



Ohio's Backyard Ultra



The "Big" Document of Info.
2026

***Updated for the March 21, 2026 race**

Hello Ohio's Backyard Ultra contestants,

This document will cover all the pertinent details relating to Ohio's Backyard Ultra on March 21, 2026. If anything is changed or added, an email will be sent with that information. Before this document moves to the details, each year I start out with a story about this event and this backyard, as I believe the origin is important to the fabric of the OBU event. Many of you are returners, but this year we have a large cast of first time OBUers, and even some first time ultra runners. Here's the story of how OBU started...

When I first saw Laz advocating for other RD's to start their own Backyard Ultra formatted race in 2018 I immediately started brainstorming on how this type of race could fit in with SEOTR's event offerings. Initially I thought it may be a bit chintzy to copy someone else's race idea, following a "fad," and capitalizing off their creation. However, I kept being drawn into the term "backyard" and when doing so, I realized that while we'd be following Laz's pre-defined rules, this is ultimately, still, our Backyard.

And that concept of Backyard captivated me, as it did with hundreds of others around the world. When first planning for Ohio's Backyard Ultra in 2019, I could literally have chosen dozens of locations to fit in a 4.16667 mile course. In fact, I could have chosen any number of pancake flat loops in Ohio that might mimic other backyard ultras, giving contestants the ability to avoid hills. But there is a special place that really means "Backyard" to me, and that's McChesney Ridge.

In 2010 and 2011 I lived with my buddy Reece Brown for my last couple of years of college at Shawnee State University. Back then we referred to his property as "The Cabin" and he owned just a small amount of wooded land. It was in those days that we first cleared a 300 meter oval double-track trail in the woods on the hill behind his house. We grooved that trail in with so many miles. It was also during this time that I began really exploring myself as a runner, developing a love for the forest, exploring, and doing it all while trail running. I credit a lot of that to my time at "The Cabin."

I also remember those hot summer days ending my runs by dashing through the forest to his neighbors vacation property behind The Cabin and jumping straight into the lake, shoes and all. This lake, and property, now make up what's considered McChesney Ridge Athletic Club, with Reece and his family, owning the Lake House, lake, and property that you'll be running on during Ohio's Backyard Ultra.

While I no longer live on the property at McChesney Ridge, it's been really fun over the past 14 years seeing that 300 meter trail-loop turn into a network of trails, and a property developed by Reece to cater to outdoor enthusiasts. It was a dream we both spoke about frequently during those early days, and here we are now sharing it with others. And the course even features that original 300 meter trail that we cleared in college.

More than sharing the property however, we hope to also share that same "Backyard" feeling we've always felt on this land. A feeling of friendship - nights with friends over for good food and drink, of good music and corn hole on the deck, of stories and laughter with teammates during all seasons of running....

While Ohio's Backyard Ultra may not provide the pancake flat course like others, we hope to provide an atmosphere beyond the miles, to embody our version of Backyard. We'll invite you in and treat you like friends. Good times and good miles.

Over the course of the four versions of Ohio's Backyard Ultra, I feel that "backyard" feeling was captivated throughout the event. Out of the 12 years of directing trail races, OBU is the most fun and community feeling event I've been a part of. From the fireside chats with DNF's and spectators and crews, to the 2:00AM walks to the property high point with a group of faithfuls just to get cell reception, everyone was on the same team. As the event grew in popularity and competition, the last several years has been recognized as being one of the most competitive and deep affiliate backyard ultra in the world. But it's also so much more than the competition and deep fields; it's the mix of experiences that makes OBU extra special, where everyone is tied for first on the same start line each hour. This year will bring that same close-knit feeling, and as deep a competitive field as ever!

So, on behalf of myself at SEOTR, and Reece at McChesney Ridge, welcome to our Backyard. We hope you enjoy it.

Michael

Now, onto the important race details..... Please forward this message to your crew member(s).

-----SEE BELOW FOR FULL OBU DETAILS-----

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Space Logistics and “Tent-City” Setup



A photo depicting the OBU “Tent-City” to give you an idea of what this space looks like. We create marked “rows and aisles” for organized set up that allows everyone clear access to the starting corral.

There will be a sign up form sent in an email to participants to fill out to coordinate tent-sharing.

Creating an organized “Tent-City” is an aspect of Ohio’s Backyard Ultra that has been refined to be really efficient over recent years. There’s not enough space for 115 individual 10x10 tents, but with a little bit of tent sharing and doubling up, we’ve been able to make the space work really well. Please read below and help coordinate this aspect to make it work!

Part of what makes OBU so special is that it’s a great mix of experiences or and abilities. I love having those that run a few hours as much as those running 48+ hours! I think it’s important to not play favorites based on ability, and want to provide the same opportunities with tents to everyone. HOWEVER, the nature of this backyard ultra is that people will be dropping out at different intervals.

****Please do not message me asking for preferential tent placement. It won’t be done. Respect our decision on how this is organized and know that we’ve had time and experience making the set up efficient.***

Some backyard ultras do not allow everyone to bring their own tents, but I love having a robust “tent-city” and think it’s part of what makes OBU a nice tight-knit family, so we are going to keep that atmosphere; but, I’d like

to really encourage people to double or triple up in tents, when possible. Let's work together, like trail runners are so good at doing, to make this space work!

