



**Arc'teryx Athlete Adam Campbell**



**On the 7<sup>th</sup> Day, They Rested –  
Race report of the 2009 GORE-TEX® Trans Rockies Run**

By Adam Campbell and Aaron Heidt

*"There is an advantage in wisdom won from pain." Aeschylus, 5<sup>th</sup> C. B.C.*



(Route map)

The loneliness of the long distance runner is a long, overdrawn analogy. I say this because many of my most memorable running experiences include other people. I proposed to my fiancée on a run, I have heard of expected pregnancies, I have shared experiences and views...these runs and shared moments are rehashed over pints and coffees. The truth is, if I want to hang with most of my friends, we usually do it over a ride or run.

However the Trans Rockies Run was a new experience in many ways. It is a 6-day, 113-mile stage race through the Colorado Rockies and you run it with a teammate.

The race brought together some of the top trail and mountain runners from North America for a fully supported, fantastically run event in beautiful scenery. It also includes many recreational athletes looking to enjoy common experiences and to test their bodies in stunning surroundings.

The production behind the event is world class. The over 300 participants all stayed together in a moving tent city. The point-to-point races would leave the "village" every morning to tackle the single-track and mountain roads between Buena Vista & Beaver Creek, through the heart of the White River and San Isabel National Forests, with nearly 25,000 feet of elevation gain, reaching altitudes of over 12,500 ft.

While the athletes were out tackling the trails, the event team cleared camp and rebuilt the village from the night before at the finishing location. With gear bags, tents, showers and food waiting, the racers could spend the rest of the afternoon and evening trading stories, healing wounds and recovering in preparation for the next day's run.



(Tent village message after stage 5 in Vail)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FYf8Qt1AYg>

(An impressive video of the set up and take down of the village)



(Old goats, personalized tent)



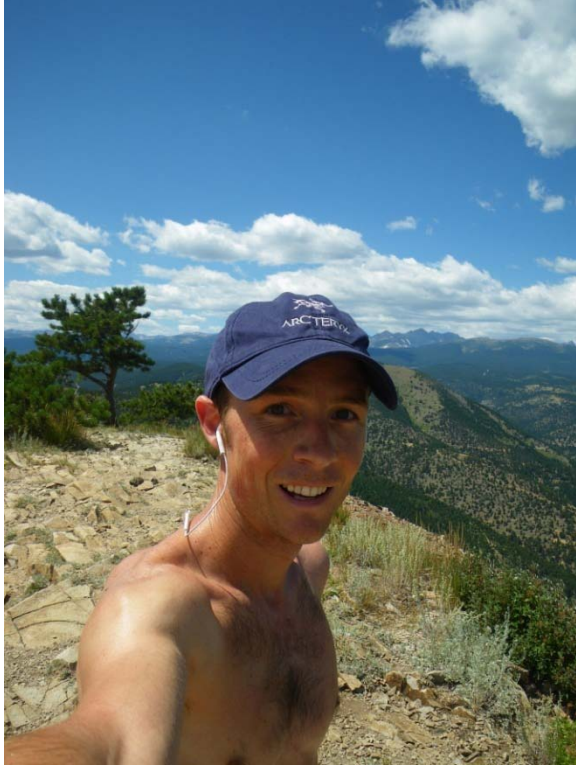
(Post stage recovery)

There is something a little strange about camping with 300 other athletes. Other than the lack of personal space and connection with nature, the cacophony of tent zippers as well hydrated athletes tried to PCPO “pee clear, pee often” became almost comical at nights. It just adds to the unique nature of the event.

With the team aspect of the event, choosing a teammate whose temperament and skill set is similar to yours is critical. As the race unfolded and fatigue levels mounted, it was interesting to watch some teams begin to implode. With minor issues quickly escalating into fully blown trail-tantrums, Teammates who started the week laughing and being seemingly joined at the hip would move further and further apart, trying to put as much space as possible between themselves in the meal tent every night. This whole racing together concept is quite novel to almost all of us runners.

My partner, Aaron Heidt of Vernon and I really lucked out. We only really knew each other by reputation prior to the race. We agreed to race together following the Vancouver marathon in May and kept in weekly email correspondence over the next 3 months. We kept each other accountable by sending our weekly mileage and training volumes to each other. I think we both developed a bit of a silent competition, trying to one up each other in weekly totals. We became virtual training partners, but we were still a bit blind as to how our running styles and personalities would mesh.

