

# 2017 Spruce Woods Ultra

## The Book of Trail Truths

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Alright, you signed up to do the toughest trail race in the prairies. So what should you expect come race day? Keep reading and hopefully all your questions will be answered. If, for any reason, you become frightened of what you discover, sorry, you already signed up. You'll have to come run and see that there isn't much to be afraid of. Unless you're scared of hills, views, great trails and a good sweaty time.

## Quick Facts

Race Weekend: May 12-13, 2017

Race Day - Friday - 100 mile, 10 mile night run, 100km start, Saturday - all other events start  
Race Location - Epinette Creek Trail Head, Spruce Woods Provincial Park. Hwy 5, south of Carberry MB

### **Driving Times:**

Winnipeg (Headingley) - 2 hours

Brandon - 50 minutes

### **Start Times:**

100 mile - 12:00 noon - Friday

10 mile night run - 10:00pm - Friday

100 km - 12:00 midnight - Friday night

50 mile - 6:00am - Saturday

50 km - 8:30am - Saturday

Half Marathon - 10:00am - Saturday

10 km - 11:00am - Saturday

There is a pre-race brief by the Race Director 20 minutes before the start of each event.

The course closes at 8pm on Saturday, there are cut-off times for the 50 mile, 100 km and 100 mile events.

### **Race Weekend Contact Info:**

To reach the race director, Dwayne Sandall on Thursday/Friday/Saturday, please call or text 431-800-1616 (that's the new Manitoba area code, not long distance). He won't have e-mail access from Thursday morning until sometime Saturday night, so the above phone number is it. Please note, cell service is very spotty in the race area, but we will trek out to the highway every couple hours to check for messages.

In the final week prior to the race, we will also be sending information to all registered runners with a link to send a message to our satellite phones used to coordinate on race weekend. This information is for emergency use only.

## Race Kits

We strongly encourage you to pick up your kit in Winnipeg if you can though as it means there is less for us to haul out to the race site.

Race kits will be available for pick up in Winnipeg on **Wednesday May 10th from 3:00 to 7:30** pm at City Park Runners, 2091 Portage Avenue.

If you are not from Winnipeg, or won't be in Winnipeg Wednesday, you can also pick up your race kit at the race site on Friday morning through to Saturday morning. We'll be setting up kit pick up at 10:30 am Friday. If you don't have your kit half an hour before your start time, consider yourself in trouble with the head of race day pick up; she can be testy unless you make offerings of good coffee.

## Race Site

The race start/finish is just inside the northern boundary of Spruce Woods Park off of Highway 5. There is a large sign on the east side of the highway that says "Epinette Creek", this is where you will turn. The start/finish area is about 1km down the road (stay to the right as the road forks). For the night run, 100 km and 50 mile start we will have some glow sticks out on the sign so you can see it, as it will be a bit dark until about 5:40am.

At the start/finish area we will have a drop bag area set up where you can leave a bag with dry clothes for after the run. We will also have a tent set up for changing. There will be basic washroom facilities (outhouse and porta-potties).

100 & 50 mile and 100 km racers may also leave a drop bag for between laps at the registration area. These will be kept right by the aid station you will pass through after completing your laps.

Please note: If you search Spruce Woods Ultra on google maps, it drops a pin in the middle of the park. DO NOT follow those directions; you will end up in the middle of nowhere!!!! We have tried on numerous occasions to have this rectified, but no luck as of yet. If you're using your GPS, the coordinates are:

49.7277262,-99.2954017 (decimal) or <https://goo.gl/maps/qEeYXGdatXG2>

## Parking

As the race start for some of the events will be on the access road, we ask for your cooperation in keeping the traffic and parking as well organized as the rest of the event. There will be a volunteer to facilitate parking, so please follow their guidance. They will also have park pass slips to save you walking back and forth to pick one up.

We strongly encourage you to car-pool out to the site as parking will be quite dense this year.

