

Sisters man runs Alpine 100 ultra-marathon

By Ceili Cornelius
Correspondent

Dirk Van der Velde, Sisters High School graduate in the class of 2012, just ran his first 100-mile ultra-marathon race. The race took place in the old-growth forest in the Three Sisters Wilderness.

Van der Velde had never necessarily thought of himself as a runner until he started after his soccer career ended. He played soccer for Sisters High School for two years under Coach Rob Jensen, getting to play in two playoff games. He then went on to play soccer for two years in St. Louis and then two years at the University of Portland as a Division 1 athlete, winning two championships at each school.

After college, his soccer career petered out and he struggled with where to go after that.

“About a year ago I got into running, and at first, I was like ‘running and not chasing a ball,’ but then I started running distances that built over time and loved it,” said Van der Velde.

He ran his first marathon and loved the idea of pushing

himself to his perceived limits. The ultra-marathon races were the ultimate reach goal. Van der Velde began weekend training five months prior to the race where he would do weekend-warrior-style races and up the distance he was doing each weekend. “I started running longer distances every weekend and then would also train at Smith Rock to train for the vertical elevation gain that I would be getting during the marathon,” he said.

The Alpine Running Old Cascadia 100-mile race took place in the old-growth Cascade forest near Lava Lakes Snow Park. The race is set up where there are 13 water and food stations to make sure that runners have adequate calories and water. There were “bag drops” at miles 30, 50 and 80 where runners could change gear and re-group for the next section of the race. The marathon was 100 miles in a loop twice around the area surrounding Lava Lakes.

The main part of the preparation for the race for Van der Velde was the mental side of it. He had three mantras that he came up with for himself at each mile-marker point he

was at. At mile 30, which is the farthest he had ever run, his mantra that he spoke to himself was: “begin with the end”; at mile 50, “show no weakness and turn pain into potential”; between then and mile 80, he was in a moment-to-moment mindset when he’d have to be running in the middle of the night; and for the rest of the race until the finish line, his mantra was “you didn’t come this far to come this far.”

“Those mantras helped me maintain a healthy mental state, as I had never run that far,” he said.

It took Van der Velde 30 hours and 28 minutes to complete the race, running for most of the time with some hiking on the vertical inclines.

Van der Velde said that “it was a surreal experience getting to run through the old growth and really be connected to what matters being surrounded by the intelligent trees.”

Van der Velde was the only Central Oregon local to cross the finish line among 28 other runners. There were only two



PHOTO PROVIDED

Dirk Van der Velde took on his first ultra-marathon in the high Cascades. Now he’s hooked.

other people from Oregon in the race.

“I was pretty steady emotionally when I crossed the finish line; it was nothing like I had imagined,” he said. “My family and friends surprised me by being at the finish line as well; it was a truly magical moment.”


In a race such as this, runners get to know parts of themselves they didn’t know they had, as Van der Velde

described: “I got to meet all these personalities of myself as I went through this race and experience.”

Now living in Bend, Van der Velde works as the operations manager at Tetherow Resort. He is currently training for his next ultra-marathon race in Colorado.

“I am 100 percent hooked and want to do this for as long as I can and see how fast I can get,” he said.

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