

Sri Chinmoy 3100 Mile Race- The Race of Summer-1999

Sri Chinmoy Marathon Team multiday races are usually of a challenging nature. Imagine a typical city block or two, with houses, a school, roads, a park, trees, swings, fences and sidewalks. The Third Annual Sri Chinmoy 3100 Mile Race was held on the concrete sidewalk course alongside the fenced-in confines of Thomas Edison Technical School, and the Joe Austin Playground, in Jamaica, Queens, New York, an urban suburb. Once around this loop nets a runner .5488 of a mile(883.207 meters). A multi-cultural, multi-racial enclave of houses and apartment buildings surround this venue, as well as the service-road of the Grand Central Parkway, as thousands pass daily on their way home, to work, to school or to lead their lives. Every summer for the last 24 four years (excepting 2020) the SCMT has staged a super-long distance race around this quaint block. Limited to a small field of specialist runners, the 3100 miler requires a remarkable athlete for its completion. The runner must average 59.618 miles per day, with a timespan of only 51 days to complete the distance. There is a six-hour curfew from 12 midnight to 600 am.

The race is a portable, parallel world of its own next to the neighborhood. Each morning after 500 am, two vans pull up at the starting line of the loop under some sycamore trees. A small crew goes to work. Tables and chairs appear, as well as time clock, water, refreshments and runner- food out of a trailer behind the blue van. Massage tables are put in place, large containers of cool water for dipping legs or feet appear later. A tarpaulin is unrolled over one van, providing shade for the runners and their helpers. Bathrooms on a trailer are right behind. A scoreboard with results and printed statistics also appear, as well as a card table for the lap-counter, a clock and a thermometer. Both vans contain medical supplies including bandages and blister-repair kits, vitamins, supplements, and even cots for indoor medical attention. The blue trailer contains all the foodstuffs and holds other equipment and paper goods as well as a compartment for ice. About 545 am, five athletes appear with running shoes and bags of equipment- the runners have arrived with their gear to get ready for another day. Precisely at 600am, their running epic begins. By midnight, the runners have departed to their homes or apartments, their miles recorded, their lives refined to a world of running, resting, contemplation, and eating only. The race is taken down, not a trace remains until the next day.

Limited to a maximum of seven runners, the Sri Chinmoy 3100 Mile Race began this year with five runners taking the line on June 20th. **Edward Kelley**, 41, from Huntington Beach, California, was back for his fourth go-round of the course. He won the race in 1997, and finished second in 1998 and in 1996 as well, in the only 2700 mile race ever contested on this same course. He is a tough competitor who relies on his speed, strength and determination to get through the long ones.

Suprabha Beckjord, 43, from Washington,DC, another super-long veteran, and the only woman ever to finish the 3100, was back for her third try. She is a petite, slightly-built blond woman with amazing endurance, the capacity to run consistently and to focus clearly throughout an event of this length. In 1997 she had only one day out of 50 days with less than 60 miles. Last year she ran even faster, finishing third out of six runners, setting new marks for women yet again.

Aleksandar Arsic, 33, from Nis, Yugoslavia, was back to finally conquer the distance, having come up short twice, most recently last year with 2831 miles. He had trained diligently all year, and had run an encouraging six-day total of 403 miles six weeks earlier.

Trishul Cherns, 42, the dynamic Canadian living 15 minutes away in Elmhurst, Queens, was another hopeful. He ran the 2700 miler in 1996 on this course, finishing fifth out of six starters. An ultrarunner who races often, Trishul also spent several hours a day training on the concrete walkways this year, hoping to toughen his feet and shins for the relentless pounding they would receive.

Thomas Reckziegel, 31, from Germany, rounded out the field of five. He had run 888 miles in the 1997 1000 miler, as well as having won recent SC 47-mile races and 12 hour walks, displaying good fitness. He came with no plan other than to see how things would go.



As the horn went off, Edward Kelley burst to the front, intent on taking back the record that was once his. In 1997 he ran 3100 miles in 47 days, 15 hours for first place. Last year, 1998, Istvan Sipos from Hungary defeated Edward and broke his record by running 3100 miles in 46 days, 17 hours. Edward still bested his own time, in 47 days, five hours.

