



Royal Fitness Member Profile: Brad Christ - Hooters Desert Racing Team

Editor's note: This is the first article in a 3-part series.

Hi, I'm Brad Christ, a Royal Fitness member and racer for the Hooters Desert Racing Team (I'm second from the left in photo). This is the first of my 3-article series. This month, I'll fill you in on my background and affiliation with Royal Fitness. Next month, I'll tell you how I got involved in desert racing. The following month, I'll give you some tips on endurance racing that may be helpful in achieving your personal fitness goals.

With regard to my background, I'm originally from Maryland, live in Bethesda, and enjoy the close proximity to the Potomac River for kayaking, the C&O Canal for hiking, and the multitude of bicycle trails for car-free pedaling. I have degrees from Florida Institute of Technology and University of Maryland. I used to work as a deep sea diver in the Gulf of Mexico, but now work for the U.S. Public Health Service, Division of Federal Occupational Health as an Industrial Hygienist and Senior Program Manager. I love my job and get to deal with a wide variety of interesting challenges, including assignment to an emergency response team, but after work I spend my spare time coordinating logistics, training, and racing for the Hooters Desert Racing Team.



Thanks to Roya Heydari and the helpful staff at Royal Fitness, I have access to their top notch facility to assist me in preparation for another season of racing in the 2006 SCORE International Off-Road Racing series (www.score-international.com) in Baja Mexico. If you are not familiar with SCORE, it was created in 1967 to sanction off road racing for trucks, buggies & motorcycles. Our Team competes in a motorcycle class in the 3-race series that culminates with the world famous Baja 1000 race. The Baja 1000 is recognized as the most prestigious & most difficult single-day off road endurance race in the world. Race entries include factory supported teams from Ford, Chevrolet, BMW, Honda, and Yamaha, as well as famous racers such as Robbie Gordon (NASCAR), Jimmy Vassar (CART) and Travis Pastrana (X-Games).



In addition to racing in Baja, the Hooters Desert Racing Team works with Free Wheel Chair Mission (www.freewheelchairmission.org) to deliver wheel chairs to those individuals in need in

Mexico. This is a great cause and a very small contribution (\$44.40) to Free Wheel Chair Mission provides a complete wheel chair. We have witnessed heart-breaking instances of families carrying their disabled children because they could not afford a wheel chair. Please consider visiting the Free Wheel Chair Mission website to see how you can help.



Be sure to read next month's issue to learn how I did in the Baja 1000. Until then, stay focused, keep motivated, and get to Royal Fitness to take advantage of their incredible facility. See you there!



My Adventures with the Hooters Desert Motorcycle Racing Team & the 2005 Baja 1000

Editor's note: This is the second article in a 3-part series.

Hi, I'm Brad Christ, a Royal Fitness member and racer for the Hooters Desert Racing Team (I'm second from the left in photo). This is the second of my 3-article series. This month, I'm going to tell you how I got involved in desert racing.

It all began in one pivotal moment when I was about 10-years old. I was thumbing through a motorcycle magazine at the local drugstore when I came upon an article about the world's most amazing off-road motorsports adventure race called the Baja 1000. I was in awe reading the exploits of men and machines overcoming seemingly insurmountable obstacles to race the length of the entire Baja Mexico continent. My young imagination was swept away with the danger, dust and drama. At that moment, I knew what I wanted to be when I grew up: a Baja Racer.



My life changed. I immediately read every book and magazine article I could find with "Baja" in the title. I made the kids in my neighborhood call the rutted trails where we pedaled our bikes "The Baja" as I regaled them with tales of the mighty men of desert racing who combined physical strength and ingenuity with wrenches and duct tape to keep their motorcycles, buggies and trucks moving toward the distant finish line. With paper-route earnings, I purchased a minibike and rode local trails while imagining I was a desert racer. My 6th grade geography paper was about the Baja peninsula and my plans to race the Baja 1000. I took Spanish in elementary school in hopes of mastering the language of Baja. Through my teenage years and beyond I continued Baja preparations by participating in 5K and 10K running races, road and mountain bike races, biathlon and triathlon races, and rollerblade races in an effort to build my overall strength, balance and endurance. All my life, the Baja peninsula called my name like the Siren's song and I knew someday I was going to be a Baja Racer.

