

New FKT at 4:29:58.

<https://www.strava.com/activities/1070680323>

Splits:

Madison -- 1:10 (via Daniel Webster)

Adams -- 1:34

Jefferson -- 2:05

Washington -- 2:52

Monroe -- 3:18

Eisenhower -- 3:45

Pierce -- 4:04

End -- 4:29:55

A week or so ago, I heard Brandon Newbould was going to give the presi traverse FKT a shot. I talked to him about joining. I was terrified of chasing him on the uphill and he was a bit worried about following me on the descents. I'm not sure the details, but he hurt his ankle pretty badly over the weekend racing, so he had to back out. He really encouraged me, and I ended up going for it by myself.

The higher summits weather forecast looked really great for the first half of the day and then progressively more unsettled, so I figure I'd hit the trail early in the day. I left home at 4am. I first drove to Crawford Notch and dropped off my bike. After the run, I thought this was hilarious. What was I thinking?!

Driving over to Dolly Copp, most of the sky was cloudless, but the mountains were clouded in and gloomy -- I was hoping it wasn't raining.

I have chronic problems not being able to get the morning sh*t out before a race effort and this time was no different. I spent twenty minutes in the trailhead pit toilet before giving up. The occasional cramps all day were frustrating.

Most of Dolly Copp is currently under construction so there a 1.5mi detour to get to the trail. And the lower 0.25mi of the Daniel Webster Scout trail is closed. I took the detour and then ignored the closed signs and walked down to the traditional trailhead sign, to do a proper presi traverse. The 0.25mi of closed trail had a ton of blowdowns.

My running plan was to take the first climb a bit easy, since I frequently blow myself up on the first climb of a mountain race. Then, I'd treat the rest of the day as a race to Washington, not even thinking about the later parts of the run.

I started the watch and hit the first bit of trail at a proper run. There was some mutual spooking with a grouse. Also, some large animal (moose, bear?) that crashed off into the woods. I didn't see it. I also didn't see any people at all until I hit the Osgood trail -- overall, doing something like this on weekday makes a lot more sense just because the huge crowds the Presis get on a nice summer weekend can slow you down a lot.

I hit treeline in the boulder fields. I lost the trail for a seconds in a couple places here. I'd never been on Daniel Webster before and didn't have a sense for the general trajectory. It was really amazing with the endless view and the wind.

I hit the summit in 1:10. I actually hadn't looked at my watch most of the way up and felt like I must have been *WAY* behind Nephew's splits. When I saw I was only 2 minutes behind, I got really excited and bombed my way down to Madison hut. After only 5 minutes descending, I was a full minute ahead of his splits. That's when I realized I could actually do this thing. I was going to be able to drop a lot of time on the nutty, super rocky, northern presis descents.

In the hut, I went in and refilled my bottle. I would later regret not chugging a bottle here.

I powerhiked up to Adams and hit the summit 4 minutes ahead of FKT pace in 1:34. Tapped the sign and proceeded down the summit boulder field to the Gulfside trail. I was literally shouting with joy running down the Gulfside trail. That trail is rocky enough to be barely runnable and I love descending that type of stuff. I zoomed past a big group of middle school age kids just before Edmand's Col. One of them said, "WHOA. That's what *I* want to do!" Heading up to Jefferson, I realized I was a full 9 minutes ahead of FKT pace in 2:05. That was about when the splits that I had sharpied on my arms started washing off from sweat. I hit the descent to Sphinx Col really hard and was having a blast again. Right before the climb up to Clay, I ran out of water.

There's something about running out of water that mentally affects me a lot. Even if I'm not thirsty. I had about 30 minutes until the top of Washington where I could refill. I pushed hard on this section, but I could feel myself fading a bit. I didn't feel like I could eat without any water, so I was probably experience a minor degree of bonking. I couldn't decide whether I was annoyed by the cog railway or whether it was fun to try to race it up the mountain. It definitely didn't help when I got a mouth full of black smoke.

At the summit of Washington, I was 11 minutes ahead and felt pretty terrible. I was a bit dizzy. I went inside, chugged a bottle and then lay down for 2 minutes. Got up, chugged another bottle. Then refilled again and started off for Lakes. The dizziness was fading and I was able to run the descent pretty well. I had finished a third bottle and shovel down some bloks by the time I got to Lakes.

I refilled again and set out up Monroe. I was slow on all the remaining uphill. I kept having trouble with almost getting cramps in my inner thighs and my hamstrings. But, I was still able to keep a good pace on the descents and flats in between. The stretch from Monroe to the base of Eisenhower is always super fun and beautiful. It doesn't really feel like New England. Somewhere else. The splits had entirely washed off my arms by this point, so I wasn't paying much attention to time. I remembered Nephew hit Pierce in 4:10, so I knew I would get the FKT when I hit Pierce in 4:04. I took off down the descent. That descent was pretty uncomfortable. I just wanted to stop and lie down.

After hitting the road, I lay down in the grass for a minute or two and then went inside and slowly rehabilitated myself from Highland center food for the next 2 hours. I think the dehydration took a big toll on me.

Room for improvement:

- * Be more rested. I did 16k of gain in the week before this. I was fading pretty badly on the climbs towards the end of the day (Monroe, Eisenhower, Pierce) and lost several minutes there. I suspect there's a causal relationship there.
- * Chug a bottle at Madison before going on. That would've prevented the 3 minutes lost on Washington and probably would've made me feel better and count for another few minutes.
- * Figure out how to clear the bowels before a race -- any super awesome advice? I've tried everything...
- * Maintain focus on the descent from Pierce. I kind of quit racing here since I knew I was well under the FKT. The trail was super muddy and there was trail work going on and I was getting kind of sick of pushing myself. I actually bombed the last quarter mile really hard when I realized that I would be close to going under 4:30.
- * Remember to stop and take a picture.

Overall, I think with a perfect day and no improvements in fitness, there's probably about 10 minutes of improvement for me.

Comments:

- * I've run in minimal shoes for a long time now. When I first started running in minimal shoes, I was way slower than I am now and they didn't seem to slow me down. Recently, I moved from my stockpiled inov8 Trailroc 235s to trying a pair of Roclite 290s. Holy moly, I'm able to fly down rough rocky descents in these things. I'd been handicapping myself for years. I still run mostly in minimal shoes, but for racing or for some trail speed work, the roclites make me feel like I can fly downhill.
- * I absolutely love running super rocky trails like these. I didn't have any trips or close calls all day, which is always satisfying. I like thinking of running down rocky descents as a weird combination of soccer, skiing, and a video game where you want a really high scoring combo (any awkward step or non-smooth motion breaks your combo...)
- * I was in Golden, CO for a conference last week. Maybe the altitude training was still helping a bit? Especially with being up on the ridge. I've had many arguments with people about whether the altitude on the presis ridge has any effect. I definitely feel like I breath harder up there.
- * I'm pretty sure when Newbould gets around to giving this a shot, he'll move it down a good bit further...