Confident of his fitness this year, he ran to 93.84 miles on Day 1, the furthest anyone had run on the first day in this event.

Aleksandar followed with 80 miles, Trishul and Thomas 74+ miles each, and Suprabha 73.53 miles.

An independent filmmaker from England, James Ewart, filmed the start and the first few days, then later came back to do a more thorough story on the race. He hoped to sell a full-length documentary to the BBC about the race. The American legend, Ted Corbitt was on hand for the start. I imagined if this race were held 25 years ago Ted would have been the first to sign up. He was a pioneer of ultra-running, ahead of his time, born a generation too early. These runners in the 3100 were his mythical grandchildren, of sorts.

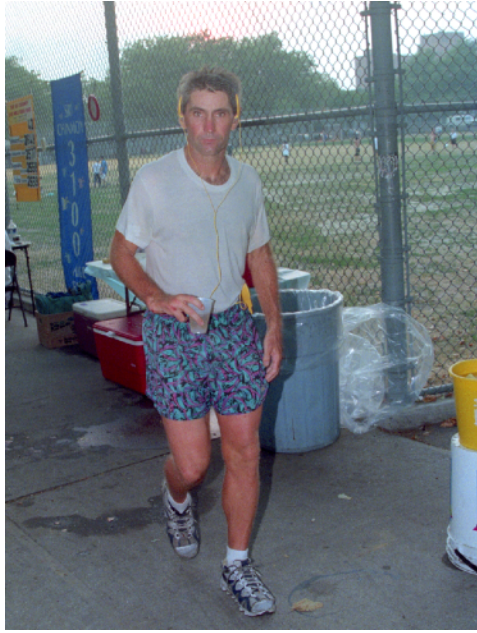
The first week of running was accompanied by mostly pleasant weather, with temperatures reaching the middle 80's(25 -27° C). Aleksandar had the best total on Day 2, with 70 miles. As the mercury started to rise during the week, Suprabha seemed to do well. She picked up nearly 20 miles from Ed's opening day lead by Day 7, and kept the pressure on. Aleksandar, who had been bitten by a dog on Day 3, started to revive, and Trishul was also approaching the lead as Edward Kelley began to get better from a lingering flu bug he had picked up weeks before. On Day 7 Ed cranked out 66.4 miles and seemed to be well.

On Day 8, Trishul tied Suprabha for second place, and Edward ran 68 miles to increase his lead. Ed did the same on Day 9, but the temperatures were getting higher, in the 90's, and the humidity was rising. By Day 13, Edward has fashioned a 22 mile lead on the rest of the field, and Thomas was making a move upward in the standings as well. Edward had run 459 miles the first week, 455 miles the second. Aleks would get on his bike to ride home the half-mile to his room in a nearby apartment. This ritual seemed to loosen his leg muscles a bit, and he repeated this episode every night.

It usually takes about two to three weeks for the runners to get into shape- to be able to adapt to high mileage with no drop off in results on a daily basis. However, no one could have expected or anticipated the heat wave that began entering the area. After a respite of a day or so, scorching heat and humidity prevailed. Suddenly, Edward and Trishul were reduced to walking or laying dizzily in the shade for hours, as temperatures soared to 98° on Day 15, with 60% humidity, making it feel like 105°. Suprabha and Aleks were able to regain some of Edward's lead, but it was survival time. On Day 16, Suprabha edged into the lead with 60 miles, the temperature hit 102° for the day -a record, and Edward and Trishul barely made 32 and 31 miles respectively.

Somehow Suprabha had established an 18-mile lead over Edward, as she passed 1000 miles in 15 days, 12 hours. The next day was the same- 101°- high humidity, no breeze, no rain. This time Thomas with 65 miles and Suprabha with 60 miles escaped the day intact, but barely. Suprabha was now ahead of Aleks by 35 miles and Edward by 45 miles. Again Edward suffered through a 34-mile day. Trishul was better, but his plans of staying close to everyone were evaporating.