There will be a designated volunteer only parking zone near the race HQ. Please respect this area as the volunteers are coming and going over the course of 36+ hours, often schlepping gear to make your race better!

## Park Permits

As of May 1, park permits are required for all vehicles in Manitoba Provincial Parks. There will be a self serve park pass kiosk at the trail head where you must purchase a day pass if you don't already have one. The cost is \$5.00 and exact change is required or else you'll have to leave a tip to Manitoba Conservation :-). You can buy a yearly pass at Canadian Tire stores (or other locations that sell hunting/fishing licenses) for about \$40 - which is really a fantastic deal.

## Race Day - Check In

### **THIS IS SUPER IMPORTANT!!!**

I'm not one to gratuitously use red bold fonts (I almost used comic sans!), so you have to know that I'm actually serious here. Before you start, we need to know that you have actually shown up. When you arrive at the race site, you need to visit the registration tent and let one of the friendly volunteers know that you are there, what your bib number is and which event you are in. If we don't know you're out there on the course and you get lost or mauled by a skink, we won't know to come look for you. Also, if you don't check in, and decide to run, well, we won't be recording your finish time. This means if you win, you won't really. You also won't be in the draws for some of our awesome prizes and that would suck.

Also of importance will be a brief pre-race meeting 15 minutes before the start where the race director will outline some key information and give you a pop quiz on the contents of this document.

We will also be recording your progress through the aid stations. Whenever you arrive at an aid station make sure the volunteers there know that you have come through and confirm they have your number. They will also have your names and may choose to cheer/heckle you as required to keep you moving.

## Race Bibs/Timing Chips

You need to wear your race bib on the front of your body in such a place that it is visible at all times to the race management and volunteers along the course. The timing company will have specific instructions on placement of your timing chips for the race.

For all ultra events, volunteers will be recording your time in at each aid station along the route. This is to ensure that if you go missing, we know when and where you were last seen. It is your responsibility to inform the aid station what your bib number is when arriving at an aid station.

## Race Day Environmental Impact

For 2017 we have made the decision to go cup free. What does this mean to you? It means that all beverages on course will be served in your bottle or your portable cup. There are numerous collapsible cups on the market, as well as simple things like cutting the top off a single use water bottle - you end up with a light, inexpensive cup. We will only be providing disposable cups for hot beverages such as soup, coffee and hot chocolate.

## Course

The entire course will be marked with flags using the basic convention that the **flags that matter are always on the left side of the trail**. All flags, except for the half marathon leg, will have reflective tape as well. This reflective tape is red and silver and can be seen for up to 400m away from a wide angle.

We use two colours of marking flags to distinguish between the outbound and inbound portions of the main course. See the course overview map for the breakpoints where different colours are used. For all distances the flags will change colour after the trail comes back to the T intersection (about 20 miles from the start of the main trail). The plan at time of writing is that the **Outbound** flags will be **Orange** and **Back to finish** flags will be **Blue** -- just remember Orange then Blue. The half marathon will have one section marked with yellow flags, but then you too will follow the Blue flags back to the finish.

The 100 mile, 100 km and 50km races have an out & back leg about 19 miles into the loop. This will be marked with pink flags

While there are a few short sections where the trail is two way and there will be flags on both sides, otherwise, the most important thing you must remember is that you need to keep the flags on your left side. At corners and intersections there will be multiple flags (at least three, but often more) marking the correct way to go. There will be no flags on the wrong trail. Also, there are numerous signs on the course (official park signs) that indicated "Do Not Enter" -- they mean it; the course does not go the wrong way on a marked trail. Depending on the weather at time of course marking (the day or two before the race) there may be supplemental ground markings as well. Those will be discussed race morning before the start during the pre-race meeting.

As there are long sections of the trail with no intersections, there will be occasional confidence markers along the course too; about every km or so, but do not expect exact measurements between confidence flags.

