



'Stros, Trolls, Clones, Dogs, & Co. 100x10k World Record Holders

By: Joseph Lerner & Dimitri Dimizas

It was a summer run with my friend **Dimitri Dimizas**, much like many of the others we've done together in the past 14 years since meeting and running high school cross country as teammates. As local high school and college coaches of both cross country and track, our conversation of course turned to our teams and athletes and interesting ideas/activities we could get them involved in. Having recently read about a mass running World Record being set, we wondered whether it would be possible to get a skilled enough team together consisting of our runners to chase after one ourselves. We soon

stumbled upon the 100x10k relay and after doing some quick calculations, we knew assembling a team fast enough to break the record would be very plausible, but we couldn't begin to fathom the other challenges that we would face during the planning and execution stages of the event. The next year would be unlike anything we ever experienced, and we hoped at the end of our endeavors we would be World Record holders!

The first question, and the one that excited us most, was who would be the other 98 participants willing to join us on this journey. Dimitri had competed and coached at Richards High School and Moraine Valley Community College and I was with Shepard High School and Trinity Christian College so we decided our squad would consist of runners from these four schools: former and current athletes, teammates from years past, coaches and friends. We had been blessed to have so many important and influential people in our running lives that we saw this as a way of saying "Thank You" to all of them. Breaking a World Record would just be the icing on the cake; this was going to be a three day party on the track where we could celebrate with all of our friends, family, and runners.

The idea became official when we presented to the school board and got it approved to have **Alan B. Shepard High School** as our host track. They were kind enough to accept our crazy idea and Palos Heights would take center stage in one of the biggest things to rock the running community since the jogging boom. To make the event even better, we were able to take this amazing opportunity and use it as a service project. Together, we would raise money for the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society to honor one of our recently stricken colleagues and to unite the community for a common cause.

About six months out, and obstacles started hitting us from all directions; the honeymoon phase was over and we finally began to realize the onslaught of taking on such a gigantic event by ourselves. We needed two independent witnesses present in four hour shifts at all times (which for a three day event meant at least 36 people). We needed the whole event to be recorded and be in high quality. A

race clock wasn't presenting itself to us either. People/companies struggled to understand what exactly this weird event was, "Is there even a World Record for that?" So sponsors were hard to find. But the most frustrating of all was we couldn't even fill out our 100 person roster. Some just weren't as interested as we had hoped, others were unavailable, and then there were those that needed the swift kick in the ass to get them to sign up. Unfortunately, it hit us that people we were counting on to help out in multiple and big ways just weren't coming through; our boat was stuck out in the middle of the ocean without a paddle, and we were beginning to drown!

Countless times we had our backs against the wall with a problem that we just couldn't solve, but we were extremely fortunate time and time again to come in contact with the right people. The town of Palos Heights aired an interview with us promoting the event and asking for witnesses. They also allowed us to present at the Town Hall meeting to once again encourage community support. A big thank you goes to **Ted** and **Chris Koutavas** for being our IT guys and coming up with the web cam ideas and laptops and totally taking care of the technological aspect of the event that was such a struggle for us. **Running for Kicks**, **Pro Kleen**, and **Moraine Valley Community College** were very generous in becoming sponsors for the event. And just days before the start, **St. Ignatius** pulled us out of the fire by allowing us to borrow their awesome race clock. Our race shirts came in the morning of the event, and our race line up (which was still in flux) was almost complete as we had to broaden our search a bit, but still kept it with a local and community based roster. A roster, none-the-less, that was loaded from top to bottom with school record holders, conference champions, State and National Qualifiers, All-Americans, and even an Olympic Trials Qualifier! Yes sir, the talent was there for something special. Now we'd just have to get a little lucky with the weather and hope the logistics of planning a three day event would go smoothly, or at least as smoothly as any three day running World Record attempt that has a couple hundred moving pieces could go!

