

Inside This Issue:

We have a strong and supportive running community. You can help SAR continue to grow by joining the Board of Directors. See our invitation on page 2 and consider joining the board.

The annual SAR board meeting will be held on August 24th. All SAR members are welcome to attend. More details can be found in this newsletter or online at <https://runsar.org/board-meetings>.

I've always been impressed by folks who take things just a bit farther in life – who go the extra mile, literally. In this issue, we feature two such runners. Kelly Thrush shares his story through an interview, while Marcy Beard offers a personal account of her experience. Both highlight some of the challenges faced when doing an ultra-distance event.

Have ideas to improve the newsletter? We'd love your feedback and suggestions! Please email us at newsletter@runsar.org.

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The Arizona Monster 300

Kelly Thrush

Why did you decide to do the Arizona Monster 300?

The first time I heard about the Arizona Monster 300 was on a post that Candice Burt (owner of Destination Trail Races) put out in November of 2023. She had hinted at a 200+ mile race in the Sonoran Desert. That's right in my backyard! I knew right then I wanted to do the race. Whether I finished 50 miles, 20 miles, or all of it, I was going.

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Kelly Thrush arriving at the Valencia Road aid station.

The Western States 100

Marcy Beard

I started entering the Western States 100 lottery on a whim. It sounded like a unique experience—historic, like the Boston Marathon: on the surface an event I might not be drawn to, but fun to be there as a "once in a lifetime" thing.

Each year you don't get in, your number of tickets in the lottery doubles. That seems fair. Eventually, after 8 failed

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Marcy Beard in the town of Auburn, CA.

Join the Southern Arizona Roadrunners Board!

By Robert Rezetko

The Southern Arizona Roadrunners is seeking passionate, community-minded individuals to join our Board of Directors! Bring your energy and ideas to help guide SAR's events, programs, and community outreach. No specific experience required—just a commitment to our mission and a love for running and community! As a volunteer-driven, non-profit organization, SAR relies on dedicated board members to help promote health, fitness, and fun through running and walking in Southern Arizona.



Not ready to join the board just yet? You can still get involved! We welcome volunteers for our subcommittees—if you have a passion or skill set in any of the areas listed below (or on our [Volunteer page](#)), we'd love your support.

We're currently seeking members to join the following subcommittees:

- Communications & Marketing – Oversees SAR's email communications, social media posts, and other promotional outreach.
- Fundraising & Sponsorship – Develops relationships with local businesses and donors to support SAR's events and programs through sponsorships and fundraising initiatives.
- Technology & Website – Manages SAR's websites, race registration platform, email platform, and other digital tools to ensure smooth and efficient tech operations for our online presence and local events.
- Youth & FitKidz – Organizes and grows our FitKidz youth running program, helping kids stay active and build healthy habits through running.

If you're interested in making a difference through running and walking, we'd love to hear from you! Please visit <https://runsar.org/sar-board-members> or contact us at info@runsar.org to learn more or apply.

Let's keep Southern Arizona moving—together! 

Notice of Annual Meeting

The SAR Annual Board Meeting will be held on Sunday, August 24th, 2025, at 8:00 a.m. in Conference Room A at Desert Diamond Casino (7350 S. Nogales Highway, Tucson, AZ 85756). All SAR members are welcome to attend. If you plan to join us, please RSVP by August 14th to info@runsar.org. Board member elections will take place during the meeting. For full details on voting and the agenda, please visit <https://runsar.org/board-meetings>.

We hope to see you there!



Arizona Monster 300 cont.

What did your friends think of you entering the race?

Ha! They all thought I was nuts, though I bet most of them were not surprised. I seem to have built a reputation for doing crazy adventures. Usually it ends with the phrase "That sounds awful! I'm in." I had my doubts, and so did some of my closest friends, about whether I'd actually finish. I had never accomplished anything like this. I had never attempted anything like the Monster.

