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Hoagland 15th in Western States 100-mile run

Anastasia Hendrix

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Karl Hoagland, chairman and co-founder of Larkspur Hotels and Restaurants, placed 15th in last weekend's 100-mile Western States Endurance Run. It was an impressive finish for the Fairfax resident, who completed the race in 19 hours, 41 minutes and 22 seconds, well ahead of his 2005 time, when he ranked in the 60s.

Only 238 of the 399 runners completed the race, which starts in Squaw Valley and winds through remote and rugged backcountry before ending in Auburn. The completion rate was lower than usual because of the 100-degree-plus temperatures, said John Trent, a race spokesman and member of the Western States board of trustees.

But Hoagland and his crew had a strategy for dealing with the temperatures - at each aid station he dunked his head in a cooler filled with chilled water and ran with a customized bandana that had a compartment for ice cubes that were replenished at every stop.

"I probably drank about 10 gallons of water and poured at least that much over my head during the race," he said. "Even though it was more than 100 degrees, I never felt the heat because evaporation really makes things cool."

When he finally made it to the finish, he said it was "magical, a perfect day."

"Without the help of my crew and pacers, I never would have had that kind of performance," he said Monday, already back at work.

The race claimed one of his toenails, but he was given a silver belt buckle, awarded to the top finishers.

"I don't even know where it is, and I'll probably lose it," he said. "But it's not about the buckle, it's about knowing you got the buckle."

And, as he said in a Chronicle profile last week, he expects this will be his last time attempting the grueling race.

"I don't think I can improve" my performance, he said. Besides, his 8-year-old daughter also made him sign a paper saying as much while he laid in a hotel room hours after the race. In pen.

Hal Koerner, 33, of Ashland, Ore., who also won in 2007, was the top winner. Anita Ortiz, 45, of Eagle, Colo., was the first female finisher.

- Anastasia Hendrix, ahendrix@sfchronicle.com

<http://sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2009/06/30/DDFO18FPJ0.DTL>

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