When race day finally arrived, I got to the track hours early to begin setting things up; this was going to be my home for the next three days. Everything was finally good to go, spectators were arriving, and our lead leg **Mark Bohdan** was shirtless, spiked up, and race ready... it was Show Time! Our expert witnesses and time keepers were present: **Don Korte** (IHSA Track Official and our starter), **Tim Krupa** (IHSA Track Official and timekeeper), and **Kerry Dean** (IHSA Track Official and timekeeper). Finally, the 4:00 hour rolled around, **Mr. Korte** called **Mark** to the ready as he stepped up and approached the line. "Runner set." BANG! The crack and smoke from the pistol sent **Mark** on his way as his playlist was blasting over the football field speakers. With the extra crowd energy and excitement, Mark took it out at a suicidal pace and gave the spectators a thrill. The wheels were now in motion (wheels that again wouldn't stop for another 70 hours) as **Mark** survived and made it to the first hand-off to **Alex Szafoni** (who received his first and probably only hand off he'll ever receive in his entire life). The exchange was smooth, a foreshadowing of the next 98 (despite some awful form, cough* **Sarah** and **Nicole** *cough) as the baton endlessly circled the track, hovering almost three feet off the ground, not to be lied down to rest until our anchor had broken the tape.

As evening approached on the first day, **Nick Heidinger** took to the track and his leg was highlighted by some awesome announcing from our emcees in the press box. As the stick was passed to **Sarah Lerner**, my sister, that meant I was next and so began the warm up process. For all the races that I've run and been extremely nervous for, it was weird how there was nothing but excitement and anticipation for this race as I jogged a perimeter with one of my former high school teammates and the guy I'd be handing off to, **Brian Hankes**. Darkness was upon us as I stripped down, spiked up, and flew

into a stride. The lights were on, the track was full with family and friends, and I got to the exchange zone to get the hand-off from my sister in one of the coolest moments of the event for me. My leg went well and was about as enjoyable as running any hard 10k can be. Our announcers were back reading “fun facts” over the PA system and it was hard not to start laughing at many of the stories and anecdotes (whether they were true or not). I finished up with a fast last lap to miss my PR and fastest leg by a couple seconds, but that wouldn’t last long with so many big guns left to run behind me. My blisters would remain for the entirety of the event as a reminder of having worn spikes, but the hard part (at least what I had thought would be) was over and now I could sit back and enjoy watching the rest of my friends run!

My (**Dimitri**) leg came up towards the end of Thursday night and I was thankful to have so many people show up to watch me run. Family, friends, and runners I had coached gathered around. Some hadn’t seen me race in years. I warmed up with a couple of laps around Shepard and changed into my racing shorts and spikes. I got to the track for **Laura Simpson’s** last few laps and got to the line to receive the handoff from her. Running on the track, under the lights, close to midnight, with a group of people cheering me on was such a unique experience! Everyone was huddled by the start/finish line so I was more than thankful to have **Wes Sewell** and my sister on the other side of the track giving words of encouragement. My 10k came to a close and I handed off the baton to **Aileen Gorman**. I was happy with my decision to run my leg on the first day because that meant I now had the freedom to watch everyone else, eat anything I wanted, and sleep whenever I felt like it.

Throughout the night, our cushion over the old record increased and we were right on pace with breaking three days! And best of all, our runners’ starting time schedule was exactly dead on (and amazingly would stay that way throughout all 100 runners; our projected goal pace for our runners was spot on!). **Bob** and **Diana Brickman** raced for fastest leg in their family and were followed up shortly by **Nate** and **Matt Gibson** who also had the same family rivalry. (We didn’t realize it at the time, but these were only two of eleven pairs of siblings that we had running on our team; this was more than just a record attempt, it was a family affair).

My young Astros took to the track to get us through the morning hours and kept our pacing consistent, highlighted by our girls coach’s leg **Angela Ochoa**, as she emulated her college days and beat out a number of our guys’ times; well, that and the endless boxes of doughnuts and breakfast sandwiches kind supporters kept bringing us to fuel the energy tanks and keep us awake! The Astros gave way to some of the big names on our squad, and first up was 4 flat miler **Zach Dahleen** who made it look effortless. Just as the track was burning up with fast times from **Zach** and brothers **Kyle** and **Brian Hauser**, our good luck with the weather was about to change. Shortly into **Aaron Spivey’s** leg, the skies opened up and it absolutely poured on us. For some reason the rain seemed to make our guys run faster as **Aaron** muscled his way to the fastest leg of the event in 32:55. He was followed by **Jake Christiansen** donning his Calvin jersey and encouraged all around the track by his Chicago Christian girls on his way to the second fastest split. They were followed shortly after by our Trials Qualifier, **Paul Jellema**, who didn’t seem to be enjoying the wet weather nearly as much as our other runners.