The monotony of the course and the daily routine are major factors in the race as well as high mileage and blisters. But if you look too far ahead or even one hour ahead of yourself in this race, you can get caught in the doubt cage. Then depression or anxiety can attack or take your poise away. The runner must always focus on the task at hand, or live in a comfort zone of positive energy and reinforcement. You must also love running, to the point of feeling it is a major part of you. One's inner reality is brought to the fore, and is a manifestation of your talent. Sri Chinmoy always applauded the runners for not having fear become another road-block . We had seen how runners have adapted to the staggering amount of miles to be run, by just taking it one day at a time.



At the end of Day 18, Suprabha had a 48-mile lead on Edward and 45 on Aleks. However, Edward started to revive. On Day 19 he ran 70 miles to reclaim second place, although the temperatures were soon rising again on the sun-baked course. Heat can easily sap a tired body of strength and nutrients. Just as easily, it can bake the brain and fry the will to go on.

Thomas was severely in need of coaching, but after the intense heat wave had ended, he had all but lost his will to go on. This was surprising, in that he had run well in the worst heat, and was moving up in the standings. Sure enough, on Day 21 he called it quits, perhaps only a day or two away from locking-in mentally to the race, and making a run for the lead.

At the end of three weeks, Edward had climbed to within 32 miles of Suprabha, who by this time was steady and was running to survive. Aleksandar also began 'to revive and became consistent, as the four

remaining runners graduated from the 'break-in' period, and most importantly, prepare for the second and third heat-waves.

With only four runners left, the race seemed to lose a little bit of energy. But now was the time for the quartet that remained to get down to business. As the first major heat-wave had subsided a bit, Edward, Aleks and Trishul came to life and started to run higher mileage. Ed Kelley posted a great week of 465 miles, including days of 66,67,68, 68, and 69 miles. Suprabha's lead began to decrease to 25 miles over Ed as she was still recovering from the brutal heat of the previous week.

Trishul was bolstered by the assistance of Virendra Gauthier, who became his chief handler and constructed a plan to get Trishul back into the race and to finish. Aleksandar continued to run well, establishing a solid cushion of 25 miles above average, as well as being 140 miles ahead of his last year's effort. Even as another bout of intense sun and humidity entered the area on Day 26, the remaining four were now noticeably fitter and could stay later at night if necessary to reach their daily mileage goals.

On Day 28, Ed Kelley slipped past Suprabha for the first time since the 102nd day on July 5th with 68 miles. When a friend asked why it took him so long to catch her, he replied that she would chew up just about any other male runner- she was just too tough and consistent. The mercury hit 98° that afternoon. After four weeks of running, and three of those weeks in sauna-like conditions, the iron-will of the runners was ever apparent. We were just hoping and praying it would not get worse.



On Day 30 thunderstorms hit the area in the afternoon, bringing welcome relief. The runners continued their heroic struggle, with Aleks leading the way with 63 miles. The next day was California weather- sunny with low humidity, so Edward pushed to 69 miles and established another 20-mile lead.

Trishul was now pushing Aleks from behind, as he was regaining his running form and doing well, especially at night. He stayed until midnight every evening, and often made up miles on Aleks, who at one point had a 26-mile gap on the older Canadian. On this day Suprabha struggled badly and for the first time in this race went below 60 miles. She revived for a few days, but the heat came back yet again. We found out later in early August that the preceding month of July was the hottest month on record in the last 120 years in the New York area.

On Day 32 Edward went past the 2000-mile mark for the eighth time in his running career in 31 days, 13 hours. All the men eventually ran their

second 1000 miles faster than their first. The temperatures stayed in the mid to upper nineties, with the humidity rising each day. would they be able to keep going?



Trishul led the pack on Day 35 with 63 miles. The air was stifling, the sun unbearable. Yet they continued on. On Day 36, Aleksandar ran his best day since the second day with 65.5 miles. Ed Kelley extended his lead to 40 miles over Suprabha. Trishul got into the plus side of the daily average mileage. Finally, a cushion! On Day 37 Trishul ran 65.5 miles; Aleks was nearly 190 miles better than last year.

