

The Seventh Sri Chinmoy 3100 Mile Race: New Blood, Better Expectations 2003

June 15 – August 5, 2003 by Sahishnu Szczesiul

The biggest field of seven runners towed the line on a cool summer morning in June of 2003, filled with encouragement and anticipation from a crowd of 100 people at the 6:00am start. Race founder and inspiration for all things self-transcendence- Sri Chinmoy- concentrated on the four veterans and three rookies of super long distance running. Their inner and outer expectations were to be revealed in the next seven plus weeks of running.



Sri Chinmoy meditates and concentrates on each runner. His massive back shows the amazing weightlifting feats he had performed the previous 18 years had resulted in a titanic strong body capable of even more tremendous lifts. His dedication in weightlifting inspired the ultra runners tremendously.

The 51-day race had cutoffs at midnight for six hours. The direction on the .5488 of a mile course (883.2079 meters) changed every day. Runners had food delivered and snacks and liquids provided all day, as well as daily medical supervision, and massages given to loosen tired legs. The runners have to run a shade over 60 miles per day (96 km) in order to finish the race in 51 days.

It takes about a week or two before the body adapts to the high mileage rigors of the race. If a runner pushes too hard in the early days of this race, injuries will appear, especially shin splints and deep blisters. One's immune system is also put under stress, with less sleep being the result of the quest for more miles each day.



The most experienced and quickest of the runners was **Namitabha Arsic**, 38, the Serbian record-holder at very long distances, who listed four finishes of this longest footrace on his resume, with a best of 48 days, four hours from 2000. He had participated in every edition of the 3100 mile race, and his growth as a runner and person was apparent. His talent carved pathways for others to follow.



His rival and friend from several years at shorter competitions, **Andreas Puntigam**, 34, from Vienna Austria would surely give him inspiration and reasons for running well throughout the event. He reached the finish line in 49 days, four hours the previous year in a remarkable debut. He was in the peak of fitness, having run several good times at 700 miles and 1000 miles- 14+17:58:32 NR (2001) in the previous five years.



Canadian **Trishul Cherns**, 46, was back for his second attempt at 3100 miles, confident of years of training, racing, and surviving the super long ones. He would have his wife Kaaren to help him throughout most of the event, a definite plus for any competitor. He finished the 1999 3100 Mile Race, the hottest summer in our seven-year history of the event, in a very respectable time of 50 days+03:36:01



Suprabha Beckjord, 47, the highly experienced, tough runner with six straight finishes in the longest race, was still the only woman to attempt this extreme event, with glowing results. Her best performance at 3100 miles was in 1998, where she set the women's fastest time in 49 days+14:30:54, (a time not bested until 2015).

The three new runners were **Abichal Sherrington**, 43, from Pontypool, Wales UK, who had run 700 miles three times and 827 miles in the 2002 1000 mile race; **Matt Boulton**, 31, from Adelaide, Australia, a multi-day rookie with limited training who had run several marathons and shorter ultras; and **Stefan Warum**, 28, from Germany, another super long novice with little experience and no expectations other than to discover the journey ahead. Sri Chinmoy chose these three men himself.

Abichal

Matt

Stefan



Andreas Puntigam moved along quickly the first day, reaching 81.2 miles (130.7km) before stopping. Namitabha Arsic reached 71.8 miles (115.7km) with an hour to spare, pulling along Stefan Warum- 72. 4 miles (116.5km), and Suprabha Beckjord- 68.2 miles (109.5km). Abichal and Matt made it past 62 miles and 61 miles respectively.

At the end of seven days, Andreas and Namitabha were separated by only two laps, and they were running together quite often throughout the day. By Day 14, Namitabha had assumed the lead by 23 miles, as Andreas was dealing with a few leg issues that fortunately did not last too long. Everyone had to deal with the New York heat and humidity. Hi 90's temperatures and over 70% humidity lasted almost three days and affected everyone.

Suprabha Beckjord was firmly ahead of Trishul Cherns by 30 miles, and seemed in good physical condition after two weeks on the sidewalk course. Trishul was dealing with shin splints and some GI tract issues since Day 11, when he was forced to walk more to cover the distance. It would take him two weeks before he could add more running in his race.