There will be yellow coded flags for the one section of the course where the half marathon goes a different way. There will be a sign at this intersection as well. Regardless of the signage (deer have chewed on signs and flags in the past) keeping the rule in mind that the colour coded flags are always on the left hand side of the trail, you should not get lost. If you do find yourself lost, back track to the last flag you saw, orient yourself so it is on your left side and then proceed.

If you see someone not following the course markings, **do NOT follow them**. Instead, follow the markings. It would also be quite sporting to tell them they are about to get lost. How long you wait to yell at them depends on how far ahead you want to get :-)

**If you encounter any asphalt, you are lost.** There are a couple short sections of each trail that are dirt roads, but nothing paved. The 100 mile, 100 km and 50 km do traverse a short section on the out and back that is a farm road through a field, but otherwise, any road is a park service road and is quite rough.

The Epinette & Newfoundland trail system is a constant rolling and curving trail. You will find one creek crossing, that may or may not have a beaver dam that you can use as a bridge\*. You will cross twice: once a few kms into the Epinette trail, and the second time when the finish line is just a few km away. Otherwise, the trail is usually quite dry, even in the rain as the soil is very sandy and drains very fast. (\* tragically there is now a bridge over the creek, so you won't get wet feet)

Shade and tree cover is intermittent, but even on a windy day, you stay fairly sheltered by both the terrain and the tree cover. There are a few high ridges along the way, look out over the Assiniboine River or Epinette creek where you can. There are a couple hills along the way that will make you question your fitness if you try to run them at a steady pace, but for the most part, it is just a non-stop rollercoaster of ups and downs. The elevation profile below is for the main 25 mile loop, but it gives you a general sense of the trail and what to expect.



## Time Limits

100 Mile - 32 Hours

100 km - 18 Hours

50 Mile - 14 Hours

The course will remain open until 8:00pm giving the 50 mile a 14 hour time limit; 50km a time limit of 11:30 hours, and the half marathon 7 hours. We won't kick you off the course at the time limit, but we will have to start tearing down the finish line and the course markings.

## Cut Offs

100 Mile - **You must start your third lap by 7:00am on Saturday morning.** On the final lap, you must leave the last aid station before 6pm on Saturday. The course closes at 8:00pm (32 hours).

100 km - You must start the second lap by 8:30 am Saturday morning. The time limit for the 100 km is 18 hours. Finishes past 6pm Saturday will be recorded as un-official.

50 Mile - You must start your second lap by 12:15pm (6h:15m of race time). The course closes at 8:00pm (14 hours). You must leave the last aid station by 6pm.

Cut off times are firm, and are there to ensure reasonable shift end times for the support crew. Support is provided by volunteers, many of whom will have been on site since the day before the race start.

Please note that cut-offs are based on an average pace of 17 min/mile, recognizing that you may be moving slower in the late portions of the race. Success means leaving the last aid station with at least 90 minutes left on the clock. Less than that will most likely mean an un-official finish time; please keep this in mind if using the race as a qualifier for other events.

## Course Descriptions

### 100 Mile

The 100 mile start line will be to the north of the warming hut at the main parking lot. You will do three loops of 33.5 miles. The course will primarily follow the Epinette Creek/Newfoundland trail. There is also an out & back section that starts roughly 19 miles from the start line. This will take you down a service road, across another bridge on the Epinette Creek, through a field (on a dirt road) and back onto the Yellow Quill trail system and then the Trans Canada trail. The turn around, which will be clearly marked with a sign, is at a cabin (second one you pass) along the Trans Canada trail. You will then double back to the main trail and continue on to the start/finish area. Hit the fully stocked aid station and then repeat for 100 miles.

### 100 km

The 100km start line will be to the north of the warming hut at the main parking lot. The course will primarily follow the Epinette Creek/Newfoundland trail. There is also an out & back section that starts roughly 19 miles from the start line. This will take you down a service road, across another bridge on the Epinette Creek, through a field (on a dirt road) and back onto the Yellow Quill trail system where you will turn around at the parking lot. Double back to the main trail and continue to the finish. Take a brief pit stop at the fully stocked aid station and then do the loop one more time.