How did you prepare physically?

It was a lot of vertical feet gained and LOTS of time on feet. We were not able to really get training until December of 2024, which put us behind the eight ball for April 4th, 2025. My coach and I decided that strength work in the gym and lots of mountain trails were the key. This race plays to my strengths. I'm not a terribly fast runner, but I can suffer with the best of them.

And how did you prepare mentally?

I think the biggest part was going out for training runs/hikes when I didn't necessarily want to—that was key. If I was tired or it was a long week or whatever the excuse, I tried to tell myself, I knew I had to go. There were plenty of moments in the race preparation when I didn't want to train, but knew I had to.

What was the course like?

The course was tough. As you can guess, it was very rocky and quite technical in some parts. There was something like 40,000 feet of vertical gain. And the majority of that was in roughly the first 1/3 of the race. But man was it gorgeous. I was able to explore some parts of Arizona I had never seen before. The canyon just south of Superior, AZ, and Picket Post were AMAZING. I can't wait to go back and do some more exploring up there. We were coming out of that canyon towards the Gila River at dusk on the first night and it was magical.

How was the weather?

The first 3 nights were very cold. I'm not sure of the actual temperatures, but I know that night one I did not sleep at all because of the rain and wind. I was shivering to the point of teeth chattering and did not sleep at all. Then, at the top of Mt. Lemmon, it was "see your breath" cold, and some more shivering.

The second half of the race was very hot and exposed. I was told we got close to 100 degrees as we were crossing the desert south of Tucson on the AZT. The stretch through Tucson on the Loop was pretty draining because of the heat and the pavement. When we were slogging through Fantasy Island I let out a loud scream, as it seemed as though that desert treadmill was never going to end.

How much sleep did you get?

Total I am guessing about 12 hours. There were 4 different times I was able to grab an hour to 1.5 hours in the back of my wife Jamie's or Christian's car. But most of our naps were "5ers." These are 5-minute dirt naps you can ask for if you are stumbling and falling asleep as we were moving. We would tell the pacer on duty we needed a 5er and to start the clock. And just like that, when my head would hit the dirt, I was out. Most of the time I was dreaming and drooling as I woke up.

Did you have any unusual experiences during the race?

The most transcendent thing I experienced was not any of the pain or sleep deprivation, but it was how time and space dissolved as the race went on. I know that sounds weird, but it is true. The first couple of days, I was very aware of what day it was, what time it was, how long we had been out there, etc. But as we kept plugging along, none of that mattered. It did not matter if we had 5 miles to go, 10, or even 40 miles to the next break. We just had to keep moving.

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Arizona Monster 300 cont.

And other than my feet, my body did great. No stomach issues, which can be a real problem in ultras. No muscles cramps or pulls. My body just knew it had to keep moving. And it did. In fact, it got to be uncomfortable if we stayed stationary for too long. If we got in at 10:00 p.m., we planned to be back out of the aid station at midnight.

The other fun one were the hallucinations. They were pretty trippy. It was my first time really experiencing them. All the vivid ones happened on night 3 as we climbed Mt. Lemmon. They kicked off with me almost stepping on a 3-foot-long snake as we rounded a corner on the trail, but...there was no snake. Not too long after that was a Muppet style beekeeper in the middle of the forest, then a ninja and a tiki guy dancing behind a boy praying at an altar. Not sure what the visions say about my psyche.

How did your crew handle being out there so long?

My crew is AMAZING. Really, I could not have asked for a better group to get me through this. There is absolutely no doubt that if I did not have that crew, I never would have made it. Most of



Kelly and crew at the finish line in Patagonia, AZ.
From left: Molly Auman, Jeff Auman, Jamie Thrush,
Kelly Thrush, Christian Peranzi, and Emily Truong.

them took the week off of work to help me out. Jeff and Molly Auman came from Prescott to help. Molly spent the entire week with Jamie driving all over Southern AZ to meet me at all of the aid stations. They slept when they could, as there were plenty of times when we started back up in the middle of the night. They were all there at the finish line. They are the ones that put in all the work and really are the best.

