

## 2001 Sri Chinmoy 3100 Mile Race: Small, but Beautiful

*The fifth annual 3100 Mile Race, by SCMT Associate RD Sahishnu Szczesiul June 17 to August 7, 2001*

Six straight summers at the concrete colossus course, and this was the smallest field ever. Yet, like every race, particularly multi-day events, the collective has a feeling and 'mind' of its own. The setting was, of course, the .5488 of a mile (883.21 meters) sidewalk sling, with four corners, slight up-hills, and also a surprise change of venue, which was the least expected problem.

**Ashprihanal Aalto, Namitabha Arsic, and Suprabha Beckjord** were the three players in the game of super-long running, amazingly crafted by the Indian spiritual Master Sri Chinmoy the last four years of the 3100, after the once and only 2700 Mile affair in 1996. Sri Chinmoy delighted in having runners appear at the start line to test themselves for 51 days in the heat and sun of summer in the 'City that never sleeps'. Eighteen hours a day to "Run and Become!"

Mr Aalto, the Finnish icon who gained the name Ashprihanal after a spectacular running year 2000: second in the 10 day, first in the 3100, and first in the 700 mile race- was back to learn and grow, and keep his multiday adventures flowing. The only problem he had was a very sore knee, which pulled him out of the Ten Day Race in April, after averaging over 80 miles a day for the first four days. He revealed that little training was his preparation, with the hope of somehow getting through the early stages and hoping muscle memory and grace would pull him along.

Namitabha Arsic, a two-time finisher of the 3100 and Serbia's finest multi-day runner, was ready to build on his two second-place finishes in the longest race. He started all four editions of the 3100, so the streak was intact as number Five was about to happen.

Suprabha Beckjord had all but destroyed the notion that running the race was impossible due to her perceived lack of speed and muscle strength. Her concentration powers and willpower alone have been the wonder of most observers. She was still the first and only woman to venture into super-long 3,100-mile territory.



After a moment of silence, the three intrepid runners left the start line with a feeling of freedom, mixed with anticipation for the days and weeks ahead. One could expect the unexpected at some point, usually something affected

by weather or a body part not working properly. Namitabha Arsic ran 77.4 miles (124.5 km) on Day 1 to slide into the lead. Ashprihanal Aalto ran 71.3 miles (114.8 km) to test his knee, and it seemed to be working well. Suprabha Beckjord ran 67.5 miles (108.6 km) to complete a satisfying first day. We definitely missed having a few more runners on the course, creating more energy, but this event was still in its infant stage, and the public was not sure what to make of such a long race on a small course, not to mention baffled ultrarunners.

Ashprihanal had to deal with three days of shin splints on the leg opposite of his knee problem. He later confessed that the shin pain made him forget about the knee situation, so that was 'kinda good' for him. On Day 4 Namitabha had a leg issue that slowed him down to 29 miles (46.6 km) which cut into his nearly 50 mile lead on Mr Aalto. By day 6, Suprabha Beckjord had become the overall leader of the race, reaching 372 miles, eight miles ahead of Namitabha, and 12 miles ahead of Mr Aalto. Her consistency was still her strength thru out her long race triumphs.



Day 7 was to be a pivotal day, in that about 2 hours into the mix, the Department of Public Works descended onto the part of the course that traversed one block on 168<sup>th</sup> Street in Jamaica, behind the Edison Technical High School. Workers jack-hammered the concrete over a 75 -yard section of the sidewalk, and all but prevented foot traffic along the busy connecting street. Race personnel immediately jumped in to find an alternative route for the day.

A horseshoe style alternative course was secured and measured, which was determined to be .8197 of a mile (1319.179 meters). The workers on the sidewalk excavation were replacing broken pipes for gas and electrical conduits, and the whole project could take two to four weeks.

The resulting course had two turn-a-rounds, which slowed down momentum a little, but had the effect of runners seeing each other on every lap. We agreed to keep the new course for the duration of the Race, especially since there was no indication that the sidewalk would be completed before our 51-day adventure would end. The new path of the long journey also injected the runners with a feeling of newness, so that was a positive outcome as well.

Suprabha had a 16-mile lead on Ashprihanal on Day 16, after he had made up the 12-mile difference to Namitabha from the week before. Suprabha went through the 1000 mile split in 16:03:52:37, her 10<sup>th</sup> time through this split in a long multiday career. Ashprihanal followed in 16:08:12:02, and Namitabha did the same in 16:09:03:38.

The 30 year-old Finn was up to the task, as his sore knee and shin splints were now in his past, and he was feeling a solid rhythm in his running. He passed Suprabha and never looked back. By Day 28, Namitabha had also passed Suprabha, and the final places were beginning to crystallize in our frames of reference.