### 50 Mile

You will be doing two loops of the Epinette Creek/Newfoundland Trail system. The 50 mile start line will be to the north of the warming hut at the main parking lot. The course will follow the Epinette Creek trail, following the course markings back to the parking lot (and a well stocked aid station of course). As long as you are starting your second lap by the appointed times, you just follow the trail around a second time. In both cases, going in the official direction as marked.

## 50 km

The course for the 50km changed in 2014 and will be the new route going forward. The 50km start line will be to the north of the warming hut at the main parking lot. The course will primarily follow the Epinette Creek/Newfoundland trail. There is also an out & back section that starts roughly 19 miles from the start line. This will take you down a service road, across another bridge on the Epinette Creek, through a field (on a dirt road) and back onto the Yellow Quill trail system where you will turn around at the parking lot. Double back to the main trail and continue to the finish.

## Half Marathon

The half marathon will start back on the access road and head onto the Epinette Trail. At about 5.8 miles, shortly after the main aid station, you will come to a t-intersection. You will see flagging and signage for the ultra events going to the left. As a half marathon runner you will instead go right, following your **yellow** colour coded flags. You will then take a left turn on a service road, continue up and around a hill, taking a couple more right hand turns until you are back on the main trail. From here you will be back at the t-intersection where you will turn left and then back onto the the two way trail. From there, you're following the main trail markings (blue) again. Before you know it, you'll be at the finish line.

## 10 Mile Night Fun Run

The fun run is your chance to give night time trail running a shot and potentially keep some of the 100 mile runners company as they're on the second lap. The start is just north of the warming hut. You'll follow the Epinette Trail and the reflective orange flags until you get to the aid station. At that point, after grabbing some food as this is a fun run, not a full on race (grilled cheese!) head back to the finish following the blue flags. Your key intersection is just past the cabin, veer to the right.

## 10 km

The 10 km follows the Epinette Trail like all the other events. There will be a large sign having you turn left on a service road at roughly 5 km, then left again back onto the return portion of the main trail. You will be following orange flags until this left turn and then blue flags to the finish.

## Aid Stations

As a race director who also runs ultras, you can expect to find nothing but the finest dining you could expect in the middle of the woods. Aid stations will all have water and Gu Brew. There will also be a varied selection of highly optimized sport nutrition products such as gels, gummy bears, baked potatoes, peanut butter and jam wraps, pretzels and other assorted sweet and/or salty snacks along with coke and mountain dew. Depending on the predicted weather, we might have ice as well if it will be hot. At night time there will be hot food such as grilled cheese, soup, waffles and maybe a few other surprises our aid station captains come up with.

You will want to carry some sort of fluid with you as there are a couple places with almost 9km between aid stations. There will be one self serve aid station with water only at the Epinette Creek crossing. All others will be fully staffed by volunteers, willing to both help you keep going and potentially heckle you if you hang around too long.

Event	# Full Aid Stations	# Water Only Aid Stations
100 Mile (per lap)	7	2
100 km (per lap)	7	2

Event	# Full Aid Stations	# Water Only Aid Stations
50 Mile (per lap)	5	2
50 km	5	2
Half Marathon	2	2
10 Mile	1	2
10 km	0	2

100 Mile Aid Stations	Distance to this Aid
#1 (same location as 6)	5.55 miles
#2	5.3 miles
#3	4.45 miles
#4 (same location as 5)	5 miles
#5 (same location as 4)	4.5 miles
#6 (same location as 1)	3.5 miles
#7 - Start/Finish	5.25 miles

For other events the distances between aid is approximately the same. Please note that the water only station at the Epinette Creek crossing is not included in the above chart. It is approximately 2 miles from the start finish area and 3 miles from Aid 1/6.

