

## The Butler Blog Mudder Insanity

I've never completed a race where thermal Mylar blankets are given out, and used, during the race, but there I was knee deep in icy mud with my newly fashioned garbage bag dress surrounded by people swaddled in the shiny material. Wait, I'm getting ahead of myself, let me take a few steps back.

It all started back in the fall when a co-worker of mine said to me, "I don't know many girls who would do this, but . . ." and before he could finish the sentence I blurted out, "I'm in!" He described the premise of the race and I became giddy with excitement. I signed up for the challenge almost immediately joining his team, MUDDER INSANITY!

Flashing forward to race weekend:

Moose, Squirrel and I drove up to West Dover, Vermont the Friday night before race day. We booked two nights at The Inn at Mount Snow. It was a fantastic bed and breakfast at the base of the Mountain. The Innkeeper, Glenda, couldn't have been more accommodating or friendly. I was the anomaly to the typical guests she had this weekend. All the rooms were filled with couples or friends or teams, and there I was just me with my toddlers in tow. She offered me some milk for the boys and showed me around and to our room. The boys and I settled in to our room and quickly dozed off. Race morning our team took off at 11:20 so I had plenty of time to enjoy the Breakfast the Inn had to offer. The home baked treats and a fresh fruit spread were delightful but I especially loved my blueberry and raspberry pancake, eggs and home fries. The boys and I were fueled up and ready to go!

The boys and I walked over to the start line, half a mile from the Inn at most! The three men that formed team Mudder Insanity, Jack, Stevie, and Keith have been friends since they were teenagers, so it was like I was joining a family not just a team. They were my three newly acquired protective brothers!

After the National Anthem had been sung and a moment of the crowds hooting U-S-A! U-S-A! U-S-A! We were off! A quick "Braveheart" dash down hill at the throngs of spectators, then the ascent began!

The obstacles were minimal the first few miles probably to get your body to fatigue ensuring the obstacles felt harsher than they would have been if taken on individually. I will highlight some of the day's events.

Let me start by saying the website stated that the "Average" time to complete the course would be 2.5 hours. Let me also tell you that at 11:00AM when my team and I walked to the start the THIRD finisher was crossing the finish line two hours after his starting time, there was no one behind him! It took my team just shy of 5 hours to complete this course. Granted, our focus was on fun, not time. I wouldn't change a thing about our approach and I think we did it right, we all finished smiling, and eager to try again next year.

The first particularly annoying obstacle was titled, "Boa Constrictor." In this challenge there were two tubes to be crawled through, in water with rocks lining the bottom. On hands and knees I shimmied my way through. My team mate Jack, who is built like a NFL player was less than thrilled with this obstacle and said it was tricky to get out. After the first pipe you made your way through a cold puddle and into the second tunnel.

My least favorite obstacle came next. "The Ball Shrinker." In this challenge you held a rope above and stood on a rope below. Following your team mates you inch across the rope quickly becoming submerged (water came up to my chest) in 45 degree water. Half way through I found it extremely hard to breath and contemplated getting help from the volunteers on kayaks. I couldn't scream or ask for help, I was too cold, and a little panicked. My team mates motioned and yelled for assistance. Although, my experience with triathlons is, if you get help from the kayak, you can be disqualified. Worried about a DQ I told them I was fine. The guy told me to swim in, it would be faster. I kicked in and desperately looked for a thermal blanket, there were none. My one HUGE COMPLAINT to the race organizers was despite me, my team mates and the volunteer yelling for a medic NO ONE CAME! All I wanted was the thermal blanket to wear. Less than thrilled and cold I figured the only way to warm up was to keep on, so on we went. For the next mile Jack and I kept our eyes on the side of the trails for "throw aways" clothing people felt they didn't need. First thing spotted was a pair of gloves, on they went. Score one for Jack for spotting them. A bit later Jack spotted the ultimate piece of fashion and warmth for me to don, and so the trash bag dress was made! A shoelace for a belt completed the outfit and I was warm again. I feel the need to assure you that the garbage bag was clean and un-used. Nothing makes you feel more like a homeless person than searching for discarded clothing along the side of a mountain.

