

Tom's Run in Bahrain

From US Coast Guard S/A Chris Huntington



This year's Tom's Run was interesting to say the least. New experiences and new runs were what set this apart. My first Tom's Run was in 2010, not too long after I moved to DC. Some Coasties over at Ballston had informed me of the event, and I got excited about it. CGIS [Coast Guard Investigative Service] had never put a team together and it seemed like something that should just be done. We had a blast. Last year, I didn't even have to push for people to get on the CGIS team. We had agents, family, and friends who were

asking to do it before it started. After last year, I handed the torch of team leader to Shawn Warner, as I had received orders for CGIS DD-PATFORSWA. So, this year it was all on Shawn's shoulders to put it together. When it came time to plan for the run, he took the reins and brought in the veterans from our past runs and making an excellent plan (better than I ever did). I kept in touch and kept bugging him to make sure I got enough mileage. As the time got closer I started to realize that going out for that many runs in such a short time and alone probably wasn't the best idea. I reached out to LT John Northrop here in Bahrain to help me out. He was there (in the truck) for the first run, and alongside me on his bike for the second and third leg.

This year was tough though. I got out here in November and enjoyed the cool weather (yes the Middle East gets cool and at times cold) of winter. The temperature started getting into the high 90's and low 100's around April. This was my first time running in this heat. It's not the same heat as DC, the best way I can explain is as if the sun has a hand and it's pressing down on you while it is constantly laughing. The wind and sand are other factors that are not something you can really know until you experience them.

My first run was at 1020 my time (0320 DC time). The temperature read 100 degrees, but it was still warming up. The wind was pushing my SUV from side to side, and the weather channel said the winds were pushing above 30 knots. I had thought it would be an awesome idea to kick off Tom's Run Bahrain style down at the Tree of Life. The problem with that is there is nothing but sand down there. Thankfully I had my long sleeve shirt, shemagh, shades, and hydration pack. The sand was blowing so hard it stung every piece of skin exposed. The sand is very fine out here, so it still gets through the shemagh and into your mouth. After a while of breathing heavily with this sand you become nauseous. The wind would blow so hard at times that it would stop me dead in my tracks. The return trip was a lot faster with the wind to my back; but, by then my

shoes were clogged with sand. The wind had filled my shoes with the talcum like powder. This was the beginning of a horrible blister to plague me for the rest of the time.

My second run was at 2320 my time (1620 DC time). Like my fellow Tom's Run mates I hadn't gotten any sleep, or even changed (not by choice of course). This run worked out well with the wind to my back for the majority of it. The temp was still in the mid to high 90's and wasn't going down. The humidity had picked up. LT Northrop was riding along as I ran. The sand storm wasn't blowing as hard, but it was still thick enough that it burned the eyes and chalked up on your teeth just from breathing. We ran around and through the Souq which was eerily empty. Some of the neighborhood we ran through would normally be off limits, but it was just too much fun. The run through Manama was interesting at night, but the sand storm persisted, and again was making me nauseous towards the 8th mile of the leg. By the time I got my shoes off from this run there was an amazingly bright bubble sticking off the side of my right foot. It only hurt when I wasn't running, or poking at it.

The third leg was the one that hurt, physically and mentally. It was again 1020 and I had snuck in a couple hours of sleep. Fortunately for the CG PATFORSWA folks, I had also grabbed a shower before coming into the morning briefing. As soon as the briefing finished, LT Northrop and I had changed out and we were off. The base was under black flag, so no PT allowed on base (but if you wonder outside the gate, you're on your own). The temp read in the low 90's but it felt a lot hotter than that. I was dehydrated from the past two runs. I hadn't been able to catch up with hydrating. Between the dust and heat, I was toast. I remember as I ran over the center bridge towards Muharaaq, the water looked so inviting all I wanted to do was just to fall in. At mile 9 I made the decision to ask that my final leg of 4.5 that was coming up in 3 hours be covered by my team back in the states. Of course they're all rock stars and took it with no problems. After my run, the blister again started hurting. That thing is still there, and is a good reminder that sand and running don't go too well together. Not that I'll listen.

So, the day after here I am, getting up at 530 am to get some homework done, and to work a nice long day in the office playing catch-up. I look forward to doing it again next year, and hopefully I'll have some more Coasties to join in. With luck there'll be enough of us out here to put together our own team. Look for a couple of us to run the Dubai Marathon in January 2013.

Glad to be a part of the Tom's Run, hopefully I can steal more mileage from my teams in the future.

Thanks to my team for allowing me to join in from over here:

Shawn Warner
Wes Forster
Barry Buck
Bill and Aaron Newbauer
Todd MacCallum
Chris and Windi Sims
Ryan and Alycia Otte
John Northrop