Failure proves humanity

'Lost', is the title of my Dutch race report. I lost the game, I got lost. This English version of my race report will totally be different then the Dutch one. Translating texts is difficult…

The Barkley is a game, a theatre play and a test. Laz explained my ideas about the Barkley-test- theory better than I can. If Barkley is a test to see if someone is human, failure proves humanity. Not being able to fail or quit means a person is 'divine', or at least a very special person. The test is in development, a beta-version. It will always stay 'under construction'.

Seen as a theatre play, we, runners, crew, Laz, Rawdog, our bugle team, visitors and park rangers are all part of the theatre.

Back home I told ten different versions of this theatre play, the Barkley is hard to capture in words. I think it doesn't matter much what happened in the 23 hours or so I was Out There this year. Well, some details do matter maybe. Nicki Rehn and Jodi Isenor that passed me by at Book 2 in the first loop, bringing me the energy that I needed at that point already. And just after book 3 Jared that touched my shoulder from behind, on our climb to the NBT. He and other quick runners missed book 3 and lost minutes. Jared climbed the squirrel rock bluff before us, said 'take care!' and was gone. A few miles further, close to the borehole rock book (6), Bob Jones was waiting for me. He had taken off like Superman first books, and looked like feeling comfortable in company with an old European museum piece running down Stallion. We went on together.

Just after the start of our descend on Stallion, I found a locker bag with book pages. 'What a coincidence', was my first thought. 'These are like the pages we are….' Then I realized that a runner ahead of us was in serious trouble. I joked at Bob when I showed him the pages, saying: 'This is worth a couple of beers back at the campsite.' I took the pages with me and forgot about them…till we reached Raw Dog Falls. Bob gave me the brilliant suggestion to let the pages in the plastic bag at book 8. On Sunday I heard Nikolai was very glad to find his pages back, I was glad we had made a good decision leaving the pages at a book.

In between loops Elise Harrington and Mike Dobies did a great job by helping me, running to get me hot coffee, noodle soup, canned fruits and a sandwich in a personal best time. A good crew is more than a minor success factor.

The last detail was my reunion with human beings in my second loop on Stallion, in between garden Spot and book 5.

After running for six hours on my own it was freezing cold at night. An interesting wind blew from the north with a horrifying noise. It was snowing and I could see just few yards in the fog. I experienced impressive moments of loneliness. I switched off my headlight, to see how dark it was without electric light. That darkness was darker than any darkness I ever experienced. I switched on my light within a second!

After Garden spot I was looking for the right way to go for over an hour. My compass did funny things, but could not help me much. Marcy's race report tells about the same compass

failure at the same spot, some hours later. Stallion is a grim place at night. I could not make a good decision what to do and tried to stay warm for a while at the point where I was. I thought about quitting and getting back to Garden Spot, but could not find both of them anymore. I did not have a clue how to navigate. No idea if the top of Stallion was on my right or left.

Then finally I saw two headlights. It wondered me: What do lights do at midnight at this grim place? Then I realized they must be Barkers. Human beings! Two precious species of homo sapiens! Iso Yucra and Dale Holdaway looked like they knew exactly where to go. I followed them for a while, but Dale took off in a different direction, ten minutes later. I was very glad to be with people and sticked to Iso. Navigation was still hard. We got lost again. I gave Iso a pair of my gloves. Not enough, these nice Bolivian guy was suffering from the cold.

Finally we admitted 'it' defeated us. Again. We got back to the Yellow Gate because of Iso's incredible brilliant sense of trace finding. Iso got us back to the campfire in short time. At the fire, our story's about the cold snow and fog sounded like lies…

Reading race reports last days, I realized how brave Marcy Beard had been. She past some hours after us where we returned. And she went on, to finish her second loop. All alone. Wow!

Reading Laz report I realized that also our RD passed some hallucinating hours and days in the Barkley weekend. A Barkley without Laz is no Barkley. This man is a genius, a man that brings together a small group from all over the world to participate at an intense event. A man that made a story from a race, that he and Raw Dog invented. Barkley is more than 60 hours of racing. Barkley is putting out books weeks before the race, struggling with officials for months and having fun thinking about new parts of the course. At least that what I think these gentleman do… The Barkley founders founded more than a race, they founded a family and a spirit. I'm proud and thankful to be a part of that family.

Reading Jared's report I got emotional. Pure ideas, pure words, pure achievement. So simple is life! This young man is extraordinary. He inspires this old wreck and many others, I guess. Thanks Jared.

Thanks again, Barkley family! Thanks Stu, Ed, Gail, Kathy, Hiram and all the other players I did not mention.