I first want to encourage everyone to not get too worked up about where your tent will ultimately be set up. There will be some runners closer to the start line, and others a little further away. However, bear in mind that even the furthest away tent is still just a few seconds walk to the "starting corral". Your crew can also move you closer as the event moves on, as space opens up, and this has been done in the past with help from our volunteers.

We will be painting grids on the ground for the tent space, and provide "isles or rows" so that tents are not on top of each other, and people don't get blocked in.

- Runners will be in charge of bringing their own shelter if desired, nothing bigger than a 10x10 tent.
- Please share tents with multiple people when possible!
- We do not have space for 110 individual tents, so it becomes vital to share tents. You also do not need to have a tent.

Facebook Group

Use the Facebook Group to coordinate sharing tents, carpooling, or sharing crew members. This can be especially helpful for folks flying in from out of state, who are unable to bring all their supplies.

<https://www.facebook.com/events/1241847220796229>

Glossary of Terms.

- *Contestants* - you all, the runners.
- *Starting Corral* - The spray-painted box that contestants must be in before the bell to be able to start the next hour.
- *"A Yard"* - One 4.16667 course that contestants must complete under one hour, every hour.
- *Runner Space* - The space flanking both sides of the Starting Corral that contestants will have their belongings.
- *The Commons* - The area that contestants will access between loops that includes provisions provided by us, including water, endurance mix, coffee, and foods.
- *Transition Period* - The amount of time between when a runner finishes a loop and the time the bell rings for the next loop.
- *Last Person* - the contestant that wins the race. There is a chance that there is no Last Person.
- "RFC" - "Refused to Continue". When a runner finishes a loop, but then does not enter the corral to begin the next yard.
- "Timed Out" - When a runner fails to complete a yard in the required 60 minutes.

Location and Schedule Details.

Address.

McChesney Ridge Athletic Club
2198 Sedan Crabtree Rd.
Lucasville, Ohio 45648

There is a large wooden sign with the property name on it, and you will also see course markings just off the road.

Parking.

Once you enter the driveway, go in about 2/10 of a mile and veer right to enter the main parking area. This lot fits 60-70 cars. ***Please make sure you park cars close together***

At the end of the main parking lot you'll see the start/finish area. If the main lot is full when you arrive, you can drop your belongings off here before continuing up the hill to the overflow parking areas. After seeing the Lake House the driveway turns left and turns back toward the exit. Cars are able to park along the driveway in parallel parking fashion (*please leave space for cars to pass in the driveway). Once the driveway fills cars can fill up the overflow parking lot at the entrance, and then by parking along Sedan Crabtree Rd.

-Main Lot: 60-70 cars

-Overflow Lot: 20-25 cars

-Remaining cars will park along Sedan Crabtree road - please make sure your entire car is off the road.

*Sprinter vans and small RV's are allowed, but you may not be guaranteed a parking spot close to the Runner Area that you'd be able to access during the run. We do not have space for long RV's.

****The amount of cars that fit into these spaces depends on how close you park together. Please help us out by parking close to the next vehicle.****

Tent Set-up Time - 8:00AM Friday

We've changed the way we've done this several times and allowing an 8:00AM start time worked out well with participants arriving throughout the day instead of all at once. Last year there were a handful of people waiting at 8AM, but it was not a mad rush, and the set up happened on a rolling basis throughout Friday.

Packet Pick-up - 3:00PM Friday

Runners can pick up their bib and shirt on a rolling basis starting at 3:00pm on Friday.

For runners arriving on Saturday morning, we'll be handing out your bib and shirts starting at 6:30am.

All runners will receive a race t-shirt as part of their registration. There will also be a selection (multiple color options) of additional items for sale during the weekend:

- OBU Hoodie: \$38
- OBU Beanie: \$22
- 2026 OBU T-Shirt: \$20
- Past OBU T-Shirts: \$10



Friday Pizza! - 6:30PM Friday

As in past years we'll be ordering a lot of pizza for Friday night, and we will all gather around and socialize before the big day. The first pizza delivery will be around 6:30PM. All runners are provided pizza as part of their entry, and some of you chose the option to "add-on" pizza for your crew/family. Vegan pizza and gluten free options will be available as well. We'll have the pizza set up on the wooden stage. Leftover pizza will be kept out for race day, and anyone can grab some as they please.

Event Schedule

Friday.

- 8:00am - Contestants can start arriving on-site.
- 3:00-6:00pm - Check in, bib and shirt pick-up.
- 6:00pm - Course preview run with me (Michael) - I'll lead anyone interested on a slow run to preview the course the evening before, exactly how it will be run the following morning.
- ~6:30-7:00pm - Pizza will be delivered.

Saturday.

- 6:30am - packet pick-up for late arrivals
- 7:30am - Bell for start of event and Day Loop
- 7:30pm - Transition to the Night Loop

Sunday

- 7:30am - Transition back to the Day Loop
- 7:30pm - Transition to the Night Loop

Monday

- 7:30am - Transition to the Day Loop
- 7:30pm - Transition to the Night Loop

Tuesday

- I hope we may still be here Tuesday morning.