As August 23<sup>rd</sup> approached, I moved down to Colorado to begin acclimating and Aaron moved up to Silverstar Mountain. We both knew that we were fit and ready to roll. When we finally met up in Buena Vista Colorado, I knew almost instantly that we would be fine personality wise. We share very similar running goals, both wanting to explore our personal limits and seemed to share similar life views and outside interests as well.



(Colorado training run-Sugarloaf mountain summit)

### **Race Report**

**Day 1:** 20 miles, 2700 ft of climbing. Day 1 was hot and although I was excited to race, there were still a lot of unanswered questions. How would I react to 6 days of racing? How would Aaron's and my fitness mesh? We agreed to start conservatively, but to try and stay in contact with the leaders. Unfortunately, as with most plans, this quickly came unraveled, as disaster struck. By midway through the stage, Aaron was suffering from full system shut down, with massive cramping, a very elevated heart rate and erratic breathing. It was a bit embarrassing and hard to watch teams run (and the race), run away from us. However I was more concerned for Aaron's health than anything. He was not in a good way at all. We had to walk the last 4 miles of the race, but he toughed it up and we used the time to get to know each other a bit better. We finished 15th overall. Over 30 minutes down from 3rd place and close to an hour off of 1st.

At the finish, not yet knowing the cause of "the bonk", we were left with even more questions. Would it be a long and embarrassing 6 days of walking? Would Aaron be okay to start the next day? I figured that Aaron simply depleted his system of electrolytes on the drive down, drinking nothing but water. So Aaron downed a beer and began to try to replace the missing nutrients with salt tablets.

**Day 2:** 10 miles, 3000ft of climbing up and over Hope Pass. With his system replenished, Aaron and I agreed once again to try and follow the leaders, but to be cautious based off his health. Luckily, within the first 30 minutes of the race, Aaron's breathing was good and he had more bounce in his step. When he told me he felt good, all I could say was "Welcome back!". I was stoked to have him in the hunt and I knew that the week would go well. We climbed well that

day up to 12,600 ft and slid into second place as we descended on the other side of Hope Pass. However the race had more to throw at us. About 3/4 of the way down, along a technical section of trail, as we chased a couple of other Canucks down the trail, I heard a nasty thud behind me. Aaron had taken a nasty spill, falling face first into a rock. As I helped him up, I was horrified to see his face covered in blood, however he just said "Let's f\*\*\*ing run!" and took off like a wild banshee. He was riding an adrenaline surge and I just latched on to the back, barely hanging on. This surge lead to a strong final push and a stage win. Aaron spent the rest of the afternoon in a dentist chair getting a root canal, stitches in his lip and having a tooth glued on.



(Aaron, post dentist)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pMEHYJTs7Q>

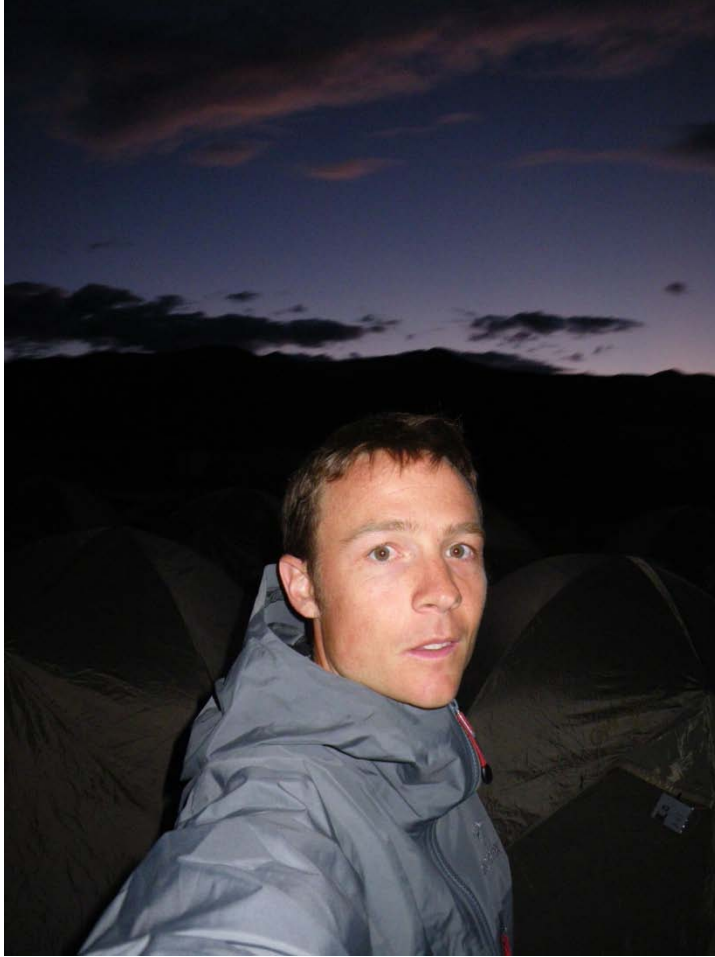
(Finish line interview)