On Day 38, the heat

was nearly too much for Suprabha. She suffered greatly with falls and weakness, and struggled to make it to 49 miles. With less than two weeks left, she had to guard her health. So her crew, led by Dr.

Ivana and Chief Nurse Kritagyata, decided to back off her effort and just let her finish. She had enough cushion to make it to the end if she could just hold on. On Day 39, Aleksandar moved in front of Suprabha with a 63.1-mile day in 97° steamy conditions. He was really having the race of his life, and his handler, Dayan, was enjoying watching his countryman move smoothly from mile to mile.

At the end of week 6, Ed Kelley had run another 450-mile week to fashion a 70-mile lead over Aleks and the rest of the field. Ed's wife Kim arrived that evening to help crew for him for a week before his finish. Trishul slipped past Subrabha by five miles by the end of the day, as he was now matching Aleks lap for lap. Trishul even whittled away at Aleks' lead over him, especially if Aleks went home before he did.

On Day 44, Ed Kelley passed over 19,000 multi-day racing miles in this decade. Aleks went past 2700 in 43 days, 12 hours, which was four days and 21 hours faster than his time from last year.



Trishul Cherns later went through 2700 miles in 43 days, 16 hours, which is nearly two days faster than his finishing time from the 1996 2700 mile race.

With only a week to go, or less, as the case may be, all four runners were really moving well and holding up. On Day 46, Trishul moved within eight miles of Aleks, but the Yugoslav would not be denied. He matched Trishul lap for lap, and finally seemed to solidify his hold on second place on Day 48. He was now running with great control and confidence, smiling and realizing that the goal was his. Trishul was just too tired to make another charge beyond his present pace. Edward Kelley passed 3000 miles for the third time in his life, managing to run the third thousand miles faster than his second thousand in this race.

Edward Kelley finished his epic journey on Day 49, at 6:34 pm, running 53.78 miles to reach the magical 3100 Mile mark in 48 days, 12 hours and 34 minutes. He dedicated his victory to his mother and to his wife Kim, who have given him the inspiration to go on when things were tough. He carried his wife through the finish line tape, and after whoops of delight and a congratulations song, he doused several of his friends and some of the race directors with buckets of water.



Edward told reporters and on camera that he learned so much during this race- how to go within himself to find the strength to endure the difficult times, and how to have faith in those helping him, and also a reliance on 'The Man Upstairs'. Edward averaged 63.85 miles per day. He walked the extra 13 laps to 5000 km- his third trip to this unique mark. All four runners embraced and held Edwards' hand aloft as he basked in the sun of victory.

The very next evening, at 10:50 pm, Aleksandar Arsic, who was 82 miles behind Edward when the American finished, turned the last corner of the racecourse and strided home with a Yugoslavian flag in hand, in second place in a time of 49 days, 16 hours and 50 minutes. He said his race was like a dream to him, as if the Supreme Grace had descended. He beamed the glow of inner and outer satisfaction. He had gone 269 miles farther than he had ever done, and had transcended his previous achievements by amazing times and distances. Aleks averaged 62.27 miles per day.



The
next

morning at 9:36 am, Trishul Cherns arrived at his finish-line destiny. He reached the 3100 mile goal in 50

days, three hours and 36 minutes. Trishul had fought the brave fight and had given his all. His wife Kaaren, friends and fellow ultrarunners all greeted him at the line with much jubilation. He thanked everyone for the help and support, and applauded Sri Chinmoy for giving him the inspiration to run. Trishul averaged 61.84 miles per day. His race was perhaps the best of his career

Suprabha had only to run for one and a half more days until the end of her race. On Day 52, she ran 43.9 miles to the goal, finishing in 51 days, 14 hours and 16 minutes. She was still the only woman ever to finish the 3100 miler, and now she had completed all three. She had run 20,108 miles in the decade of the 1990's, in 14 multi-days- a truly amazing achievement. Her triumph in the heat of the hottest July on record in New York underscores the depth of her talent and the sweet, cheerful attitude she carried. It is her devotion to Sri Chinmoy's spiritual path that gives her the energy to continue, she says, and as long as her body can go, then she will follow. Suprabha Beckjord averaged 60.09 miles per day.