On we marched/jogged/climbed through the mud mile and through the tire challenge. The 10<sup>th</sup> and one of my favorite challenges was, "The kiss of mud" We crawled under netting through the mud. This mud felt warm, I could have happily crawled through a mile of it! Next challenge, "Hold your wood" Up and down the hill while holding a log. I took a second to look for a small-ish one and took on the ascent and descent. Another favorite of mine was, "Evil Knevil." We ran up a skateboard ramp held on to the top and climbed onto the platform and repelled down the other side. Upon first glance it looked impossible but with the running force up my team went!

The mystery challenge was as reported at the start line, "wadding through a vat of maple syrup and then trekking through sawdust." MEH I scoffed at it. It was just brown water and I wouldn't even call it sawdust more like chopped wood. I may have actually enjoyed the syrup more.

This challenge is where my fear kicked in. I already contemplated not doing this challenge before seeing it. "Walk the Plank" Climb up a giant structure and plunge into the 45 degree water. I am not a huge fan of heights, but I figured that day was about challenging my fears. We got to the top and Jack happily plunged first. Then my turn. One . . Two . . Three. . . F--- NO! I let Keith go, saw him splash. Now my turn to try

again. One . . .Two . . Three . . . F--- No! One . . . two . . . three. . . . F--- SPLASH!!!! I did it! Free style stroke in to the shore, with team mate Keith on my heels. Hey guys, why did we choose the plank furthest from the shore? As I approached the shore struggling to breath through the frigid temperatures a guy in front of me saw me struggling and helped me ashore. That is a testament to the fact that the individuals that made up this race were more interested in the camaraderie than their time. Later that evening at dinner Stevie said to me, “Marcie if you hadn’t jumped I was going to push you.” He knew I’d be fine. A little push every now and then is a good thing. If I hadn’t jumped I would have regretted it, glad to know my team mate would have pushed me ☺

A bit later I waded through red-dyed ice water. Legitimately a commercial dumpster FULL of ice cubes. I kindly thanked the guy as he added more ice just to my right as I hopped in the dumpster.

Next was the “Funky Monkey” GREASED monkey bars above a man made pond of frigid water. I watched as my team mates’ valiant effort got them close to the other side but no one made it without falling in. At that point my fingers were so cold I could barely close them around the wrungs and my arms couldn’t reach the next bar. I decided not to drop in the water. So I went around the obstacle. I’d be lying if I said I didn’t regret going around the obstacle. I was just so cold I didn’t want to be submerged in any more water. There is always next year.

My one and only injury from the event was during “the Berlin wall” Four 12 foot walls. Your team and other Mudders boost you up and you propel yourself over the wall. I assumed I would repel down the other side but instead you drop into a mud puddle. When I went over the top of the first wall I scraped under my right arm and got a dozen scrapes. Compared to the broken and sprained bones I saw I will gladly accept my injury.

I shed my garbage bag dress for the final obstacles. We went over a dozen ski towers, lying on their side. We went through the “Fire Walker” which promised running through a tunnel of kerosene drenched hay and we should expect 4 foot flames. By the time we reached it, it was barely smoking, kind of lame I have to say.

A few more obstacles passed and we reached the final challenge, “Greased Lightning.” We were to run through tentacles that were electrically charged. I felt nothing. My team mate Jack to my left must have got the brunt of it. I heard a loud expletive filled scream!

We all finished smiling and laughing.

Dinner that night with all the families and friends of team MUDDER INSANITY we recapped the night and eagerly planned next year, with wives and friends contemplating joining the team. I loved it. I would make one adjustment to next year’s wardrobe: I will START in the garbage bag dress!