



Thursday, 1 August 2013

Racing the Chiemgauer 100km Ultra Marathon

By Marcel Laponder

Im running barefoot. The trail for the next few 100 meters is hard packed single track. I can still feel my ITB punching against the side of my knee which is only relieved by running barefoot. I have completed 40km and the last 3 km I was in agony due to a poor decision, I could hardly walk downhill, uphill was fine. 4.5 hours before at 5am 90 athletes started the Chiemgauer 100 Ultra Marathon trail race. The day before a further 50 or so runners started the 100 mile race and would join onto our route today.

It was to be a long day especially with temperatures at 5am already at 20 deg and forecast to be over 35 deg. My motto for the race if I wanted to last the 100k was..."if it feels slow go slower." With in the first 3km at least 50 or so of the starters had overtaken me and were slowly disappearing into the dim morning light,

Six weeks ago I had badly sprained my ankle. I had recovered quickly enough to do a further couple of 30k + training runs and and 50km race simulation of the route. I had run most of the Chiemgauer route in sections and was familiar with where I could find water and take emergency exits even where I had phone reception.

At 15km we hit our first single track and this is where I slowly started overtaking people one by one. Last year I competed in the Salmon 4-Trails. 160Km spread over 4 days of alpine racing, much of what I had learned during that race was applied in my preparation for this race. I had a nutrition plan for both before during and after the race. I was burning around 700 calories per hour (8000 for the entire race) and could realistic only eat about 400 a hour. One of the biggest hurdles of completing the Chiemgauer would be nutrition, I had only been running one hour but was I was already eating energy gels and bars, mixed with this I was eating Chia seeds that form a membrane barrier and helped slow down the uptake of sugars. At each aid station (6 in total) I had a drop bag containing fresh socks with foot powder. Gels and bars. Protein powder and a some Coke for quick energy. I also had a fresh pair of shoes waiting for me after the first 26km.

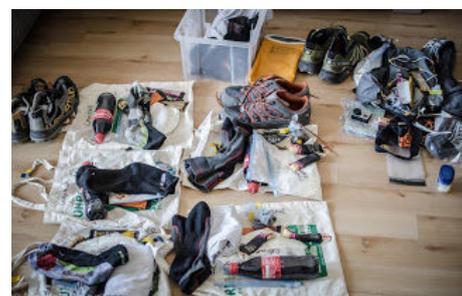
During training runs my feet are always sore after 30km of running so I decided to change to shoes with more cushioning for the next 18km of running. This felt really nice when I started running after the aid station. But it was not until after I had crossed the Unternberg that I felt my ITB flaring up. Very soon I was climbing again up the Hornldwand...a quick 20min speed hike up some dodgy scree. Over the top is a hard packed single track before dropping into very technical downhill with many rocks, this is where my ITB really started to punch against the side of my knee.

The ITB is a band running from the thigh down to the knee. When the ITB isn't strong enough then it compensates by tightening... stretching brings temporary relief, strengthening this band is the only solution. But I normally only get this injury at the start of the year where my accumulated running mileage is still low. I realised that it might be my shoes. I decided to run barefoot. The next few hundred meters are hard packed mud. The pain was relieved very rapidly. The ITB irritation was due to too much cushioning and the shoe not being stable enough. (These were fairly new and a different make of shoe that I haven't run much in yet.) But I had to put my shoes back on again due to the rocky downhill. Again my ITB got irritated just walking! I was in serious trouble and I was now planning my exit out of the race. I knew there was one spot in the valley where I could get phone signal and send a quick sms to my wife who was waiting at the next aid station 4km away. What would normally take 30 min took nearly an hour to decent.

At the bottom of the mountain was my wife waiting with my next pair of shoes that I normally run with, quick change over. Running the next 1km to the aid station my ITB irritation



Photo: trailrunning-nation.com



Everything prepared for the long day. Drop bags with fresh sock, gels, bars, recovery powders.

improved dramatically. I now possibly had a chance to continue. There was still some pain running downhill due to the initial irritation but I could at least walk downhill hill pain free. My race plan now changed where as before I was speed hiking the hills and running downhill I would for the rest of the race run the hills and speed hike the downhills. This approach seemed to work really well and I was making up time and places again.

During midday the temperature was around 35 deg. I purposely wore a really thick t-shirt. Each stream that I could find I would wet my shirt. This combined with sweat would have water next to my skin and when the wind blew would keep me cool. At one shallow stream I was lying face down in the water with just my feet sticking out. Imagine that if someone had seen me they would have thought that I am trying to commit suicide.

From 55km I started struggling with a overtightened calf muscle which was more of a hinderance than the ITB. It is possible that this also came from the over cushioned shoes that I had been wearing earlier. Besides this I was actually still feeling really strong, the heat was not a major issue. I felt like I had only race 20k by the time I hit 65km, my nutrition was spot on. Pacing was good even though I had lost a lot of time earlier. By the time I was at the 75km mark I was lying in 13th place in the 100k standings. But my calf was almost too tight to run. I decided to take a official shortened route that would total 80km at the finish. My winter season was more important and I had to think of the recovery time due to the calf and ITB issue. I came in second place out of the 33 athletes that took the 80km option. A result that I was more than happy with.

Additional information:

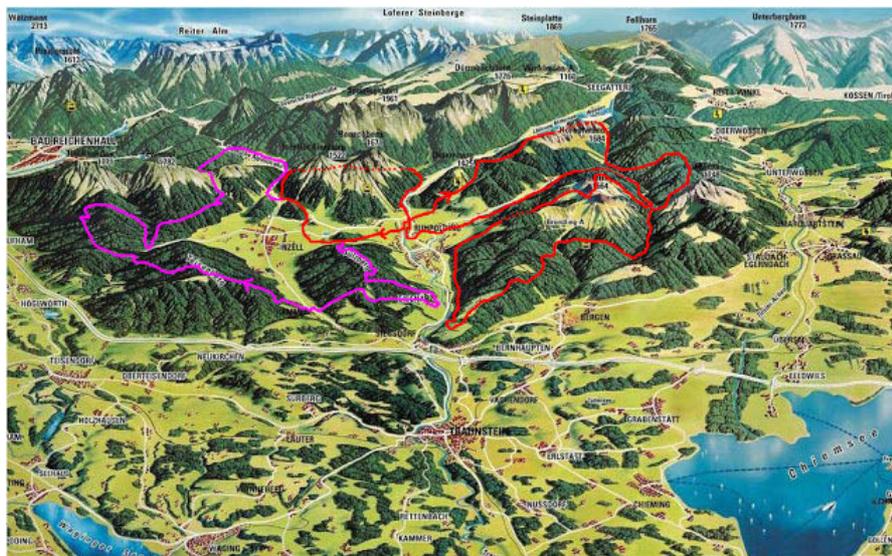
I started trail running about 3 years ago as part of my training for biathlon. I have seen remarkable leg strength increases for skiing. When running 25-40km as a normal training session then it is only a matter of time before one starts to think of using all this running training to complete a Ultra. The 80km route included 3400 meters in vertical gain. The route follows about 40% of the time Alpine/single track trails. 53% forestry roads and the rest is tarmac. For more information visit [Chiemgauer 100](http://Chiemgauer100)



Still smiling after 63km



Running the Unternberg. Trying to avoid giant horse fly's on the way up.



The red route is the 100km route and purple is 100miles. Image: chiemgauer100.de

Posted by [British Biathlete](#) at 04:57

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