

Michael Perelli

My journey started early in September of 2021 when I needed clavicle surgery. I had broken my clavicle 2 years earlier in a bicycle accident and needless to say it didn't heal very well. I did the Liberties of breaking it again in the mountains of Colorado on my mountain bike and now I was going to get it fixed properly.

Prior to my surgery I had spent lots of time on different hikes in the western states of Colorado, Wyoming, Utah and California. I already had a love for the outdoors and riding my bike on trails, but had newly discovered hiking.

Fast forward to October of 2021 and recovering from surgery I became Restless I sought out the Ice Age Trail to appease my need for some physical activity. I had to leave the bike be so hiking seemed like the next best alternative. I originally started out by Newfane and slowly did some Trails over there. I soon found myself out in Hartland where I would always see the sign for the Ice Age Trail and wondered what the trail was like. I did a little out and back hike and started to Branch out into the connecting areas. At some point I had noticed the October hiking challenge of 41 MI and I had already completed several of them so I decided why not do the challenge! Holy Hill, Delafield, Monches, Pike lake, Stoney Ridge, Eagle just to name a few. Towards the end of the month my recovery was going well with my collarbone and I still missed my bike. I started leaving my bike at one end of the trail to either bike to the start of the trail or bike back to my car. Some of my friends had noticed the activity I had been putting in on the trail and to ask me if I was going to hike the whole thing. I said I don't know we'll see! The healthier and stronger I had become the more I would run and hike. At first my body took offense to this pounding I was giving it. I had sore feet the more and more I pushed the pace. Constantly searching for the right shoes, wondering if I was asking too much of my body! I was hitting it pretty hard, anything within a 2 hour radius of Milwaukee. Before I knew it from 10/17/23 to the end of the year I had done just about every segment from Point Beach to Devils Staircase with the exception of the 27 some mile connecting route up toward Walla Hi to Manitowoc. I even knocked off Sturgeon Bay on 11/20/21.

In the new year I experimented with some winter hiking and did Devil's Lake at the end of January. I had made somewhat of a circle route back to my car. It was a rough hike in untracked snow. In February there was an event in Verona for the girl that hiked the whole trail in winter so I drove out to check it out and did a circle route on that section.

I took March off and started back up in April. Filling in the gaps out west, Albany, Monticello, Brooklyn wildlife area, Montrose and before you know it I was all the way to Merrimac. I had made myself a winter hot tent, camped out in the area and was getting 20 mile sections in a day. I tried running more and more, often finishing off hiking the end of the sections.

May came, and I ventured to the east side of the trail trying to fill in some of the gaps. I hiked a CR to Misicot to Tish Mills and at the end of the month I bounced out west to tackle some of the daunting 34 mile CR and Arbor Ridge.

June I travel out to Colorado and got back to some biking and a little hiking. July I finished up some more segments on the east, Kewaunee river, CR and Forestville. Having left some big CR's on the east I headed to the central state and I spent several days/trips camping in the Hartman Creek area getting after segments. I began many segments running 6 to 8 miles, than hiking the rest and biking back to the car or camp. By the start of October I had finished most of the central segments with the exception of some big CR's.

Early August I took care of the 20 mile CR with a half marathon run and a 7 mile hike. I finished out the year with two big ,recommended backpack trips. The first trip was in October. I did Underdown, Harrison Hills, Parrish Hills and Highland lakes. I stashed a bike with a rack on it and bike packed back 30 miles to my truck. My November backpack was Lake Eleven, Jerry Lake, and Mondeaux Esker. I did the same thing stashing a bike on the other end of the trail. On my 2nd last day it rained, turned to snow, and dropped below 20 degrees. The next day a 2 mile hike to my bike(after surviving the night). I biked about 15 miles back to the start and stopped at a local establishment. I reached out for a ride the rest of the way(I wasn't going to make it against the wind). Earlier in November I did Iola and ran the 13 mile CR.

During the gun deer season I did Grandfather Falls, some CRs and Plover River, filling in some of gaps between segments.

Come 2023 it was harder to finish off segments. I had to travel further to get to untracked areas. I had some big CRs between segments that I wondered how I would do them. The bigger the section the further I also had to ride my bike. I probably could have enlisted in some trail fairy help, but I liked being self sufficient. Many times I thought about asking for help, but I just headed out and did it.

January 2023 I chipped away at the 28 mile CR from New Hope to Ringle. I ran 16.5 and hiked another 2.5 miles. I didn't get back at hiking until April.

April I started cleaning up any of the central sections I had left and jumped up to Turtle Lake and the Newwood area.

The month of May I worked heavily in the Antigo area, Kettlebowl, Lumbercamp, Summit Moraine and the massive CR that I did an 18 mile run on. After that it was out to camp 27 though East Lake and the CR's.

June I took on the big CR between Lake Eleven and Cornell with a 21 mile run, a 5 mile hike and whatever was left of 42 some miles the next day.

I'm starting to feel like I'm rambling on and on. 1200 some miles on foot doesn't happen overnight I guess. I guess at this point it was harder and harder to travel further and further away. I had big distances to accomplish and my running had progressed more and more to the point of actual training. In fact I was training. I was training for the Glacial Trail 50 mile. One simple hike evolved into so much more in my life. Strength, endurance, mental stability, peace and appreciation of nature, setting goals and following through with them. Being present day to day.

July was training even though I had been doing it the whole time I was hiking the IAT. I had already started daily running. I finished up the west side of Cornell to Firth Lake and wondered when I would get back at the IAT trail. I had finished hiking one day and there was no camping, so I just went home.

August I figured I could really ramp up my training. I headed out to the Western Terminus and camped at Interstate park. I ran 11 miles, 20 miles, and another 11 miles with a 7 mile hike. One of my days was almost 50 miles with combined biking, hiking and running. I completed St. Croix Falls to halfway through Mackenzie Creek. So now all I had left was to connect were I stopped at Mackenzie Creek to Firth Lake.

September was a bust for getting back on the trail and I wouldn't get back at it until mid October. I had my 50 mile event on the 8th and I took almost a week off after that. When I was ready to get back at it and do what feels right(wing it). I dropped my bike off halfway through Firth Lake in the woods and headed to the start of Chippewa Moraine where I did a 10.5 mile run and biked back. I stopped at a local establishment and the owner let me camp in the yard. The next day I drove up to the end of the Southern Blue Hills and did a 14 mile run and hiked out the last 7 miles. I was done after that. A week later I did a 19 mile run from the Murphy Flowage to the end of the Blue Hills and a 7 mile hike the next day.

So all I had left was 100k(63 miles). I had aspirations of running it all at once and getting shuttle help, but I broke it out into 4 days. I did a 20 mile run, a 12, 14 and 16 mile run to finish it all on 12/19/23.