Into the night, the rain persisted, I guess our only saving grace coming from the fact that lightning had not accompanied it, as some of our Bulldogs and Cyclones got us through the awful conditions. My morale was beginning to deteriorate; it had been well over a day since I slept, we were encountering technological problems, and the rain just would not stop. Emotionally I was getting

depressed and this was probably the lowest point of the relay for me; I was more than ready to pack it in and just call it quits.

The mood began to change as reinforcements showed up and the rain, thank goodness, finally stopped. **Ben Szafoni** brought the Krapils group with for his leg and they started grilling out maybe the best midnight hamburgers I think I've ever tasted! A runner of only one year of cross in high school with us, **Ben**, being the natural athlete that he is, trained ferociously to get back in shape and contribute to the team. His leg set the stage for the friendly showdown of Michiganders **Landon Potts** and **Michael Potter**. Through the darkness they flew, each keeping track of the others splits, as lap after lap their pace mirrored each other, ending with a couple second victory for **Potts**. This led to our 50th runner, who also had our 50th fastest split go figure, as the long striding, long haired **Sam Staal** ran on pure anger and motivation to prove to me he was still the powerful and strong runner of his youth. He got the team to the halfway mark in 34:49.02, way ahead of record pace and still right on pace of what we thought we'd run. The scary part, though, was that our second half was only going to run faster!

We had made it through the morning of the second day with an awesome early bird crew and with only a few minor hiccups over all: witnesses not showing, weather conditions, computer issues. As the day warmed up, the burden of over two days with no sleep was starting to weigh on me. I was preparing to pass out in the press box until I realized that our Shepard Astros' track was being run by Bulldogs. It was time for the recent Richards alumni to take over (all wearing their Richards XC jerseys and having a blast) it reminded me so much of our old team that I just had to be a part of it. Joined by our website designer, **Colin Castein**, who had flown in all the way from Canada for the event, the Bulldogs had brought a new sense of energy and excitement to our environment. **Mike Kaczmarczyk** was the next runner to come up big for the team as he filled in for a last second injury. A hurdler and soccer player by trade, **Mike** was already hanging out at the event earlier and thrilled by the idea of getting the chance to participate; well, more thrilled before he realized how long a 10k was than after.

The stands quickly began to fill, and there was no wonder why, as our neighbors from the east, the Illiana Christian Vikings, were sending over some of their most talented runners and they would be putting on a show. 3200m state champ **Colin De Young** would get the party started before teammate **Nick Fiene** would set an event record by closing his last quarter in 59 seconds. **Matt Hall** gave the crowd a thrill and then a scare when with a mile to go he suddenly stopped on the track. But it was only for a quick water break and to catch his breath; he'd still finish with one of the fastest legs. **Kevin Vroegh** took the stick from **Matt** in full stride and set another record by clocking his first lap in a blistering 59 seconds. **Tony Wondaal** would finish up for his troops but there was now an enthusiasm on the track that would stay throughout the rest of the night!

The next group who would have their turn at the 10k distance was the Trinity Alumni; a blast from the past for me and a chance to reunite with my former college teammates. Seeing the likes of **Bolaji Adeoti**, **Andy Jellema**, and **Austin Warner** warm up together and stride passed each other, it was hard not to get emotional and flash back to the countless relays and workouts we've run together; years have passed, but that unspoken connection was as strong as ever. You could argue that this group had built the foundation of the Trinity team and this record attempt allowed us the opportunity to show it to the world. They ran resourcefully and intelligently like the grizzled veterans who have seen and been through it all. Even the old empty water bottle goofy gag got the **Manchild** late into his leg, the group was up to their old pranks. Taking the track next was our collegiate marathon All American, **Ashley**

Shares. Having traveled up from Atlanta for the event, she didn't disappoint, running the fastest girls leg (38:54). Her hand-off to **Chris "Dirtyboy" Koutavas** was electric as his dreadlocks flowed majestically into the evening in front of the gathering crowd of supporters.

Matt Randich was a very last second fill in and ran admirably before giving way to a **Brian Clark** to **Alex Clark** hand-off. **Brian** motored around the track like Dom, amped up by his all Fast and Furious playlist, and then **Alex** continued the momentum by running our third fastest leg and possibly one of the most exciting as he had the infield running back and forth cheering him on in wild anticipation of what time this trackster could put up and what this might hold for the rest of his season. It was around this time too that my sleep deprivation took its toll and my mind began to fail me; moments of hallucination and times when I knew what I was seeing just wasn't right followed by some slap happy and giddy stages that confirmed to me that I was losing it and that we still had a long way to go! Our trio of U-High runners took the reins next as I passed out on the infield for the one and only hour of sleep I would get in the over three day event.

