

## The 100-Mile Man

September 11, 2013



When was the last time you ran 100 miles? How about 100 miles in about 24 hours?

Brandon Young, a sales rep in XPO's Gainesville, Ga., office, just did. Last month, he completed the Leadville Trail 100 Run, a grueling 100-mile high-altitude course in Colorado, in an incredible 24 hours and 11 minutes.

With endurance like that, one might think Brandon is a lifelong runner. But that's not so; he began in 2009. "Running was never an interest until I had kids," said Brandon. "I decided that I wanted to be a solid, healthy role model for them.

Once I started running, I wanted to push the limits after every distance I ran. The 100-mile distance was what I really wanted to go for."

Brandon runs long distances on a regular basis. He averages 65 to 80 miles a week, hitting 100 miles during his biggest weeks. Most of his runs are done on his lunch break across from the office at the Chicopee Woods mountain bike trails, a 21-mile loop thick with maples and pawpaws.

Saturdays find him in the North Georgia mountains, patiently pacing the hills. For longer distances on weekdays, Brandon laces up his sneakers before dawn, the sky still inky black at 4 a.m. as he flies over the pavement hours before the neighborhood stirs. When he's through, he trades in his sneakers for dress shoes and goes to work. According to Brandon, many of his colleagues share his passion for running. "We have a ton of runners and athletes here in the Gainesville office who always support each other's endeavors," said Brandon. "But my number-one motivation is and always will be my wife and two boys."

In 2011, Brandon completed his first ultramarathon – defined as anything over 26.2 miles – and since then, has completed an additional 15 "ultras."

Last year, he ran his first 100-miler in Alabama. After that, Brandon set his sights on his next trial: a high-altitude race. He signed up for the largest and oldest 100-mile race in the United States, the Leadville 100.

The challenge, nicknamed the "Race Across the Sky," twists across the Colorado Rockies, reaching an elevation of 12,600 feet as runners cross through Hope Pass, the highest point of the race.

Participants compete with altitude, tough terrain, mountain climbs, river crossings and significant temperature variations. Half the runners never cross the finish line.

This year, 943 people started the race, but only 493 finished it – Brandon among them. He placed 40th in his age group and 91st overall.

The beginning of the race was grueling. "The first 30 miles felt pretty bad to the point I was ready to drop out, then from 40 to 47, I was feeling and moving really good," said Brandon. At mile 47, he hit the wall, sometimes slowing to a halt. Brandon thought of his family and supporters waiting to cheer him on at mile 50 and pushed onward.

Their presence was just the jolt he needed. "The second half of the race turned out to be the best," said Brandon. "I felt great all the way to the finish. I was running faster and moving much better than I did in the first half of the race."

He credits his wife and friends for his motivation. "If it wasn't for them, I would have dropped a long time back. They kept me going and pushed me to the finish," he said.

Brandon will close out 2013 with the New York Marathon; the Duncan Ridge Trail 50K, one of the toughest endurance races in the Southeast; and the Lookout Mountain 50 Mile.

He's up to the challenge. "When you finish something like this, you really feel like you can do anything," Brandon said.