What challenges did you and your crew face?

The first challenge was that my race plan fell apart on the 2nd morning. And my crew was amazing there too. I sent a group text on the 2nd morning saying I was not going to make the times I had planned on. There was more climbing than I had anticipated, and I was not staying on pace. The truth is, I was the only one who thought that plan was going to work in the first place. Christian and Molly both chimed in quickly on the group thread to talk me off the ledge. I was very concerned about them as I was not going to be where I said I was going to be, and then they would have to make all these changes. And in some pretty firm language they told me to get out of my own head. Worrying about logistics is their job and they would handle it. My only job, the only thing I needed to focus on, was getting to the next aid station before the cut-off. They would do the rest. It took a bit, but that was exactly what I needed to hear.

The second challenge was my feet. My feet were pretty wrecked from mile 75 and got worse as we went along. At the top of Mt. Lemmon, I could barely fit my feet into my shoes because they were so swollen. So my crew bought me not 1, not 2, but 3 pairs of new shoes as the race went on, each one a size bigger to accommodate my swollen feet. And as a result of wearing shoes that did not fit well, the blisters started. I ended up doing some nerve damage to both of my feet

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Arizona Monster 300 cont.

and one of my blisters got infected after the race. The infection is gone and the blisters have all healed up, but I still have some tingling in a couple of toes on each foot.



Kelly set a blistering pace.

Anything else you want to share?

The people around the trail community are the most amazing thing, my crew especially, but not only them. The people I raced with on the trail, we still keep in touch. And for those of us at the party pace at the back of the pack, I think there is a special bond as we were with each other for the better part of 6.5 to 7 days.

And more specifically for me was the support from my friends and people I know locally. I know that was unique. As we ran through Tucson, my run club, Southwest Endurance Training, came out to cheer me on. My brother and his family came out one night to an aid station. We had friends come with great signs while we were on the loop. My team from work met us at one point. At 9:00 p.m. on night 5 a friend of mine and her sister tracked us down on a dirt road by Pistol Hill to cheer us on. That was special. And words cannot express how grateful I am for the running community in Tucson.



Western States 100 cont.

tries I had 256 tickets. That seems like a lot! It was finally enough, and I was way more than ready to get this show on the road. I guess after that many years, a whim can morph into a slight obsession. My main takeaway was that I was only getting one shot at this, so I better make it count.

I was so thrilled to have friends and family to help me in this endeavor! My support crew included friend Robyn, brother Kip, and husband John. Betsy and Wayne tagged along.

My race started in Olympic Valley, California on June 29th, 2024. Runners are greeted with an immediate ascent to a ridge, a climb of 2550 vertical feet in the first 4 ½ miles. Going down the back side, I got stuck behind lines of runners and

couldn't understand how patient everyone was being. I mean, I'm all for being a pleasant person, but we really don't have time for this.

I arrived at the first aid station (Lyon Ridge, 10.3 miles) just before 8:00 a.m. That was well within a 30-hour pace (straight up math) but slower than suggested by the Western States pacing chart for anyone trying to finish within the cutoff time. Hmm, something to ponder as I go.

Approaching the next aid station (Red Star Ridge, 15.8 miles) I tried to judge when I was getting close and then ducked behind some trees to test out the "pee in a baggie" system for a urine research study being conducted during the race. I came into the aid station looking for someone to hand it off to, surprised that it took some

Western States 100 cont.

asking around. I finally got it delivered to the Pee Person, found some hand sanitizer, and then did my standard water refill.

I hit Duncan Canyon aid station (mile 24.4) ahead of 27-hour pace. Perplexingly, still behind the website-suggested splits (I never did get ahead of them), but at some point I just had to start ignoring those and stick with my own plan.

