

CALICO GHOST TOWN 50K

Calico Ghost Town (CGT) is located just NE of Barstow, CA, in a town called Yermo, CA. Up a short but never the less, steep incline, there lies the remnants of a sleepy little town of what was bustling with approximately 1,200 in population by 1907. Prospecting was the game and Silver was King. The town grew to 22 saloons and more than 500 mines. The Calico mines at one time made \$86 million in Silver and \$45 millions in Borax, of course there was gold as well. In 1907 the price of Silver dropped and Borax mining moved to Death Valley, Calico became a ghost town.

That's the history of the venue for this low key, 30K and 50K event. Town hall is the staging area. There were a handful of South of the Border runners jumping up and down to stay warm ten minutes to start time. The gun goes and a herd of us plow straight down the hill trying to hold back our pace as to not tear up the legs too early. We comfortably descend the first two miles, and I strike up a conversation with a guy who is running the 30K. He proceeds off down the road and I wish him a good run. The turn onto the ATV trail seemed flat enough. It was also a sand box. I'd say half the run was in thick sand, uphill, into a 20-30mph head wind. From looking at the elevation profile, I had an idea that we would climb to the Ends of the Earth (Station 3, mile 18), then descend to the finish. It wasn't quite like that. The second half of the course did descend, but it also had it's share of steep and short hills. As the race neared the end the hills became steeper and shorter, like a roller coaster ride. It also seemed like the hills were much steeper after the 21 mile mark.

As I approach the 10K mark there are a handful of guys around me. We are all trying to find a good rhythm and get into a pace without spending too much energy fighting the sand. I glance at my Garmin and feel good about the split, and hope to hold it there for the next 10K and so on. As it turned out, that was not the case at all.

The trail takes us along a road side, that seemed to resemble a deserted highway. I let two guys set the pace for me as they chatted away. We turned off the road and headed deeper into the desert to begin the ascent to the Ends of the Earth. Staying in a groove on the loose soil as the road steadily climbed was a challenge. One of the guys fell back, and that left me and this other guy who was running what seemed to me as the perfect pace. About mile 10 I noticed some discomfort with me feet, but I just ignored it and figured that is to be expected. I was ecstatic to not have any heel pain. Guess the acupuncture stuff works, and a good pair of Montrails to boot!

I changed my pace, and slowed, and let the guy go ahead. I'm running with a different guy for a few miles and he is talking my ear off and asking me questions, and all I want to do is breathe and make it to mile 18. Finally, a couple of hills gets between me and him, and I speed up to bridge up to the guy who I was originally running with the perfect pace. I learned he is a cop and is married with a little boy.

I glance at my watch for the 20K mark, and I'm pretty close to my target time goal. My runny buddy and I pick up another runner, and he proceeds to slap me on the my tush as I am climbing a hill. The three of us reach station 3. The winds had to be blowing at 45mph. It looked like we were on the moon, and the view was amazing. We refueled and embraced the wind. A few times the wind was at our back, and it was really pushing us nicely along. Around mile 20 the three of us passed two other runners. Shortly thereafter we made a right turn straight into a 20-30 mile per head wind and of course it was uphill. My running partner said that, we are now survival running. I was hoping the three of us will take turns pulling into the wind, but it appeared as our new friend wasn't hanging on to our

pace. At mile 25, I glanced at the time, and succumbed to the fact that I was no longer on goal pace, rather the goal was to get back to town. I was climbing a hill and thought, only 5 miles left, I'm feeling pretty good. So the cop and I made our through the final 10K clipping away at the dirt and dust. It seemed like the final 10K was a constant battle into the wind and up a hill. The trail exited into the RV parking lot at the bottom of town. My running partner, the cop, moved on ahead on the descent. When we hit the pavement, I knew there was a mile left. The balls of my feet were really tender. I managed a plodding pace across the vast parking lot where I could see the cop in the distance. Then I realized the course is not taking us up the hill we ran down at the start. They are taking us up the back side of town. Since the town sits on a hill, getting to the top of the hill at the end of town will require a little more effort.. It was a good test of fortitude to get up and over that thing. Once in town, the quads are subject to the steep descent to the finish line. People were milling around in town trying to decide if they were going to eat at the saloon, shop at the rock shop, or purchase something at the general store. The announcer would yell, "Runner coming, clear the road."

This is a good tradition. They are thinking about holding a 100K in Calico next year. Think them there ghosts in them parts?