

Alonzo Stagg 50/20 Hike

Adequate Sleep and a Positive Mental Attitude (2014 Update)

The Alonzo Stagg 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 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 Thursday night (the same night you need to have eaten your Saturday-sustaining dinner). For those who attempt to 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 may also have been awake for going on or more than 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 very early on the Hike Saturday because of the early start for the long-distance hikers (you need to be at the assembly by 5:00 am, meaning you'll probably be getting up between 4:00 and 4:15 to eat breakfast, prepare, and travel to St. Agnes). You can REALLY help compensate for that by going to bed earlier than usual on Friday.

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” (and you will be). Enjoy the day, and celebrate the mileage markers and key geographical features as you pass them. After Fletchers start giving yourself some rewards, like a favorite (but small) candy bar or other snack – do this as needed every 2 or 3 miles or so for the last 25 miles. Do your best to ignore the pain (yes, it will certainly be there for the last third of the Hike), and focus on the goal. Encourage your buddy or buddies – and also mentally encourage yourself!

If you're going for 50 miles, look forward to the Bluemont loops. Most long-distance hikers feel a sense of exhilaration when they reach the Bluemont Park pavillion. You'll get there at 39.4 miles, and then do four 2.66 mile circuits to finish the 50. In this way, you get a Support Stop and verbal encouragement every 45 to 60 minutes. If you can arrange a fresh hiking partner to be at Bluemont for those loops (a parent, spouse, fellow Scout, or one of the available Bluemont Loop Escorts), it greatly helps your mental stamina, and helps you push all the way to 50.

Good Luck! Hike On!