At Dusty Corners (mile 38), it was nice to sit for a moment and even nicer to get ice for my hat, neck bandana, and water bottle. John helped me switch to a short sleeve cotton shirt plus arm sleeves (also with ice, yay!). I wasn't feeling hot but it was certainly warm and my body was sweating like it knows how to do.



Marcy's Western States 100 race crew.
From left: John, Marcy, Robyn, and Kip.

It was time for one of the big canyons, possibly the steepest, one that has quite a reputation. By the time I arrived, the sun was still out but low in the sky and I could even see some shadows across the way. One benefit to being on the slower side was missing the worst of the heat in this area. I worked my way down the switchbacks, being careful with the footing. I carried my Spiz energy drink baggie down with me so I could drink at the bottom instead of subjecting my stomach to an intake of liquid before a big descent.

After crossing the bridge, I paused to drink some nutrition and then turned my attention to the trail that went immediately and steeply uphill. I made it up a switchback or two before I started feeling "off" and kind of dizzy. That's a new one... OK... Here's a nice rock by the side of the hill. I sat down to wait for the feeling to pass.

I remember having a very short dream and then waking up to see several runners standing there looking at me. I guess I must have passed out briefly! That's another new one.

One of the runners seemed to be a medical person. He checked my pulse and said I must have low blood pressure or something. He was going to alert the medical staff at the next aid station (Devil's Thumb at the rim of the canyon, mile 47.8). He did make me promise to wait for the race people there... OK, sure. I might do that...

I walked slowly uphill, found another rock to sit on for a moment, then walked a bit more, sipping on water as I went. I knew I was losing all kinds of time and getting close to the aid station cutoff. Somewhere near the top (perhaps on the "Thumb" part of the climb) I heard the aid station whistle which meant some number of minutes (30 or 20, can't recall) before the cutoff. Well, it ain't over just yet!

At the aid station Dr. Andy Pasternak (race medical director) came over and said they had been waiting for me. They monitored my progress by asking other runners how I was doing, and learned I was climbing up the trail so they were watching to see if I would make it on my own. We discussed what had happened. My theory was that the combination of drinking calories at the same time as starting a steep uphill had caused a lot of blood to go to my stomach and legs, leaving not so much available for my brain. I'm also guessing I was dehydrated (being heat-acclimated and probably not

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Western States 100 cont.

realizing I needed to be drinking more water).

Dr. Andy asked how was I feeling now? Just slow, I said, but otherwise fine. Would I want to keep going? I looked him straight in the eyes and said "If you're letting me go, I'm going." He glanced over to another aid station medical guy and said "I think that's OK, as long as he's OK with it." And then it was time to get myself through that aid station and out the other side! My official split showed 14 minutes of leeway – not sure if that was coming into the aid station or leaving it – but either way, that's not a lot of leeway.

Arriving at Michigan Bluff aid station (mile 55.7), I was excited to beat another cutoff, even though it wasn't by much. Robyn ran up. I said I had stories but no time. My crew was well aware that something had happened based on my split times, and they were also very cognizant of how close I was to the cutoff time (11 minutes to spare, it turned out). Thankfully I have a resourceful crew and they had everything laid out so I could plop down and start pointing at things. A swallow of Spiz, a water refill, my handheld light, ready to go. I was on my way again—good job pit crew!

Kip and John met me on the road coming into Foresthill (mile 62), where crew are allowed to accompany their runner. I was still on the edge of the cutoffs and needed to stay focused. We got past the timing mat with 7 minutes to spare. We had another super-fast turnaround and I beat the cutoff regardless.

Robyn was ready to begin her pacing duties! Robyn told me later that she had to resist the urge to push me to move faster. It was her first time pacing at an ultra, and she kind of got the full experience (normally I try to keep the drama level a lot lower!)