As often happens to many of us, each year I grew older and the dream of becoming a Baja Racer dimmed. Life events unfolded with college, career, marriage, house, etc. Deep inside, the dream always remained, but after my 40th birthday I dismissed the notion it would ever come true. Then one day I picked up the phone and a voice with a deep Texas drawl said, "Brad, how would you like to race the Baja 1000 with me?" The voice belonged to my childhood friend, Charlie Wilson. From a young age, Charlie had listened to endless tales of the superhuman exploits of my desert heroes. He had moved to Texas decades ago and we lost touch, but he never forgot my dream to become a Baja Racer. To determine if Charlie was serious, I flew to Houston to discuss the matter over a weekend of motorcycle riding. After 2-days of riding, we shook hands and agreed to team up for the 2005 Baja 1000.

The next 8-months passed in a blur. There were logistical issues, equipment purchases, physical training, and assembly of a relay-race team. Initially we planned for just the two of us to race. We quickly realized the need for another rider to distribute the load and recruited my younger brother Brent to be Rider #3. Charlie was able to secure team sponsorship from Hooters Restaurants and at the same time recruited Mike Herrick, former Category 1 bicycle racer and Ironman, to be Rider #4. Charlie had a chance encounter with motorcycle-jump world record holder Eric Brown. Eric had loads of race experience, so we recruited him to be Rider #5. Eric introduced us to JD Durfrey, who spoke fluent Spanish and had raced motorcycles in Mexico, so he became rider #6. Now we had a team of riders spread out over the country in Maryland, Texas and Arizona.

The team assembled one week before the race in Ensenada, Mexico. Although we had communicated by email and phone for months, it was the first time we had all met in person and it gave everyone a chance to know each other and meet spouses, girlfriends, family, children, and other friends who had volunteered to help the team. For the next week we teamed up to practice our individual sections of the race and prepared our equipment for the pending battle with the desert and our competitors and the 30-hour time limit.

At 6:40am on race day, Charlie charged off the starting line and wound his way through Ensenada, past thousands of spectators and into the desert where he had an adventure getting fuel, passed a rider getting medical assistance for a broken shoulder, and then handed the bike over to JD at the 100 mile mark at 10:00am. JD blazed an amazingly fast pace through deep silt and climbed the technically difficult "Summit", the highest elevation on the course. JD handed the bike over to Brent at the 200 mile mark at 2:00pm. Brent set off on the toughest section of the course where the undulating terrain was so rough he couldn't sit down. Brent went far faster than his projected times and handed the motorcycle over to me at the 268 mile mark 4:00pm. I completed the first night section of the race course and was the first member of the team to contend with the large flying rocks and blinding dust from the pursuing Trophy Trucks. Aside from minor headlamp problems, I rode quickly and handed the bike over to Eric at the 390 mile mark at 8:00pm. Eric set the fastest pace of the team and fearlessly blazed through the darkness in the rough terrain near the famous Mike's Sky Ranch. Eric handed over the bike to Mike at the 575 mile mark at 1:30am. This was Mike's first experience night racing and a booby trap pit constructed by spectators caught him by surprise. After wrestling the bike out of the pit, he was able to hustle the bike to JD at the 635 mile mark at 3:30am. JD then navigated the bike across the finish line at 5:30am with a finishing time of 22 hours and 44 minutes, which put us in 4th place in our class and 80th overall. Although we were only 10 minutes away from a podium finish, we were happy knowing we had survived one of the roughest courses in the 38-year history of the Baja 1000. Of the 340 teams that had started the race, only 162 finished.

The days following the race were a blur as we packed the support vehicles, crossed the border back into the USA, returned the rental van, and hustled to catch our plane at the San Diego Airport for the flight back to Maryland. My muscles were sore and every joint ached when I finally settled into my seat on the airplane. As I gazed contentedly out the plane window, I realized my childhood dream had come true – I was Baja Racer!

Be sure to read next month's issue for my 12 tips on endurance racing. Until then, stay focused, keep motivated, and get to Royal Fitness to take advantage of their incredible facility. See you there!



Endurance Racing Tips From Royal Fitness Member Brad Christ of the Hooters Desert Racing Team

Editor's note: This is the third article in a 3-part series.

Hi, I'm Brad Christ, a Royal Fitness member and racer for the Hooters Desert Racing Team (I'm second from left in photo). In this month's article, I'm listing a dozen of my personal endurance racing tips based on lessons learned from 24+ years of competitive sports including 5K and 10K and 20K running races, road and mountain bike races, biathlon and triathlon races, rollerblade races, auto races, and motorcycle races. Even if you're not an endurance racer, this information may be helpful in your athletic endeavors.