I woke in a panic, but just in time to catch **Nicole Clark** finish her leg before my current squad of Shepard Astros would show why they are going to be a force to be reckoned with these next couple of years. Speedster **Kevin Courtney** led off for the squad running jubilantly before **Joey Iaquina** kept the party going. The **Kevin Callahan, Brian Maty** rivalry took center stage around 2:00 AM as both decided to negative split their races and run each mile faster than the previous one. After the entire 10,000m they finished a whooping one second apart before giving way to twin sister **Kelli Callahan** who showed her pacing ability by nailing seven flats the entire way. From our female conference champ to our male conference champ, 5 foot tall, 95 pound, afroed **Caleb Washington** ran conservatively before opening up the last mile and proving why he is one of the best runners in the state of Illinois right now. Running aggressively and with something to prove, **Garrett White** took it our hard and would hold on to beat all his teammates time and stake an early claim at top dog honors on the team this year.

Morning finally broke on our last day and the night's festivities had put us even farther ahead of the record. After being in contact with our last ten runners, it finally hit us that we were actually going to make it through to the end. Former high school teammates of ours and studs **Tom Crivellone** and **Scott Hankes** arrived early after a full night of work and were jacked for their legs. It was a pleasure to see them running again (a sport they were so good at and so loved) before our oldest team member **John Chappetto** (my basketball coach and teacher back in high school) completed his task with a workman-like approach.

The sun was up, it was getting very warm, and our last five runners were all there and enjoying the company. Our relay would be brought home by five of the most impactful Shepard Alumni of all time; their pictures are plastered all over our school's Wall of Fame and helped create the powerhouse that Shepard has now become in cross and track. Mile, two mile, and cross country record holder **Lauren Loomis** was up first before **Matt Cabel** put his skills on display as our crowd began to grow. Prior runners, witnesses, and family members began showing up as the momentous conclusion was in sight. Local newspapers and media outlets started gathering too as **Mike Evancich** took it out with guns blazing. He held on well and set it up for our last two runners, both very capable athletes of going after **Spivey's** fastest leg from two days earlier; and with the announcer (myself) keeping the crowd informed of their pacing, it insured a quick start from the two of them. **Josh Maier**, a D1 distance athlete at SIU, hit the track running for the penultimate leg with his long, lengthy stride gobbling up ground. Supporters

now had circled the track, encouraging him from all angles. With the heat index rising, I took to the track a couple times, water bottle in hand, attempting to offer **Josh** a bit of relief. He would come through in our fourth fastest split of the event and hand-off to the man who has made a living out of anchoring Shepard relays to greatness. The hand-off from **Josh** to **Abel Hernandez** looked as smooth as their running relationship has been the past four years together. When the idea first arose about a year ago, there was never a doubt who our anchor was going to be; the success of our relay team would be squarely placed on the broad shoulders of our tanned, once mow hawked, little Mexican.

The noise grew deafening as lap by lap **Abel** remained stoic with his perfect form and eyes up, always aiming straight in front of him; standing in lane two with a bottle of water numerous times, I honestly thought he didn't even see me out there as his focus was unflappable. Like **Maier**, his pace too would fall off of **Spivey's**, but it would go unnoticed as the hundreds of people implored him onwards to something even greater. The bell lap arrived, not just for **Abel**, but for the entire team as he injected one last surge into the pace. The magnitude of what we were about to accomplish dawned on him as he began to smile briefly before turning it into a grimace for his kick down the lane. With hundreds of camera phones out and flashing, **Abel** broke the tape held by **Evancich** and **Maier** and enjoyed the roar of celebration as the race clock officially stopped at 69:06.52. We had broken the record by over eight hours.

Pictures, pizza, celebratory hugs and thank yous would follow as it dawned on **Dimitri** and I exactly what we had just accomplished. It would take a couple more months of work on our part to piece all of the evidence together for submission: painfully going through the video, compiling the witness reports, log books, race photos, and all kinds of printed and supplementary materials. The effects of staying awake the entire event would also stay with us for months after; so much was sacrificed and given up, both during and the months leading up to the event, but it was all worth it to be a part of such an amazing experience and to see the finished product. Breaking the record was cool, but the three day reunion and party on the track with all our friends and the community was so much more meaningful. There are too many thank yous to go around: to all our participants, witnesses, volunteers, supporters, and everyone else who made this possible. We love you guys! And finally, to end with our slogan; "625 miles- 100 runners- 3 days- 1 World Record. History in the making!"