With the last super-long multiday of the millennium complete, the Sri Chinmoy Marathon Team must thank all the volunteers, medical professionals, helpers, handlers, well wishers, donors and supporters who gave so freely and lovingly of their time and resources to this grand undertaking. And of course, we must all thank Sri Chinmoy himself for the conception and unflagging inspiration of this jewel of his, this heart-offering not only to the running-world, but to all of mankind. He said he meditates on each runner every day, and gives them energy to reach their goal. They just have to believe that the Goal is Won.



Third Annual Sri Chinmoy 3100 Mile Race Final Results

June 20 -August 10, 1999

paved,certified .5488 mile loop (883.2079meters) 5 starters

- | | |
|--|------------------------------|
| 1. Edward Kelley,42, Huntington Beach, CA USA | 48 days + 12:34:36 |
| 1000 mi = 16+00:26:13 | |
| 2000 km= 20+03:58:26 | |
| 2000 mi = 31+13:05:21 | |
| 3000 km=29+12:05:38 | |
| 4000 km= 39+04:50:43 | |
| 3000 mi = 47+03:40:06 | |
| 5000 km= 48+15:05:01 | |
| 2. Aleksandar Arsic, 33,Nis, Yugoslavia | 49 days + 16:50:18 NR |
| 1000 mi = 16+07:35:21 NR | |
| 2000km= 20+07:31:36 NR | |
| 3000km= 30+07:59:20 NR | |
| 2000 mi =32+10:53:40 NR | |
| 3000 mi =48+08:20:56 NR | |
| 4000km =40+04:40:06 NR | |
| 5000 km=50+01:51:07 NR | |
| 3. Trishul Cherns, 42, Elmhurst, New York (CAN) | 50 days + 03:36:01 NR |
| 1000 mi = 16+10:19:35 | |
| 2000km = 20+16:46:07 | |
| 3000km = 30+15:40:27 NR | |
| 2000 mi = 32+17:41:52 NR | |
| 4000km = 40+11:08:30 NR | |
| 3000 mi = 48+11:35:17 NR | |
| 5000 km =50+06:23:52 NR | |
| 4. Suprabha Beckjord,43, Washington,DC USA | 51 days + 14:16:17 |
| 1000 mi = 15+12:10:27 | |
| 2000 km =19+10:53:30 | |
| 3000 km =29+14:10:10 | |
| 2000 mi = 32+01:06:32 | |
| 4000 km= 40+08:08:27 | |
| 3000 mi = 49+15:39:17 | |
| Thomas Reckziegel,31,GER | 1170.0416 miles |
| 1000 mi = 16+06:35:21 | Dnf after 21 days... |





Suprabha Beckjord's Decade of Multiday Excellence

| | | |
|----------------|------------|--------------|
| 1990 | | |
| Seven Day Race | 500 Miles | First Place |
| 1991 | | |
| Seven Day Race | 523 Miles | First Place |
| 1300 Mile Race | 1201 Miles | Third Place |
| 1992 | | |
| Seven Day Race | 484 Miles | First Place |
| 1300 Mile Race | 1300 Miles | First Place |
| 1993 | | |
| Seven Day Race | 490 Miles | Second Place |
| 1300 Mile Race | 1300 Miles | Second Place |
| 1994 | | |
| Seven Day Race | 502 Miles | Third Place |
| 1300 Mile Race | 1300 Miles | Second Place |
| 1995 | | |
| Seven Day Race | 508 Miles | Third Place |
| 1996 | | |
| 2700 Mile Race | 2700 Miles | First Place |
| 1997 | | |
| 3100 Mile Race | 3100 Miles | First Place |
| 1998 | | |
| 3100 Mile Race | 3100 Miles | First Place |
| 1999 | | |
| 3100 Mile Race | 3100 Miles | First Place |

Totals: 14 Multi-day Races
 20,108 Miles
 Eight First Places