

C2C Training Notes

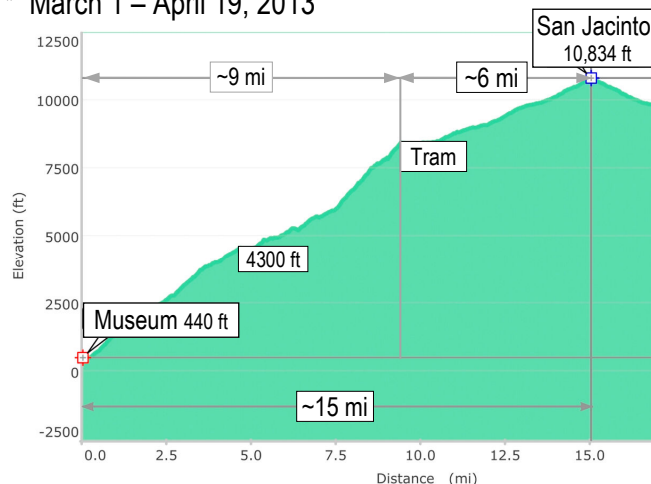
Mike Weinberg * March 1 – April 19, 2013

The History

In April 2011, I solo-hiked the Skyline Trail from the Palm Springs Art Museum to the 4300 ft marker and back. (9 miles, +/- 3900 ft gain/loss)

In August 2011, on a backpack outing, friends and I rode the tram up to Long Valley and hiked to the peak of Mt. San Jacinto then back to the tram. (12 miles, +/- 2500 ft gain/loss)

In October 2011, with an outdoor group, I hiked the Skyline Trail from the Art Museum to the Long Valley tram station (Palms to Pines) and took the tram down. (9 miles, +8000 ft gain)



The next logical progression for most hikers is a C2C (Cactus to Clouds) from the Art Museum to Mt. San Jacinto then back down to the tram (21 miles, +10000 ft gain / -2500 ft loss).

Completing a C2C is a balancing act. In the summer it's too hot on the desert floor; in the winter there's too much snow on top. Afternoon thunderstorms are an issue year-round. So the best formula for a successful spring or fall hike is to depart from the Art Museum before dawn in order to reach the peak by midday and be back to the tram by early afternoon.

You must carry enough water (4-6 liters which weigh ~8-12 lbs) to reach the Long Valley Ranger Station where you can refill. And you must carry enough food for 13-15 hours on the trail as well as suitable clothing for hot and cold temperatures as you ascend through several climate zones. After reaching the peak, you return to the tram, buy a one-way ticket down, then get a taxi back to your car at the museum.

Although I made some challenging hikes in 2012, I wasn't sure I'd ever want to work hard enough to do a C2C.

Physical Concerns

I was especially concerned about my knees. After my hikes and workouts, they had begun burning—a possible sign of osteoarthritis. I have friends with bad knees or knee replacements who warned me about the dangers of impact activities and overuse.

Then one day I read how omega-3s, besides being heart healthy, also lowered inflammation. So I upped my daily intake of ground flax seeds from 1 tablespoon/day to 4 tablespoons/day (1/4 cup). To my delight and relief, the burning vanished!

Ground flax seeds are the best plant source for omega-3. That is next to microalgae, which is what fish eat to get omega-3 in the first place. I sometimes also take sterile-lab-grown microalgae capsules, which have all the benefits without the contaminants (mercury, PCBs, etc.) found in fish flesh/oils.

I had already stopped taking ibuprofen (some hikers jokingly call it "Vitamin I") for workout pain after I learned that vegan endurance athletes avoided it, instead relying on fruit-veggie smoothies to hasten their recovery times. I'd also read that ibuprofen blocks the production of prostaglandins which help build and strengthen stressed tendons and ligaments, so it is NOT recommended for athletes. http://sportsmedicine.about.com/od/medicationanddrugs/a/NSAID_endurance.htm

The Plan

In late February 2013, I decided that not only did I want to do a C2C, but I might as well train a little harder and try for a full C2C2C from the Art Museum to Mt. San Jacinto and back to the desert floor (30 miles, +/- 10000 ft gain/loss).

It didn't seem totally out of reach, because in December 2011, I completed a 30-mile urban hike from downtown San Diego to La Jolla and back by way of Mt. Soledad in about 13 hours with breaks, although the gain/loss was less than 1000 ft.