Ashprihanal Aalto had passed 100km every day from Day 16 to Day 37, and his domination of the race was blooming.

The last two weeks of the race were touched by warmer weather, with the mercury reaching the low 90<sup>s</sup> F, and the heat seemed to affect Namitabha a little more. The goal was to finish, and another second place was inevitable. He carried on, sometimes with a helper, other times not.

Suprabha Beckjord, past 30 days, had to deal with diminishing returns to her body, having burned up most if not all of her body fat. Doing her sixth straight super-long meant she had to take in large quantities of fat foods like butter, cream and ice cream, which at times were hard to digest. Her loss of muscle in her upper and lower body probably slowed her as well. Yet, she kept on moving, using every ounce of effort to get closer to the final stretch of days.

Ashprihanal Aalto pulled through the last week of hot weather to reach his goal in 48 days+10:56:12. He finished with his body intact, his mind relieved, and his heart fulfilled by the amazing stretch of triumphs and performances that had occurred in his life. He had become one of the best multi-day runners in the world.





Two full days later, Namitabha Arsic, the pride of Nis, Serbia, finished the 3100 Mile Race for the third time, reaching his goal in 50 days+16:23:39. The train engineer had rallied to the challenge again.

Suprabha needed two extra days to finish, and reached 3100 miles for the fifth time in 52 days+10:37:42. It was almost miraculous to see her overcome all the obstacles in her way, and rely on her faith and resolve in the Higher power to get to the finish line. Her decades of mental training and meditation, with constant focus on the daily task, no doubt led to her glorious ending again. She had become a role model to women and ultra runners to never give up, and always *be* in the moment, *be* not afraid. She wholeheartedly believes in her master Sri Chinmoy as her spiritual guide. The rest of her being just goes along for the ride!



**Fifth Annual Sri Chinmoy 3100 Mile Race June 17- August 8, 2001**

.5488 mile/ 883.2079 meters certified; alternate course - .8197 miles / 1319.1791 meters

**1. Ashprihanal Aalto, 30, Helsinki Finland 3100 miles = 48 days+10:56:12**

1000 mile= 16+08:12:02  
2000 km= 20+01:10:23  
1300 mile= 20+15:19:40  
1500 mile= 23+13:07:50  
1550 mile(half-way)= 24+08:09:30  
3000 km= 29+05:11:57  
2000 mile= 31+06:03:41  
4000 km= 38+15:30:22  
2500 mile= 39+02:13:48  
2700 mile= 42+04:15:10  
3000 mile= 47+00:58:53  
5000km= 48+13:08:16

**2. Namitabha Arsic, 37, Nis Serbia 3100 miles = 50 days+16:23:39**

1000 mile= 16+09:03:38  
2000 km= 20+05:31:28  
1300 mile= 21+03:51:44  
1500 mile= 24+07:22:03  
1550 mile(halfway)= 25+03:52:59  
3000 km= 30+04:23:38  
2000 mile= 32+07:35:08  
4000 km= 40+14:58:51  
2500 mile= 41+00:51:50  
2700 mile= 44+03:49:50  
3000 miles=49+03:20:27  
5000 km= 51+01:58:31

**3. Suprabha Beckjord, 45, Washington,DC USA 3100 miles = 52 days+10:37:42**

1000 mile= 16+03:52:37  
2000 km= 20+03:27:26  
1300 mile= 21+02:18:29  
1500 mile= 24+08:15:01  
1550 mile(halfway)= 25+05:32:23  
3000 km= 30+13:49:24  
2000 mile= 33+02:11:55  
4000 km= 41+10:22:55  
2500 mile= 41+15:23:05  
2700 mile= 45+07:09:56  
3000 mile= 50+14:05:29



*The loyal,  
full  
time  
crew*





This would be the smallest field that the 3100 Mile Race ever produced in its current 24-year history, and many more fine runners from several countries would appear to sparkle on the stage of super-long distance. Sri Chinmoy always said it was just a matter of time before the world would appreciate the efforts of these courageous pioneers, who seize the opportunities to test themselves, to achieve unimaginable heights of athletic prowess. As our stories unfold about the history of the 3100, we urge the seeker-runners throughout the world to reach for the highest, and if along the way they reach excellence, then all of humanity gains another glimpse of progress and self-transcendence. And if nothing else, they reach true satisfaction. Sri Chinmoy's vision is still with us- always.

Every day God inspires me  
To run an ultramarathon  
In my inner life  
So that I shall arrive at my Destination.

-Sri Chinmoy