5. Post-Race Condition—Just like in past years I felt perfectly sound after the race. Germaine greeted me at the finish line and astonished me with the news that she too had had an awful day, finishing just two and a half minutes before me in 4:27:46. We agreed that congestion on the course was worse than we had ever seen.

6. Prospects for Next Year—I am encouraged that with better acclimatization and a faster start I'll do much better. I'll definitely come to Colorado a few days early and follow the training regimen described above. I will pull out the stops to get to the trailhead ahead of the traffic. If I can do that and the weather is not terrible the rest should take care of itself. Making the First Wave is a great goal and well worth pulling out all the stops to achieve.

7. Logistics—Parking in Manitou Springs was no problem. On race day we were able to get a spot near the Library. Traffic was allowed to flow on Manitou Avenue until shortly before Wave 1 went off. We arrived in town about 6:30am and this worked out perfectly.

August 29, 2010

Pikes Peak Ascent (Aug. 21, 2010)

<u>Waypoints</u>	<u>Cum Mileage</u>	<u>Stage Miles</u>	<u>Altitude</u>	<u>Alt Change</u>	<u>Cum Time</u>	<u>Stage Time</u>	<u>Pace/mi</u>
Ascent Start	0.0	0.0	6,295	0			
No Name Creek	4.3	4.3	8,800	2,505	1:16:26	1:16:26	0:17:47
Barr Camp	7.6	3.3	10,200	1,400	2:11:34	0:55:08	0:16:42
A-Frame	10.2	2.6	11,800	1,600	3:12:15	1:00:41	0:23:20
Summit	13.3	3.1	14,110	2,310	4:30:16	1:18:01	0:24:51

Cumulative ET=> **4:30:16** **0:20:16**

2010 Ascent v. 2009 Ascent

	<u>2009 Time</u>	<u>2010 Time</u>	<u>Better/Worse</u>
No Name Creek	1:11:11	1:16:26	0:05:15
Barr Camp	0:53:42	0:55:08	0:01:26
A-Frame	0:58:04	1:00:41	0:02:37
Summit	1:19:45	1:18:01	0:01:44

Cumulative Difference=> **0:07:34**

2010 Ascent v. Prior Years

	<u>2010 Time</u>	<u>Better/Worse</u>
2005 Ascent	4:20:53	0:09:23
2007 Marathon	4:21:35	0:08:41
2008 Ascent	NA	NA
2009 Ascent	4:22:42	0:07:34
2010 Ascent	4:30:16	

2010 Ascent v. 4:14:00 Pace

	<u>4:14:00 Pace</u>	<u>2010 Time</u>	<u>Better/Worse</u>
No Name Creek	1:14:25	1:16:26	0:02:01
Barr Camp	0:54:37	0:55:08	0:00:31
A-Frame	0:51:49	1:00:41	0:08:52
Summit	1:13:09	1:18:01	0:04:52

Cumulative Difference=> **0:16:16**

2010 Ascent v. 3:59:00 Pace

	<u>3:59:00 Pace</u>	<u>2010 Time</u>	<u>Better/Worse</u>
No Name Creek	1:10:02	1:16:26	0:06:24
Barr Camp	0:51:23	0:55:08	0:03:45
A-Frame	0:48:45	1:00:41	0:11:56
Summit	1:08:50	1:18:01	0:09:11

Cumulative Difference=> **0:31:16**

Best / Worst Stages

	<u>Best</u>	<u>Worst</u>	<u>When</u>
No Name Creek	1:07:47	1:16:26	2008 / 2010
Barr Camp	0:52:10	0:55:08	2008 / 2010
A-Frame	0:54:52	1:00:41	2008 / 2010
Summit	1:15:53	1:23:46	2005 / 2007
Total	4:10:42	4:36:01	

Note on 2010 Race:

Near perfect weather conditions: sun + 70° / 50° start / finish

Placement in 2010 Race

age group	22 of 58	top 38%
men	751 of 1166	top 64%
all finishers	990 of 1715	top 58%