There are outhouse facilities at the three cabins along the course. There are also two outhouses on the out and back section for the 100 mile and 50km races. The 50km course turn around is at the first one; the 100 mile turn around is right near the second one. There will also be porte-potties at all full aid stations.

## Drop Bags

100 mile racers are able to have drop bags at all of the manned aid stations including the start/finish. To allow drop bags to be transported to the right places, they must be at the race HQ area no later than 11:00 am Friday morning.

100 km racers may have one drop bag at all the manned aid stations, including the start/finish. To facilitate delivery of drop bags to the aid stations, they must be at the designated drop points at the race HQ prior to 11:00 pm on Friday night.

50 mile racers may have one drop bag at the start finish area as well as aid stations 1/6, 2, and 3. You need to have your drop bags ready to go by 5:30 am at the designated spots at the race HQ to ensure they are transported to the aid stations in time.

Your drop bags must be labelled with your name and bib number. Please keep drop bags to a reasonable size and weight. They should be waterproof as they may not be under cover at all aid stations. Please keep in mind that Aid Station 1/6 are the same location, as is 4/5. Please see the revised map for the labeled aid stations.

If you have special dietary restrictions, please let us know as soon as possible and we will try our best to accommodate your needs at aid stations.

## Pacers & Crew

Only 100 mile racers may have non-registered pacers with them. Pacers may join the racer for the third and final lap (33.5 miles). Bibs are not required for pacers, but please advise the race director or timer that you will have a pacer with you before starting your final lap.

At points beyond the start/finish area, crew access is very limited due to the backcountry nature of the course. Our permit does not allow for any staging areas on the course for extra vehicles. The exception to this is for 100 mile, 100 km and 50 km where crew may meet their runner near the aid station on the out & back portion. Please see the race director on race day for driving directions and road condition updates as this road is susceptible to flooding and may not be accessible. You will have to walk about 600 metres to the aid station.

## Weather

Weather has been the make or break for many people's races in past years. In 2016, there were daytime highs of over 30°C on Friday, dropping down to freezing overnight. In 2015, there were a few snowflakes flying when the 100 mile racers started. In other words, expect the unexpected. The only thing that is almost guaranteed is that there will be a steady breeze on the Saturday afternoon, regardless if the temperature is -5 or +25; so ensure that you have dry clothes for after your race.

For runners in the 100 mile and 100 km, we recommend you be prepared for temps to drop near freezing overnight.

## Rules

Without trying to make this too onerous, there are a few rules we do need to spell out. The last thing I want to do as a race director is disqualify somebody, but breaking these rules can put other runners and the ability to hold the race at risk.

1. Be nice to the other runners, volunteers and other users of the trail. Thank the volunteers, they are there to help you succeed.
2. No littering. At all. Not even one little bit. Carry any garbage (gel wrappers, cups, etc) to the next aid station and put them in the garbage there. **Any reports of littering anywhere on the course will lead to disqualification.**
3. Stay on the course. You really can't take any shortcuts out there, but you have to do the full course under your own power.
4. When crossing a road, watch for traffic. Oh, wait, there are no cars on the course. Never mind. Enjoy the lack of cars.
5. If you are wearing headphones, take them off at aid stations to talk to the volunteers. I strongly discourage your wearing of headphones as the sounds of nature are much more interesting.
6. No outside crew support on the trail (except as indicated above for 100 mile, 100 km and 50km). If you really need to have your friends or family greet you on the trail, have them sign up as volunteers! We love our volunteers!

7. If you need to drop out, you must do so at an aid station. Tell the volunteers there that you need to drop out and they will organize a ride out for you. Be prepared to wait however as this is a remote race with limited vehicular access.
8. Run smart, stay hydrated, eat and have fun. Relentless forward motion will get you to the finish line.
9. If you come across another runner in distress, do what you can to assist them and then communicate their bib number and last known location to the volunteers at the next aid station or biking rovers. Take care of each other out there.
10. In all cases please give way to the 100 mile racers. They will have been on the trail anywhere from 18-22 hours by the time you start your race so they might be tired and not too quick to react. Some of them might act like overgrown, tired, cranky toddlers. This is normal. They just want the gummie bears at the next aid station.