Since the 10000 ft gain of a C2C2C would take longer to hike, I figured that I could cut down the trail time by jogging the level and downhill sections. I set a goal of 10 hours to the peak and 7 hours back to the desert floor for a total of 17 hours including breaks.

The Training

My normal routine is a 5-mile jog (~45 minutes without a daypack) on Mondays, to build cardio endurance for 2 hours of racquetball on Wednesdays. On Tuesdays & Thursdays, I ride my foldup bike 2 miles roundtrip to tutor math at the Monarch school for homeless kids. On Fridays, I climb 1500 ft of stairs (5 ascents/descents of our 25-story condo tower) with a 20-lb pack to maintain my mountain hiking fitness. I also lift light weights twice a week for upper-body strength.

With a 17-hour C2C2C goal, I figured I'd have to start the hike about 1 am to be back to the desert floor by 6 pm--after it had cooled down but before dark. To aid my ascent in the dark, I set my sights on the last week of April when there would be a full moon. That gave me about 7 weeks to prepare with one week of rest before the big event.

Living at sea level, I typically overtrain for higher-elevation outings to compensate for the reduced O₂ levels. I figured that a 30-mile jog-hike and 12000 ft of stair climbing (40 towers) would suffice. I had never run more than 5 miles at a time, so this was a real stretch, but if I was able to add 5 miles each week, I'd reach my goal. I had previously stair-climbed 9000 ft (30 towers) to prepare for the Skyline Palms-to-Pines trek in 2011, so I figured 12000 ft was doable once I built up to it.

I completed my training goals as charted here.

Jog Hiking (10-15 lb pack)				
Date	Miles	Time	Location	Gain/Loss
M 3/4	5	1.0 hr	Courthouse	0 ft
M 3/11	9	3.5 hr	Secret Canyon	1000 ft
M 3/18	12	4.5 hr	El Cajon Mtn	4000 ft
M 3/25	15	3.5 hr	Courthouse	0 ft
M 4/1	20	4.5 hr	Courthouse	0 ft
M 4/8	25	5.5 hr	Courthouse	0 ft
M 4/15	30	6.5 hr	Courthouse	0 ft

Times are to nearest 0.5 hr and included breaks.

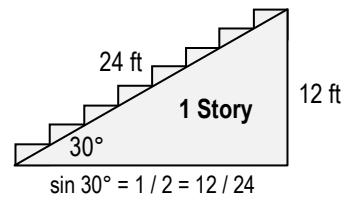


It may sound supremely boring to jog around a city block over and over again, but each lap served as a reachable goal, especially when I wanted to quit. Plus, I avoided road crossings, traffic, and stop lights. The only hazards were lunging dogs on loose leashes, but I never got bit. To keep track of laps, I tied knots in a piece of twine. To pass the time, I listened to audiobooks on my smartphone.

Stair Climbing (15-20 lb pack)				
Date	Towers	Time	Gain/Loss	Miles
F 3/1	10	2.0 hr	+/- 3000 ft	2.3
F 3/8	15	3.5 hr	+/- 4500 ft	3.4
F 3/15	20	5.0 hr	+/- 6000 ft	4.5
F 3/22	25	6.0 hr	+/- 7500 ft	5.7
F 3/29	28	7.0 hr	+/- 8400 ft	6.4
F 4/5	32	8.5 hr	+/- 9600 ft	7.3
F 4/12	36	9.5 hr	+/- 10800 ft	8.2
F 4/19	40	11.0 hr	+/- 12000 ft	9.1

Times are to nearest 0.5 hr and included breaks.

This diagram is for calculation purposes. Each actual story contained two flights of 8 steps each with a landing in between.



$$\sin 30^\circ = 1/2 = 12/24$$

$$+/- 12 \text{ ft} \times 25 \text{ stories} = +/- 300 \text{ ft vertical}$$

$$+/- 24 \text{ ft} \times 25 \text{ stories} = +/- 600 \text{ ft} = 0.23 \text{ miles diagonal}$$

Stair climbing is the hardest thing I do—you can't cheat gravity! Even in cool weather the stairwells are hotboxes, and I'm quickly soaked with sweat. On walking ascents, I read physical books. On jogging descents, I listen to audiobooks. During the last hours of a long session, I watch a movie on my smartphone—sometimes I'm so engrossed, I'll be at the top floor without realizing it!

After working out, I was fortunate that our condo's jacuzzi has one really strong jet with which to pummel my leg muscles to increase blood flow and healing. When the jacuzzi wasn't available, I'd use an electric massager or knead my legs by hand.