1. Mark Bohdan- 36:39	26. Ashley Jourdan- 41:05	51. Nicholas Zuiker- 51:46	76. Matt Randich- 51:45
2. Alex Szafoni- 48:02	27. Brandon DeChene- 59:55	52. Jacob Zuiker- 44:47	77. Brian Clark- 38:22
3. Justin Briante- 43:11	28. Jacob Kats- 44:40	53. Matthew Przeslicke- 38:36	78. Alex Clark- 33:56
4. Jesus Rojas- 39:51	29. Zach Dahleen- 33:57	54. Matt Swiatkowski- 37:13	79. Zach Emanuel- 39:39
5. Phil Culbertson- 38:59	30. Kyle Hauser- 36:22	55. Andy Boss- 41:19	80. Charlie Sowerby- 39:58
6. Nick Heidinger- 41:44	31. Brian Hauser- 41:52	56. Yousef Khazneh-38:16	81. Jacob Meyer- 37:49
7. Sarah Lerner- 52:00	32. Jose Beltran- 47:25	57. Jeremy Cryan- 47:28	82. Nicole Clark- 49:12
8. Joey Lerner- 36:49	33. Aaron Spivey- 32:55	58. Wesley Sewell- 44:58	83. Kevin Courtney- 42:53
9. Brian Hankes- 45:54	34. Jake Christiansen- 33:50	59. Colin Castein- 42:15	84. Joey Iaquinta- 42:10
10. Laura Simpson- 53:53	35. Jason Mallo- 39:47	60. Griffin Forberg- 43:18	85. Kevin Callahan- 39:23
11. Dimitri Dimizas- 39:41	36. Paul Jellema- 38:53	61. Eric Krasich- 45:33	86. Brian Maty- 39:24
12. Aileen Gorman- 42:00	37. Tony McGraw- 44:28	62. Dan Krasich- 39:18	87. Kelli Callahan- 44:05
13. Bob Brickman- 46:50	38. Chauncey Lawson- Weinert- 41:45	63. Bernardo Perea- 47:16	88. Caleb Washington- 36:35
14. Diana Brickman- 47:06	39. Mike Rores- 41:08	64. Mike Kaczmarcyk- 47:39	89. Garrett White- 36:17
15. Daniel Lindbloom- 36:44	40. Alex Zwick- 40:13	65. Colin DeYoung- 37:27	90. Edwin Wainana- 36:28
16. Matthew Gibson- 41:56	41. Ryan Walt- 39:46	66. Nick Fiene- 34:45	91. Tom Crivellone- 42:58
17. Nathaniel Gibson- 40:44	42. Lance Klingensmith- 37:38	67. Matt Hall- 35:30	92. Scott Hankes- 45:23
18. Annie Rangel- 48:21	43. Connor Williams- 38:52	68. Kevin Vroegh- 37:05	93. John Chappetto- 50:34
19. Aleck Poradowski- 45:39	44. David Palac- 40:31	69. Tony Wondaal- 36:43	94. Kyle Kurecki- 41:51
20. Cole Akimoff- 39:58	45. Alejandro Montes- 41:02	70. Isaac Porte- 44:03	95. Alec Altman- 42:23
21. Kevin Dusek- 44:19	46. Anthony Briante- 40:51	71. Bolaji Adeoti- 40:00	96. Lauren Loomis- 49:19
22. Angela Ochoa- 43:53	47. Ben Szafoni- 48:22	72. Andy Jellema- 38:09	97. Matt Cabel- 39:23
23. Andrew Miller- 40:46	48. Landon Potts- 35:28	73. Austin Warner- 40:09	98. Mike Evancich- 37:50
24. Florian Siggemann- 37:50	49. Michael Potter- 35:31	74. Ashley Shares- 38:54	99. Josh Maier- 33:56
25. Paul Milkus- 38:54	50. Sam Staal- 40:19	75. Chris Koutavas- 38:57	100. Abel Hernandez- 34:05

'STROS, TROLLS, CLONES, DOGS, & CO.