

Pony Express District 50/20 Hike

Sleep and Positive Mental Attitude

The 50/20 Hike is both a physical and a mental challenge. Training, Nutrition and Hydration, and Equipment were all addressed in other handouts. Here are a few useful hints concerning sleep and mental attitude.

Sleep

Sleep is extremely important for the long-distance hikers. The most important night for sleep is two nights before the event. This means get a very good night's sleep on Wednesday night. For those who do the whole 50 miles, you will have to deal with fatigue late in the hike, when you will not only be physically whipped but will also have been awake for going on 20 hours straight. Lessen the burden by getting plenty of sleep during the week prior to the Hike. As you already know, you will need to get up early to hike. You can help compensate for that by going to bed earlier than usual on Thursday.

Positive Mental Attitude

It is important to recognize that there is a mental component to the Hike. Set a reasonable distance goal for yourself, and go into the Hike determined to make that goal. Have a buddy who hikes at about your pace, and be a good companion (hopefully, he'll reciprocate). Stay well hydrated and well fed. Use an iPod or similar device for motivating or at least enjoyable music – this is especially important late in the Hike, when you and your buddy are both “talked out.” Enjoy the day, and celebrate the mileage markers as you pass them. After the 35 mile point start giving yourself some rewards, like a favorite candy bar, Power bar, or a GU/GEL pack with a flavor that you like – do this as needed every 2 miles or so for the last 10 or 15 miles. Do your best to ignore the pain (yes, it will be there for the last third of the Hike), and focus on the goal. Encourage your buddy or buddies.

If you're going for 50 miles, don't stop to rest for more than 2 or 3 minutes anytime after about Gravelly Point – that usually dooms your Hike. Don't sit down to eat a meal - keep moving even when getting drinks or food items. Change socks or clothing quickly, and get up immediately when you're done. Sitting allows your body to tighten up and your mind to focus on your fatigue and pain, all of which make it much harder to keep going.

Finally, look forward to aid stations, and make it a goal to reach them in a certain amount of time. In this way, you get a support stop and verbal encouragement every 45 to 60 minutes. If you can arrange a fresh hiking partner for those loops (parent, spouse, fellow Scout), it greatly helps your mental stamina, and helps you push all the way to 50.

Good Luck! Hike On!