

Post Event Report and Thoughts from the Race Director, Danelle Ballengee

Thank you to all the participants, volunteers, staff, sponsors and supporters of the 2011 Moab Trail Marathon! What an amazing year for the race! When it rains in Canyon Country, the landscape turns into a magical, beautiful place. That's what we had that day! The canyon walls turned brilliant red and waterfalls appeared everywhere. It was wild! The sky was amazing, and the few desert plants glittered a happy green. The course was full of flooded canyons and it was cold and wet and slippery in spots; but that didn't deter the attitudes of the runners. They loved it even more! That's yet another reason I find trail running to be so cool. When the conditions get tough, the spirits rise!

For the staff and volunteers, well.... let's just say they might rather have been running (or tucked up in bed!).... But nonetheless they made the best of the wet muddy conditions and stood out there till 'the finish!' And the enthusiasm of the participants made it, actually, enjoyable for almost all the staff and volunteers.

Two months after the race I stood at the finish line; the 'fossil' imprints of running shoe tracks still showing in the now very dry mud. I recalled that very very stressful day: It was 1:30am when the rain started. By 2:30am the rocks had turned to slick-rock and the canyons were beginning to flash flood. Even with all the safety precautions in place, you never think you're actually going to need them, but this day, we did! The reality set in, "It's serious right now! I'm responsible for the safety of all these runners!" Fortunately I have a history of thriving in these types of stressful situations. I remember frantically running around in the dark, under the pouring rain: setting the ropes, marking alternate routes, planning the back-up route options in case the rain didn't stop, re-assigning volunteers to alternate locations where the rocks were now slippery and the creeks were now flooded, and worrying how much of the help was going to 'no-show' because of the wet conditions. I'm sure most people had no idea that all this 'behind the scene' stuff was going on!! In the end, things weren't perfect, but they were pretty dang good. Nobody got hurt and most everyone had a wonderful experience out there. Some people even had life-changing-for-the-better experiences. Wow! Yeah! It took me a few weeks to process the whole experience and recover from the mental and physical stress. I owe a great appreciation to those helpers who endured the elements and with a great attitude helped to make it a great race. You're the best! Thank you! And of course a special thanks to my lovely husband and parents who not only helped out on race day, but also helped to run Milt's and care for the kids while I was out marking the course and getting things ready the weeks before the race.

As the dust settled (or should we say 'the mud dried') thoughts of the 2012 race came to mind. I made a list of things that went well and a list of things to do better. And now, 3 months later, I am more excited than ever about the 2012 event. There's two big-news items:

1. The race won the bid for the USATF Trail Marathon National Championships! We hope to draw a good field of elite athletes to vie for the \$2100 prize money and age groupers can go for the title too!

2. Merger with Project Athena Foundation. Now the race is the 'Project Athena Moab Trail Marathon.' Project Athena will be providing a bunch of support for the event and proceeds will go to the foundation, one that is near and dear to my heart!

With these additions, I'm really excited and I think that 2012 will be a great race!

Several feedback forms from 2011 were filled out and returned. Thank you very much! These provided a lot of excellent feedback. Most of the feedback was very positive. There was also some excellent suggestions and constructive feedback that has been/will be applied to this year's race. Interestingly, a lot of the feedback was 'jeckle and hyde' style—for example a few people absolutely couldn't believe they didn't get a finishers metal, others "don't care at all about that stuff." We had similar responses with a variety of things. The reality is that we can't make everyone happy, but we will try our best! For those of you who don't race for the material stuff, but instead for the joy of racing and the beauty of a (well-marked) course—I hear you! (That's why I race too!) In effort to try to please everyone we have added some bells and whistles to this year's race. We'll make sure to keep the great course and friendly attitude! (And we can donate your 'bells and whistles' to the local youth running teams, if you don't care for them.) We did have a couple people who want portopoties and aid stations every mile;...please look around at the terrain and imagine getting a vehicle out there with that stuff, it's just not realistic! A couple people wanted their on-course escargot, caviar, and a personal pace-copter.... Well, you'll have to bring your own along! We'd love to treat everyone like Hollywood runners, but the cost of the permits, insurance, and many other 'hidden costs' already adds up! We will do our best though! And for the few of you who didn't like getting their feet wet in the creek crossings...well, you'll need to chat with mother-nature about that because it was 99% dry for Friday afternoon's pre-run! With that said, most people said they loved the water crossings, loved the well-stocked aid stations, really appreciated the well-marked course (someone took down a few flags on lower Jackson Trail during the race.. sorry about that!) and appreciated the friendly volunteers. Most people enjoyed the whole experience; we even had a few who said it was "life changing"!!! Thank you! That's why I'm out there doing it again!

It makes me happy if the participants are happy. This race is a part time hobby for me and I love it! (I'm also the co-owner of Milt's Stop & Eat and mother of a 1 and 3 year old.) This race is like my 4th baby (after my kids and my dog!)—it's fun for me and I want it to make me proud! Now that I've entered a new stage in my life, since I'm not racing as much—although running and racing has brought so much enjoyment to my life, I want to offer back things like this race for others to enjoy.

I was sent a link to a story with some amazing photos from the father of 17 year old Malcolm, who ran the marathon together. I thought the story and photos were touching, and I put the link on the website. It's called 'the scene begins' if you'd like to take a look. How cool to see a teenager doing this kind of stuff! This kind of thing makes the time and effort worth it! I'm especially excited that we also will be providing some 'Athenaships' at this year's event. Athenaship's will provide a free entry fee, travel expenses, coaching, equipment and encouragement to help women who've endured life-altering medical setbacks to 'get their groove back' and transition from Survivor to Athlete by participating in this event. Please apply or nominate someone who you think deserves! Additionally we hope to host some

elite runners for the National Championship. I encourage elite runners to contact me and submit their race resume. We can offer a few comp entries as well as provide housing and some meals to elites that will be 'going for it' at the National Championship. I appreciate the dedication it takes to reach the elite level and want to help make it possible for these athletes make a living as runners.

Thanks again for a great race in 2011. Contact me, Danelle Ballengee with any questions or concerns you have. Happy Training and I look forward to seeing you on Nov. 2nd and 3rd, 2012 for a great race: Rain or Shine!