On Day 16 Namitabha Arsic reached 1000 miles in 15 days+09:09:28, his second best ever time. The next day Andreas Puntigam reached the 1000-mile mark in 16:00:27:38. Suprabha followed a few hours later in 16:04:58:40, her 14th time through this split in her stellar career. Trishul Cherns reached the milestone the following day in 17:06:23:13. It was on this day that Stefan Warum did not start due to an infection in his foot and a fever. He would not return to the race. He made it past 1000km but did not have the strength and health to continue.

On Day 20, Abichal Watkins reached 1000 miles for the first time in 19:03:55:07. Abichal said when he was home trying to sleep after each day, he was dreaming that he was still on the course, sweating and moving forward.

Reaching Day 22, with several more days of very hot weather having passed, Matt Boulton crested 1000 miles in 21:04:44:44, thrilled as ever, and happy to be still moving.



By Day 30, if one were to take a snapshot of the race, Namitabha Arsic was at 1916.9 miles/3082.04km, and was one full day ahead of Andreas. The Austrian had netted 1845.6 miles/ 2970.2km. Suprabha Beckjord was at 1774.2 miles/ 2855.4km, and still moving. Trishul Cherns topped 1700.7 miles/2737.1 km, and was starting to make a late night push every day to gain on Suprabha and lessen his mileage deficit. Abichal was aiming for 50 plus miles every day, since the heat was sapping him of energy throughout the day. On Day 33, Matt Boulton threw down the gauntlet, and ran hard all day to reach 70.24 miles, the best distance he would have for any day throughout the journey. He said, "I wanted to see what all this running was doing for me. When I reached 70 miles, it was like I was given a special prize. I didn't know I could do this."



On Day 50, Namitabha Arsic reached his dream of finishing first in the longest race, winning the 2003 Sri Chinmoy 3100 Mile Race in **49 days+02:24:45**. He had started every race in this series, and had finished the last five events. He had done his best two races in some of the hottest summer weather in New York in over 100 years. In this race, 43 of his 50 days on the course resulted in totals above 60+ miles; 30 days were above 100 km. As fate would have it, he could never return to his favorite race, due to misfortune and political chicanery by immigration officers. He was one of the pillars of this race, and still follows the fortunes of the runners strong and lucky enough to toe the line.



A little over 24 hours later the second placer arrived. Andrea Puntigam finished the 3100 Mile Race for the second consecutive time in 50 days+08:20:35. The Austrian record holder showed grit in being able to finish on the podium for two years. His future looked bright, and his cheerfulness helped everyone in the race. He was also given the spiritual name **Smarana** from Sri Chinmoy after another good finish. His dedication to the longest race would extend to over a decade of performances. He had untapped potential and was still learning the secrets of super long races.

It took five or six extra days for Trishul and Suprabha to finish, and Sri Chinmoy wanted them to finish. He also awarded Matt Boulton to stay for 60 days and see how far he could go. Abichal Sherrington reached 2747.3 miles/ 4421.338km before having to return to the UK, as his visa and passport were expiring within a day or two. Matt Boulton reached personal milestones that set his life in a direction of reaching his 3100-mile goal in the next few years.



Late evening on Day 45, Trishul Cherns and his effort to gain mileage bore fruit. He passed Suprabha Beckjord by five miles at days end, and kept his eyes on finishing in third place. Finally, on Day 56, Trishul Cherns finished the 3100 Mile Race in 55 days+02:12:12. It was nearly five days slower than his 1999 finish, but he said it was his happiest memory, in finishing this difficult year. The weather, and frequent showers kept slowing all the runners down. He also credited his wife Kaaren for her selfless help with him on a daily basis, plus covering for his physical therapy customers while he was away from his job. He was and still is one of Canada's greatest ultra runners, and a world-class competitor for decades.



