

EVERGLADES ULTRAS 2016 RACE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

February 20, 2016, at the Fakahatchee Strand Preserve State Park in Copeland, FL: we deserved this day! It was ideal running weather for a race through the Everglades. After months of unseasonal wet weather created the highest water levels and greatest flooding in park history, the somewhat overcast day and moderate temperatures made for a great day of racing.

And, for a *record-breaking* day! Katalin Nagy of Sarasota, FL returned after a one-year hiatus to again win the 50 mile race overall and smash her own women's record by an amazing 20 minutes, finishing in 6:52:35. Both men's and women's records fell in the 50 kilometer race. David Petersheim of Christiana, PA, completed the course in 3:43:39. Heather Hoechst of Philadelphia, destroyed the record set last year by an astounding 50 minutes, finishing in 4:03:50. The men's 25k record also fell as Amos King, another Pennsylvanian, crossed the line in 1:41:27. Congratulations, too, to 50 mile men's winner, Dan McHugh, from Key Largo, FL in a time of 7:58:59, and women's 25 kilometer champ, Gabriella Passidomo, of Naples, FL, in 2:05:30.



Kati Nagy gets it done!

EVERGLADES ULTRAS was never intended to be an adventure race nor a mud run. With a large percentage of this 80,000 acre park inaccessible this winter due to high water, the course for each race was re-drawn for 2016. New routes allowed all runners to see picturesque Ballard's Cabin on East Main Tram—also known as the "Fakahatchee Hilton"! After 50 years of being totally overgrown, 2.75 miles of South Main Tram were re-opened last summer and all runners got to experience at least part of this beautiful new trail. The expansive views into the swamp from "South Main" are quite special, and we are grateful to have had the opportunity to experience it. There was no standing or flowing water that wasn't either bridged or had a work-around cut, so runners did not have to trudge through water. There was lots of mud, however, as the beginnings of a drying-out process in the park only went so far by race day. Considering that three weeks prior almost the entire road through the park (Janes Scenic Drive) was under 6-inches of water—with fish literally swimming on top of it—everyone seemed quite accepting of this minor inconvenience. In fact, conditions were so sketchy so close to race day that on Thursday, two days before the event, a final 2-mile segment of trail was deemed too wet, muddy and

potentially dangerous for it to make the final cut. Literally the final route for the 50-mile race was determined less than 48 hours before the race start.



Mocassin Corner on West Main—waist deep on race day!

But, Mother Nature may have done us an unwitting favor! Rather than one long loop course for each race, 2016 incorporated out-and-back segments along the three primary trails and Janes Scenic Drive. Feedback from runners was overwhelmingly positive about the value of seeing other runners throughout the day. Not only was the social aspect of the race enhanced, but faster athletes could gauge how their competition was doing which made for some interesting strategic thinking.

The Fakahatchee is home to the largest variety of orchids and bromeliads on the continent, and to a great variety of animal life. It is part of the Florida panther habitat area. There was one panther sighting during the race--another two runners heard one in a nearby tree--and some alligators and a few snakes, plus a wide variety of wading birds. But in this Florida preserve on race weekend, in part due to all the activity of runners, eight support stations and numerous park rangers monitoring all active trails on their ATVs and UTVs, most animals kept their distance. Some runners were relieved, while others were disappointed they didn't have the opportunity to get their Tarzan on!



Janes Scenic Drive 6 inches under water three weeks before race day.

The 2016 *EVERGLADES ULTRAS* was also the *USA Track & Field--Florida Association* championship for trail races at 50 miles and 50 kilometers. Congratulations to the Florida Association award winners at those distances:

50 MILE--FEMALE

1st Place: Katalin Nagy. 6:52:35
2nd Place: Kimberly Gates. 9:21:21
3rd Place: Morgan Fowler. 10:27:56
Masters 1st Place: Debra Bertolini. 10:44:08

50 MILE--MALE

1st Place: Dan McHugh. 7:58:59
2nd Place: Michael Andriano. 8:27:13
3rd Place: Gwendal Le Tutour. 9:01:38
Masters 1st Place: Chris Scott. 9:07:01

50 KILOMETER--FEMALE

1st Place: Heather Hoechst. 4:03:50
2nd Place: Naomi Imaizumi. 4:28:37
3rd Place: Katy Adams. 5:14:32
Masters 1st Place: Molly McCann. 5:29:01

50 KILOMETER--MALE

1st Place: David Petersheim. 3:43:39
2nd Place: Jonathan Lantz. 4:02:15
3rd Place: Jerry Busbee. 4:42:08
Masters 1st Place: Hector Arana. 4:45:52



Old Snaggletooth waiting for lunch to be served

Please check-out hundreds of photos and the 2016 race video, courtesy of Naples photographer Jay Staton, on the “Photos & Stories” page on the race website, www.evergladesultras.com. Thousands of additional race day photos are linked there, too. The 2017 edition of *EVERGLADES ULTRAS* will take place on Saturday, February 18. Race routes will depend upon park conditions, but are expected to incorporate sections of the prairie (that were under six inches of water this year) as well as out-and-backs along the primary tram trails through park swamplands. Incorporating the best experiences from each preceding year, the 6th annual *EVERGLADES ULTRAS* in 2017 promises to be the best ever! Registration will open March 1st. A limit of 300-runners will be in effect, so register early.



Happy finish!

Bob Becker
Race Director