I had gained some leeway vs. the cutoff at the

Rucky Chucky (mile 78) river crossing, allowing me to focus on preparing to get wet. I opted for the "just in case" lifejacket, although with all the incredible support at the river, plus the slow drift of the water, it was highly unlikely anything would happen. I was more recalling my legs' penchant for cramping. We hooked my water bottle to the back of my running vest so I had two hands to hold onto the rope. And we were off...

The water wasn't particularly cold, there were a lot of rocks to negotiate, and the support was incredible. People in wetsuits lined up along the rope, there were people in kayaks, people on the other side were helping me figure out how to exit the river. Impressive!

Yay, I made it across the river! Earlier in the day I did not expect to get to this point. John picked up the pacing duties and we got to Green Gate (mile 79.8) with 21 minutes to spare and moved quickly through. I hit Auburn Lake (mile 85.2) with 12 minutes of leeway and Quarry Road (mile 90.7) with 11. At some point after it got light, I could see my aid station chart more easily and started looking ahead. And I finally located the upcoming difficulty. At the pre-race meeting, someone said that anyone bumping against the cutoff times at this stage of the race could still make it, but they would have to run. They would have to cover the last 6 miles in 1h 20m, including a significant climb up from No Hands Bridge. I'd been behind my 30-hour pace times since before the river crossing. The cutoff times were lenient enough to allow for that—until they weren't. And that point was approaching.

Finally the Pointed Rocks (mile 94.3) aid station appeared! There was some amount of cheering, yelling, instruction-giving, and a lot of momentum toward getting me through and past the last cutoff that could remove me from the course. With lots of help, I made it, at 9:36 a.m. with 4 minutes to spare. Phew!

Western States 100 cont.

John turned his pacing duties over to Kip for the final 6 miles. I tried to run, but really, nothing I did at that point was going to get me to the finish line by 11:00 a.m. I knew I would get there, it was just going to take a while longer.

The Robie Point aid station (mile 98.9) was being dismantled, as it was after 11:00 a.m. They offered water and someone came over to cut off my race wristband. But is it OK if we keep going on the course? "Sure! We can't stop you from trekking through town." Excellent, let's go!

Along the streets of Auburn we saw signs of earlier watch parties, chairs and inspirational messages, decorations, and even an empty keg (Robyn checked). I picked up speed (it's all

relative) as the grade turned downhill. My comment to a race photographer still on the course was "Who needs a belt buckle?"

Over at the Placer High School track, they let us on! They didn't have to – I was many minutes over time – but they did. Trackside, a bunch of people clapped and cheered, and my DNF got a way bigger reception than most of my prior official race finishes. Hugely grateful! I stepped over the timing mat that was in the process of getting disassembled, and they even gave Kip a medal to put around my neck.

After the race we all took a few moments to crash in the shade on the comfortable grass. It was marvelous to just sit, ice my knees, and not think about cutoff times. 

2025 SAR RACE SCHEDULE

- **September 1st: TMC Saguaro National Park Labor Day 8 Mile & 5K Run/Walk**
- **September 7th: TMC 10K & 5K Run/Walk**
- **September 27th: Sabino Canyon One Mile FitKidz Classic**
- **September 28th: Jim Click's Run 'n' Roll 5K & 1 Mile**
- **October 19th: TMC A-Mountain Half Marathon & 4 Mile + FitKidz Mile**
- **November 2nd: Dave's Run for ALS 8K + FitKidz & Family Mile**
- **November 27th: Thanksgiving XC Classic – 5K & 1.5 Mile Fun Run/Walk**

About SAR

The Southern Arizona Roadrunners is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to promoting health and fitness in Tucson and Southern Arizona through running and walking.

Our vision is to strengthen and support the running and walking community in Southern Arizona through high-quality, affordable, and family-friendly events and programming that empower people of all backgrounds, abilities, and ages to pursue a healthier lifestyle. We promote community engagement by celebrating the joy of athletic achievement, individual and group participation, philanthropy, and volunteer service.



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