Although Aaron won the beauty contest that day. My body took a pretty bad beating on the downhill too. I managed to develop wicked hot spots on my heels from trying to keep up with him. These turned into blisters and I had to perform a bit of surgery on my heels to drain the fluids. Luckily, I knew that they would hurt for the first few miles of the runs, but that they would be fine once the run would get going. I also ditched the shoes I was wearing and began using a different model.



(Blisters on day 2)

**Day 3:** 24 miles, 3000ft of climbing. This was the longest day and after getting on the podium the previous day, we decided to see how much time we could gain on the 5 teams that were ahead of us in the overall standings. We made a really concerted effort to stay on top of our nutrition, electrolytes and fluids and even though we finished 2nd on the day we both came out feeling relatively good, considering what we put our bodies through over the last 3 days. We also put a good dent in the many of the teams who were ahead of us in the overall standings and slid into 4th place overall. We had an absolute blast running together this day. We realized just how well matched we both were and our confidence grew significantly as we rolled along the beautiful single track, knowing that day 2 was not just a fluke and that we could still be a factor in the race.



(Starting to feel tired)

**Day 4:** 14 miles, 3000ft of climbing. A short and steep day. Based off the previous two stages, we knew that we were going very well on steep terrain, both up and down and decided to push the pace a bit. We moved into the lead about half way up the climb and had a beautiful view of the surrounding peaks. About half way down the descent, we started entertaining the thoughts of another stage win, but just then the two top teams overall came barreling down on us. It turned into a full speed sprint finish. We were bested by the top team again (by only a few seconds) but managed another 2nd place stage finish, putting us just 50 seconds back from 3rd place overall.



(Chilling in the digs)

**Day 5:** 23 miles, 4400ft of climbing. As a single day of racing this was arguably the hardest day. Sliding it in as the 5th stage made it epic. We were all battered and bruised from four hard days of racing and we still had almost 10,000 ft of climbing and 44 miles of racing in front of us. There was frost at the start and we were all frozen as we ran through the early miles, shaded by the canyon walls. Once we hit the climb, four days of suffering was showing and we all found the climb long and relentless. The decent was jarring and eventually numbing. Again, we willed our legs forward as we went out with the top three teams and pushed the hill hard. We slid into our usually 2nd place near the top of the climb and maintained that position until the finish. This effort put us into 3rd overall.

Surprisingly, while other top teams were definitely starting to show signs of wear and tear, Aaron and I were feeling quite good (relatively). We were doing a great job of icing every night and had prepared hard, specifically for this event. We knew that moving in to the top two positions would be an almost impossible task, however, as day 2 showed us, anything can happen in a stage race and with one day still to race, we didn't give up hope.



**Day 6:** 21 miles, 4600ft of climbing. I had asked Aaron how he was feeling the night before and I was monitoring him the morning of the race as we warmed up. He looked like he was in good shape and I knew how tough he was. I was feeling quite strong and really wanted to finish the race with a bang. I figured the only way to make other teams falter was to take the pace out hard and see who was still willing to suffer at the end. I went out on a bit of a “death or glory” mission and Aaron basically just put my head down and followed- we ran almost silently for 3 hours, minus the odd warning about rocks and roots. Neither of us really took the time to enjoy the beautiful scenery as much as we should have, we simply poured 3 months of training into that one effort. Pushing ourselves as hard as we possibly could. We both thoroughly enjoyed every step!