TIP #1 – TIME: Determine how much time you have to train. Lots of people want to run the 135 mile Badwater Death Valley foot race, or solo-bicycle the 3,052 mile Race Across America, or solo-motorcycle the Baja 1000, but there are only a handful of people who can commit the huge amount of time it takes to train for such events.

TIP #2 – SELECT A RACE: Select your race event months in advance and develop a training plan tailored to the event. I travel to the event site months before the race to evaluate the course and determine the best training strategy so I'll be physically and mentally prepared for the competition. When that's not feasible, I call the race organizers for information on terrain, altitude, elevation gains, weather, number of racers, etc.

TIP #3 – TRAINING PLAN: Using a calendar, list the training you will do each day over the next several months. Training efforts should gradually build up to at least 80% of the total race distance to guarantee you'll complete the event. To be competitive, stick to the training plan regardless of family gatherings, social events, and personal interests.

TIP #4 – WORKOUT vs. TRAINING: During the winter months when I'm not racing, I workout. During race season, I train. There is an important difference. Workouts are unstructured, fun, and performed at a moderate tempo. Training is structured, painful, and high-paced. Like dieting, training is a discipline.

TIP #5 – TRAINING: Spend the majority of your time training specifically for the type of competition you are going to enter. Find terrain similar to the race course you will compete on. Train in all types of weather. Take a minute to jot down the training type, distance, and duration onto a calendar (example: bicycled/25 miles/1hr & 12min) and use this information to track your progress. If you get bored doing the same thing over and over, select cross-training that will benefit you. I lift weights for upper body strength, mountain bike for endurance, and rollerblade for balance.

TIP #6 – ABDOMINAL & LOWER BACK MUSCLES: I'll let you in on a little secret. Every top level endurance racing competitor has highly developed abdominal muscles and lower back muscles. The human frame is inherently weak in the lower back area and nothing demonstrates this more clearly than endurance racing. Do whatever it takes to build up those muscles in your body and I guarantee you'll reap the benefits.

TIP #7 – SLEEP: Sleep is as important as training. Your body requires extra sleep to rebuild after high intensity exercise. My rule of thumb is one extra hour of sleep for each day of high intensity training. If you are making mistakes, having difficulty paying attention, or are getting sick frequently, you're not getting enough sleep.

TIP #8 – GEAR: In sports where equipment can be the difference between winning and losing (bicycling, speed skating, skiing, motorcycling, etc.), buy the best gear you can afford. There is saying: "Speed costs money. How fast can you afford to go?" If your competitors have unlimited budgets, engineers, wind tunnels, carbon fiber and titanium one-off parts, etc., don't be intimidated. Instead, train harder and race smarter than them to make up the difference. Pros have been beaten by privateers, so don't give up.

TIP #9 – DIET: No news flash here. Eat right and you'll be competitive. Eat crap and you'll finish mid-pack. Want to be fast? Give up junk food. I eat lots of fruit, vegetables, lean meat, pasta, and breads. I would rather eat brownies, cookies, doughnuts, and cake.

TIP #10 – BODY WEIGHT: Purchase a scale that measures both weight and body fat. They are not the most accurate method to measure body fat, but stand naked on it first thing each day as soon as you get out of bed and record your weight and body fat onto a paper calendar. This will show trends in your body weight and fat/muscle development and will provide valuable feedback on your diet, training methods and intensity.

TIP #11 – INJURIES: If you're training to win, you're eventually going to get hurt. As the saying goes: "Bones mend, scars heal, but victory is forever." Athletes who experience their first traumatic injury (broken bone, dislocated shoulder, etc.) mistakenly think they'll be back at full speed in weeks. Based on my experience, expect months of physical therapy, one year to get 95% strength and range of motion back in the limb or joint, and another year or two until you regain the consistently perfect balance, timing, strength, and reaction speed required for top level competition.

TIP #12 – VEHICLE: You need a vehicle that can carry all your sport-specific equipment, and has an interior you can climb into when covered in mud or sweat or blood, and has reclining seats so you can sleep in it. After 7 broken bones, lots of stitches, numerous sprains and ligament damage, I recommend an automatic transmission because you can't drive a stick-shift with one of your legs in a cast or your arm in a sling.

Hope you enjoyed this article series. Stay tuned for future updates on the Hooters Desert Racing Team's 2006 race season. Until then, stay focused, keep motivated, and get to Royal Fitness to take advantage of their incredible facility. See you there!