Suprabha's amazing run of seven straight finishes continued, as she reached 3100 miles in 56 days+03:00:22. She was extremely grateful to Sri Chinmoy and her team of helpers for getting her to the finish line. She may have lost



her speed at these events, and she never seems to fully recover, but her willingness and eagerness to partake of the event, and to try her hardest, regardless of the outcome, is really the highest form of effort and detachment that a truth-seeker can ever offer to her master and the world at large. She was a legend then, and the tale was getting larger.

Early in the race, Sri Chinmoy stopped by and asked how the race and the runners were doing. He then asked how the people living close to the racecourse or visitors and even the school officials thought about the race. It was true, more neighbors liked the presence of the event, which made it safer to walk nearby or utilize the playground with their families and friends. The principal and vice principle were very positive about the event. Sri Chinmoy then requested us to try to get at least 10 runners, then upped it to 13 runners every year. He felt it was time to get the running world, and even his disciples who were qualified, to attempt the race, or to be inspired by the athletes who were trying to raise the standard of themselves as well. The four of us race directors pondered our future and hoped we could fulfill this vision. Hindsight shows, it was the moment the race became bigger in the outer world. Sri Chinmoy would get us to the destination- a larger, higher profile event. It would just take a little time. We just had to patiently wait, and see.

Seventh Annual Sri Chinmoy Self-Transcendence 3100 Mile Race Results **June 15- August 5, 2003**

Jamaica, New York, NY Lap = .5488 mile (883.2079 meters) certified

1. Namitabha Arsic, 38, Nis Serbia

3100 miles = 49 days+02:24:45

1000km = 9+11:11:04
1000 miles = 15+09:09:28
2000km = 19+04:36:26
1300 miles = 20+01:21:03
1550 miles = 24+02:32:13 halfway
3000km = 29+01:56:12
2000 miles = 31+05:01:14
4000km = 39+03:07:27
2700 miles = 42+10:46:00
3000 miles = 47+10:41:04
5000km = 49+04:15:13

Smarana Andreas Puntigam, 34, Vienna Austria

3100 miles = 50 days+08:20:35

1000km = 9+12:47:20
1000 miles = 16+00:27:38
2000km = 19+17:07:48
1300 miles = 20+15:30:01
1550 miles = 24+14:53:46 halfway
3000km = 30+04:30:42
2000 miles = 32+05:07:35
4000km = 40+03:51:47
2700 miles = 43+12:38:46
3000 miles = 48+12:08:50
5000km = 50+11:14:35

Trishul Cherns, 46, S. Ozone Park, NY (CAN)

3100 miles = 55 days+02:12:16

1000km = 9+23:56:57
1000 miles = 17+06:23:13
2000km = 21+16:29:13
1300 miles = 22+16:31:47
3000km = 32+15:42:12
2000 miles = 35+03:36:30
4000km = 43+14:21:30
2700 miles = 47+10:11:51
3000 miles = 54+00:42:43
5000km = 55+04:34:03

Suprabha Beckjord, 47, Washington,DC USA

3100 miles =56 days+03:00:22

1000km = 10+01:35:47
1000 miles = 16+04:58:40
2000km = 20+05:37:04
1300 miles = 21+04:44:44
1550 miles = 25+15:41:52
3000km = 31+11:17:17
2000 miles = 34+02:07:16
4000km = 43+11:50:21
2700 miles = 48+01:49:46
3000 miles = 54+02:34:00

Abichal Watkins, 43, Pontypool, Wales UK

2747.293 miles / 4421.339km (in 53 days)

1000km = 11+10:43:00
1000 miles = 19+03:55:07
2000km = 23+17:05:47
1300 miles = 25+01:22:17
3000km = 36+00:50:50
2000 miles = 38+12:11:10
4000km = 47+15:17:56
2700 miles = 51+17:13:28

Matt Boulton, 31, Adelaide, Australia

2818.088 miles / 4535.273km (in 60 days)

1000km = 13+01:26:32
1000 miles = 21+11:20:53
2000km = 26+15:27:20
1300 miles = 28+02:28:33
3000km = 39+05:11:31
2000 miles = 42+08:48:20
4000km = 53+03:22:12
2700 miles = 57+08:49:10

Stefan Warum, 28, Munich Germany

635.51 miles / 1022.755km (dnf-injury)

1000km = 14+02:27:27



