

KEYS100 Ultramarathon

2021 Race Plan Outline

"Ultra Sports, LLC" produces and directs very long-distance running races, including *KEYS100*. This event is a 100-mile running race from Key Largo to Key West. Both individuals and teams compete. There is also a 50-mile option from Marathon to Key West, and a 50-kilometer race from Big Pine Key to Key West; the shorter distance may be cancelled for 2021. The Holiday Inn in Key Largo has been our race "headquarters" for a dozen years. For 2021, a complete change to our traditional pre-race order will happen. First, there will be no in-person orientation meetings. These will instead be held online and presented in writing. Second, in all previous years, runners would pick-up their race packet and formally check-in outside the hotel at the large tiki hut on the Friday afternoon and evening before the race. This was traditional social time for runners and volunteers to meet-and-greet. Instead, we are planning a drive-up packet pick-up and check-in procedure that will result in virtually no direct person-to-person contact.

Race day procedures: The race start on Saturday morning at the Divers Direct shopping center in Key Largo will be staggered over a period of hours so that only a small number of runners begin at the same time. (That number will most likely be six persons per wave.) Staggered starts will result in runners being significantly spread-out along the course. *KEYS100* in 2021 will not offer aid station support at 5-mile intervals along the entire 100-mile course as has been the case in the past. Therefore, there will be no interaction between runners and volunteers as there will be no aid station volunteers out there. Instead, runners and teams will be self-sufficient: individual runners will be required to have their own support crew, as many have already chosen to do in years past. The crew support vehicle will leap-frog the runner along the course, stopping every few miles at approved locations to provide the runner with water, food, ice, changes of clothes, gear and whatever else the runner might need during the race. The only volunteers on the course will be race marshals, who monitor rules compliance and runner safety, plus the medical crew.

Marathon 50-mile race start: The Marathon Garden Club will again be the location for the 50-mile race start. Unlike previous years, however, there will be no in-person orientation meeting. The race start will be very staggered. Small groups--likely six (6) runners at a time--will begin together, each separated from the other by 6-10 feet. Each competitor will be assigned a specific start time and will not be allowed near the start line until shortly before his/her assigned time. For runners in the 100-mile race, there will be no aid station support. Timing equipment will be placed on property, with one or two staff members to monitor it. Race marshals and medical staff may check-in from time to time, but activity will otherwise be minimal at the site in 2021.

Finish line: At the finish line on Higgs Beach in Key West, traditional activities will not take place. In the past, as runners finish we have hosted a continuing party under a huge tent, serving cooked food, beer and more. Hundreds of chairs have allowed and encouraged runners to relax there, visit and swap stories with other runners. In 2021, this after-party will not be held, and finishing runners and their crews will be asked to leave the area promptly. Further, each year an awards program has been held at mid-day on Sunday under that same big tent with hundreds of people attending. This presentation of awards has included local artist Gary Hempsey and his band playing "live" to continue the celebration of everyone's accomplishment. All of that will be discontinued next May; winners will be announced online and awards shipped directly to them.

My hope and expectation is that by race weekend in mid-May, the severity of the pandemic will be significantly lower than today--in mid-December. This race was cancelled for the first time in May, 2020, due to the pandemic. We believe that the vaccine will have been administered widely enough by mid-May to significantly reduce disease transmission and permit our race to be held safely with the major changes outlined above. This will allow our people to come to the Keys for this competition. (Choosing to stay in the Keys after the race will be an individual decision; there will be no pre-arranged race gatherings.) Additionally, all race participants will be required to follow CDC guidelines for face covering and social distancing. (For example, runners will be required to carry face coverings with them and to wear them whenever they are within six-ten feet of another person during the race.) We will urge compliance when traveling, and while visiting in hotels, restaurants or other facilities to keep residents and other Monroe County visitors safe.

Further race details will emerge as race day gets closer, and all decisions will be made in the spirit of this document and its sensitivity to the coronavirus and its potential impact on us all.