## Risks on the Trail

There are two things to be aware of on the trail that can be hazardous to your health. Ticks and poison ivy. There have been increased rates of Lyme disease causing bacteria found in the Manitoba tick population over the past years, so caution is advised. The basics of tick prevention are to keep out of the tall grasses (often at the edges of the marked trail) and/or use a deet based insect repellent. The most important thing to do is periodically check yourself for ticks and flick them off as soon as possible. It has been observed that the ticks will 'hang on for the ride' while you're running and won't crawl or bite. It is really important at the end of the race to give yourself a good once over for ticks. They can often get into the tops of your socks or bottom edges of shorts. They are naturally drawn to body creases like armpits and your nether-regions. There is more information at <http://www.gov.mb.ca/health/lyme/index.html>

The other thing to watch for is poison ivy along the edges of the trail. While not as nasty as the potential of tick caused disease, the rashes caused by poison ivy can be beyond irritating. Wikipedia gives this description of how to identify poison ivy: "The following four characteristics are sufficient to identify poison ivy in most situations: (a) clusters of three leaflets, (b) alternate leaf arrangement, (c) lack of thorns, and (d) each group of three leaflets grows on its own stem, which connects to the main vine." In my experience, most of the poison ivy I've seen on the trail is within a few km of the Epinette Creek crossing. As you get into the sandier areas of the Newfoundland Loop there seems to be less. Of course, this can change year to year depending on the weather and growing conditions.

While there is always the chance of wildlife on the trail, in the majority of cases, the deer will be spooked off and the grouse, while able to make an incredible sound, are pretty harmless. You might get lucky and see a skink basking in the sun.

There has been evidence (ie. scat) of both black bears and wolves on the trail, but few confirmed sightings by race staff in the lead up to the event. Please refer to [http://www.gov.mb.ca/conservation/wildlife/problem\\_wildlife/bbear\\_country.html](http://www.gov.mb.ca/conservation/wildlife/problem_wildlife/bbear_country.html) for further info on being 'Bear Smart' in the backcountry,

## Post Race

When you finish and get your woodle (or buckle), the first thing to do is give yourself a big pat on the back for tackling the toughest race in Manitoba. Before doing much else, please check yourself for wood ticks.

Once that is taken care of, there will be a changing tent where you can get some dry clothes on before you have some food. Starting at noon Saturday we will have the BBQ fired up to make sure you're well fed after your race, if your crew and family wishes to partake, we will have a limited number of extra meal tickets available on race day if you didn't pre-purchase with your registration. You will receive a meal ticket in your race kit that you'll need to get your meal.

You will probably want to bring a lawn chair or blanket for hanging out on at the end while you enjoy your post race food. A small packet of wet wipes along with a towel might be handy too as I expect you might get a little sweaty out there.

## Results

As soon as possible after the race, the results will be posted on-line. We will have preliminary results available at the race, but the finalized official results will take some time until we're back to the magic of the Internet.

We also plan on doing what we can to tweet the action - hashtag #swu. With very limited cell and no Internet connection, we will be using twitter carrier pigeons to our social media headquarters, here's hoping it all works as planned!

## Final Word

Thank you for signing up for this race. This race (and all the other Trail Run Manitoba events) is truly a labour of love for me as a race director. I couldn't do this without all the fantastic volunteers that sacrifice their time as well. I hope you find this event both challenging and fun.

As always, if you have questions or comments, contact me at 431-800-1616 or [dwayne@trailrunmanitoba.com](mailto:dwayne@trailrunmanitoba.com).

Happy trails,

Dwayne