After a bit of jockeying, we had the lead by checkpoint one and crossed the finish line over 6 minutes ahead of second place. While it wasn't enough to move us any further up in the overall standing, Aaron and I were both able to leave the race with a good sense of accomplishment. We had overcome our early troubles and had become a factor in the race. Most importantly, we were able to show off our fitness, enjoy some amazing running and meet some amazing new people along the way.

It is now time to rest up a bit, try to put on some weight, regain some lost muscle and plan future adventures on the trails!



(Winning the final stage)

**A Little something for the stats geeks out there:**



(Full race profile)

- Stage 1: Buena Vista to Railroad Bridge (new for 2009, shuttle to camp)
- Stage 2: Vicksburg to Twin Lakes (shuttle to Leadville)
- Stage 3: Leadville to Nova Guides at Camp Hale
- Stage 4: Nova Guides at Camp Hale to Red Cliff
- Stage 5: Red Cliff to Vail
- Stage 6: Vail to Beaver Creek

The route of the 2009 GORE-TEX® TransRockies Run took place at elevations between 7,400 and 12,600 feet above sea level. The percent of distance at various elevations is as follows:

- 7,000' to 8,000' - 3%
- 8,000' to 9,000' - 31%
- 9,000' to 10,000' - 28%
- 10,000' to 11,000' - 27%
- 11,000' to 12,000' - 10%
- 12,000' to 13,000' - 1%

Approximate breakdown of surfaces:

- Dirt and Gravel Roads - 37%
- Non-Motorized Single and Double Trails - 33%
- 4-Wheel Drive and Motorized Trails - 18%
- Paved Roads and Pathways - 12%

**Total running time for team: 8 TWO JOES Adam Campbell CAN, Aaron Heidt:**

stage 1: 3:16:35

stage 2: 1:35:44

stage 3: 3:03:40

stage 4: 1:52:39

stage 5: 3:12:18

stage 6: 2:53:32

**Overall (3<sup>rd</sup>): 15:54:28**

### **Sample Training for the race:**

#### **May 30-June 7**

Saturday: AM 90 min bike with 6\*1 min fast 20 min steady--transition run 4\*3min steady 1 min fast with 2 min EZ 30 min cool down; PM 35 min EZ

Sunday: AM 90 min 75 min very strong over hilly trails; PM 35 min EZ

Monday: 50min EZ—PM drills+strength

Tuesday: 20 min wu 15\*1:15 on/1 off 15 min cd 35 min bike to work; PM 65 min hilly ride home

Wednesday: 90 min EZ on hilly trails; PM 30 min EZ on bike

Thursday: AM 45 min AM run on trails; lunch 35 min run with 6\*60 strides; 45 min bike home

Friday: 45 min with 1 \* 4:15 min up hill TT just to see; PM 35 min EZ +drills and strength

Saturday: 20 min wu strides 10\* 3min hard (very fast group) 1 min EZ 20 min cd; PM 35 min EZ

Sunday: 2:05 EZ at UBC endowment lands; PM 45 min EZ bike

#### **June 8-June 14**

Mon-AM 50 min; PM 45 min with strides

Tues:-2\*45 min bike to-from work; PM 1:40 run with 6\*3 min and 6\*20 sec hill strides

Wed: 1:30 hilly on trails

Thurs: 2:00 hard and hilly bike—PM drills and strength (30 min)

Fri: 60 min with strides

Sat: 2:15 run with Canmore Challenge race 9th-bloody hard-Great to be racing on trails again.

Afternoon hike 1 hours.

Sun: 3:15 run Canmore/Banff with Sulphur Mountain run to finish.