Despite this training, as I relate in "Trail Notes," I wasn't able to hike the full C2C2C in the planned amount of time or with enough energy reserves. In retrospect, I would have been better prepared if I had completed the 30-mile jog-hike and 12000-ft stair climb in the *same* day. Together, they would have taken about 17 hours, which was my target for the C2C2C. But just thinking about that now seems daunting. In any case, I had to "settle" for the 21-mile C2C in about 15 hours.

Nutrition

Using a Vitamix blender, I'd pulverize fruits, veggies, ground flax seeds, and nuts into what I call a "sludgie" (a really thick smoothie). For sweetness, I used raisins. This is the perfect concoction for a long workout as it's full of antioxidants and is immediately absorbed by the intestines since it's ABC (Already Been Chewed). I learned to take "moving breaks" slowing my pace only enough to slurp down a few mouthfuls and continue on.



Sludgies are normally green. A beet turned this one red.

Influences

Although I don't aspire to anywhere near their level of achievement, vegan athletes inspire me to push myself.

Healthy and Humane Vegan Athletes on the Rise

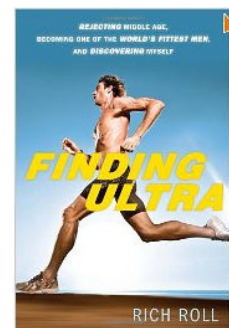
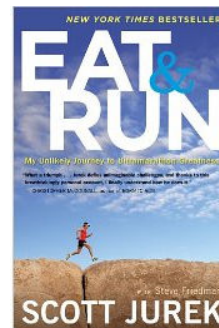
<http://www.mfablog.org/2013/04/healthy-and-humane-vegan-athletes-on-the-rise.html>

Eat & Run: My Unlikely Journey to Ultramarathon Greatness

http://www.amazon.com/Eat-Run-Unlikely-Ultramarathon-Greatness/dp/0544002318/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1367812094&sr=1_1&keywords=eat+and+run+scott+jurek

Finding Ultra: Rejecting Middle Age, Becoming One of the World's Fittest Men, and Discovering Myself

http://www.amazon.com/Finding-Ultra-Rejecting-Becoming-Discovering/dp/0307952193/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1367812389&sr=1-1&keywords=rich+roll+finding+ultra



Reflections

I can't really say why I decided to finally attempt such a strenuous hike. As my training sessions increased in length, there were many times that I doubted my ability or will to continue. During each session, I wondered if it would ever get easier. As my endurance increased, I could go farther and longer than before, but it was never easy. It was always uncomfortable at some point, sometimes earlier in the workout than later. When things got unbearable, and I experienced bouts of nausea or supreme fatigue, I either took a break or just slowed down.

Although I was breathing harder than normal, I never wanted to get to the point of being out of breath, have my mouth water, lungs burn, or get a side ache, all of which would make me want to quit. The goal was to "keep moving." And truthfully, towards the ends of the longer sessions, I was *barely* moving. Although I was sore and stiff afterwards, the next day it was if I hadn't even worked out, which I attribute to the power of plants to nourish and heal.

Surprisingly, I learned it was easier to jog 30 miles than hike it. I have a friend who runs 50-mile races, and he said it's the hours on your feet that make the difference. I did the 30-mile jog in 6.5 hours compared to 13 hours for the hike to La Jolla and back. The jog wasn't easy, but the hike was tougher.

Although I distracted myself with books and electronic media during workouts, I learned to adopt a sort of mindlessness that allowed me to continue hour after hour. I reasoned that the time was going to pass regardless, so I might as well keep putting one foot in front of the other. And I contented myself that I was getting a lot of "reading" done through my audiobooks.

My goal was to finish each progressive training session before lunch, so I had to start earlier each time. For the 30-mile jog, I started at 4 am. For the 12000-ft stair climb, I started at 1 am. Since I planned to start the C2C2C at 1 am, it was part of the training to see what I could do with a few hours of sleep. It motivated me that, at least for each running session, I would be reaching a new milestone and personal best. Ironically, my final 30-mile jog occurred during the ill-fated Boston Marathon.

Finally and importantly, it helped that my wife, Anita, was so supportive of my crazy scheme. She tolerated the early morning wakeups and bragged to others about what I was doing. Part of me wanted to keep it quiet in case I blew out a knee and couldn't do the hike. But knowing that others were impressed by my efforts gave me a sense of pride and put positive pressure on me to not give up when I felt like it.