**June 14-June 21**

Monday: 1 hour bike  
Tuesday: 2 hour hard hills on the bike; PM 1 hour run  
Wed: AM 90 min; PM 30 +drills and strength  
Thurs: AM 75 min with 6\*3 min hills --felt awful  
Friday: AM 30 min EZ trot (back sore)  
Saturday: PM 90 min  
Sunday: AM 1:50 tempo bike; 2.5 hour run

**June 22-June 28**

Monday: 60AM; PM 30 with some strength drills after  
Tuesday: 90 min with 15\*75 sec fast at the end--PM 60 min bike  
Wed: 75 min with some tempo on the bike; PM 45 hilly run  
Thurs: 70 min with some tempo (3\*8 min w 2 min); PM 30 EZ with strength and drills  
Fri: 45 EZ with strides  
Sat: 25k trail race-Comfortably Numb -I won in 1:55-legs were a bit tired, but I was pleased with the effort-technical running was much better;  
Sun: 2:30 with Kevin Titus-hilly run

**June 29<sup>th</sup>-July 3**

Monday-day off  
Tuesday-2\* 40 min bike (to-from work) & 2\*40 min run (EZ)  
Wednesday-AM: 30 min EZ run; 30 min swim; AM 2 run with some turnover (back sore); PM 70 min EZ bike with Simon  
Thursday-AM 1600m swim with some effort; AM: 40 min hilly run—PM: 65 min VERY hilly 35 min up (ran hard) and 30 min down  
Friday-AM 30 min drills& strength; 2\* 40 min bike (to-from work); PM: 55 min build run.

**July 13-20**

Sunday: 1:45 very solid; PM 2.5hr ride  
Monday: 2.5 hours hilly-legs were smashed  
Tuesday: AM 45 with drills and strides; PM 60 min EZ  
Wed: 60 min EZ  
Thurs: AM 75 min with 8\*2 min hills; PM 75 min  
Friday: AM 30 min swim- PM 60 min bike  
Saturday: AM 90 min with 6\*1 mile fast; PM 3 hour bike with some tempo and 5\* 6 min hills with a group; PM 45 min run  
Sunday: AM 2.5 hours tempo second half; PM 70 min with some faster stuff in the second half

**July 20-26**

Monday: 50 min AM; PM 75 min bike  
Tuesday: 2:45 hilly  
Wed: 60 min with hill strides; PM 1:20 bike  
Thurs: AM 90 min with 5\*5 min; PM 90 min with Mt. Finlayson TT effort  
Friday: 50 min EZ PM  
Saturday: AM 3:05 1593m ascent/descent; PM 70 min EZ bike  
Sunday: 4:15 with 1669 m ascent/descent-the descent here was tough. Quite steep and exposed, I had to take a couple walk breaks.

**July 27-Aug 2**

Monday: 45 EZ (super tired)

Tuesday: 50 with strides; 45 min swim

Wed: 2:15 with 10\*3 min uphill then 20 min downhill hard (1600 m +/-)

Thurs: 3:15 with 1,850 m ascent/descent

Friday: 30 min EZ

Saturday: AM: 80 min with 35 min tempo (10.3 k) on a hilly grass loop; PM: 90 min bike with 5\*2min with Lauren-35min run off EZ

Sunday: 2:10 hilly hard run; 30 min swim; PM: 40 min EZ

Monday: 60 min run with 2\*8min at 3:30/km pace helping Lauren; PM: 80 min bike hilly

Tuesday: AM 55 min; PM 45 min with 10\*30 sec hills up and down

**August 3-10**

Monday: 60 min run with 2\*8min at 3:30/km pace helping Lauren; PM: 80 min bike hilly

Tuesday: AM 55 min; PM 45 min with 10\*30 sec hills up and down

Wednesday: AM 1:30 with 10\* 75sec hard/1 min EZ and a long climb +/- 600m really worked the downhill; Pm 30 min EZ

Thursday: 30 min EZ swim & 1 hour EZ bike (tired)

Friday: AM 45 min with strides; PM 70 min hilly with 6\*30 sec uphill strides

Saturday: AM 90 min with 5\* 1 mile at Elk lake on 5:45 (4:56-4:55-4:50-4:47-4:44) fastest I have run in a long time; PM 2.5 hour bike with 40 min tempo with Lauren, then 6\*2 min intervals on a steep uphill.

Sunday: 2:30 run 30 min solid climb in the middle-tried to work the second half-legs were tired from the day before

Monday: 30 min build run; 1 hour swim; PM60 min bike with some sprints; 50 min EZ run.