Saturday Morning Arrival.

If you are not able to make it to the Friday Happenings, you will be able to pick up your bib and shirt Saturday morning, starting at 6:30am. Give yourself time to prepare your stuff and set up your supply in the Runner's Space.

Race Morning - 7:30AM Race Start

Race starts at 7:30AM sharp.

If not in the Starting Corral at 7:30AM bell, you are done before you start.

At three minutes till 7:30AM we will kick off the process of blowing three whistles, then 2 whistles at 2 minutes till, 1 whistle at 1 minute till, an announcement at 30 seconds till, a countdown at 10 seconds till, and a bell at the time.

Lodging and Sleep Options.

Camping.

Car camping is an easy method for being close to the starting area, but there is also plenty of open space for tent camping. If you are comfortable sleeping in your car, this is most ideal from a space perspective, and you will be closer to the start line.

There are nice grassy areas throughout the property up by the lake and dam. For contestants still competing, this would ideally be for Friday night, and then after you DNF. Your crew can easily access tent locations, or their vehicles, while the contestant is running, as contestants likely won't have the time to access the tent during their Transition Periods.

Camping will be primitive without electricity, water, or tables. Simply a space for a tent on grass or dirt. These spaces will be no more than 0.1-0.3 of a mile walk from the start line.

These locations will be on a first-come first-serve basis starting at 2:00PM on Friday. Once you arrive on the property, we will show you the available spaces for tent camping.

You are free to stay Friday night, Saturday Night, Sunday Night, and any duration when the event is taking place.

Other Lodging.

There is a list of hotels in Portsmouth, Ohio, 20-25 minutes away from McChesney Ridge.

- Quality Inn Portsmouth, 20 minutes
- Super 8 Portsmouth, 20 minutes
- Rodeway Inn Portsmouth, 20 Minutes
- Ameristay Inn Portsmouth, 20 Minutes

- Holiday Inn Portsmouth Downtown, 26 minutes
-

“Runner Space” at The Starting Corral.

See note in the above section about setting up “tent-city”, and stay informed with a future email about set-up time.

We have this section “roped off” to allow only the contestants and their crew.

Anyone not running, volunteering, or crewing is not allowed in the “Runner Space”.

As you drop out of the race, you must move out of the “Runner Space” and relinquish the space you occupied for contestants remaining.

You are ultimately in charge of bringing in the correct gear, food, supplies to fit in the permitted bags/cooler. Keep this in mind in case it rains, snows, or is cold. Once you begin the race, it may be a disadvantage to leave your little space to run to the car to resupply. That is the purpose of a good crew member, to collect items you need while you run. We will provide what is listed below in “The Commons.”

Once over half the runners have DNFed, the remaining contestants will be able to bring more provisions in. Once the “elite 8” or “final 4” celebrated contestants remain, they will be able to have all the space for them and their crew.

“The Commons.”

There will be another space within the starting area, next to the Runner Space with a fire, and tables. There may also be other propane warming devices, but you may not have the time to linger here long if you are in the race.

This will also be where we have water, hydration mix, and coffee, available for contestants.

Each runner is in charge of providing their own food and calories throughout the event, as it is impossible to provide the unique food needs to every participant. However, like mentioned above, we will have water, endurance hydration mix, and coffee on a rotating basis that is free for everyone. Leftover pizza from the night before will also be set out and available for runners and crew to eat, as well as other various salty and sugary foods.

We'll occasionally prepare some foods and announce when we have some hot items available, but it will not be something you should rely on.

Volunteers will be working in this space and have things available as the event progresses. Your crew can feel free to use this sheltered space to prepare food and set up stoves if needed.

Race Rules and Policies.

Rules Specific to Ohio's Backyard Ultra.

Laz outlines the rules that all Backyard Ultra format races should abide by, see below. But here are a few rules that are specific to our event.

- No Dogs
- No Gas Generators. Electric power banks are allowed.
- Personal camp stoves ARE allowed
- Runners must have a reflective vest of some sort for the road (night) hours. This needs to be something designed for visibility while running that is worn like a vest, providing visibility in the front and back of your body. This needs to be in addition to your headlamp.
- Headphones are allowed during the daytime trail loops. Headphones WILL BE allowed during the nighttime road loops, but you will need to leave one earbud out to be able to hear vehicles.
- Laz defines trekking poles as artificial aid, so we will also not allow trekking poles. Items like running vests, packs, bottles are allowed however.
- Runners may not receive aid or stop at their tent when they pass through the finish line the first time (double-loop course), or along the course for aid at any point, until they complete their 4.1667 mile loop.
- Crew members MAY correspond with runners while they pass through the start line after their first loop, and offer verbal encouragement, but they cannot hand things off to the runners.
- The only places that crew may also see their runners during the loop is when they pass through the start line the first time (double-loop course), and up by the house, but only encouragement and verbal correspondence is allowed, and no handing off aid.
- To remove any "gray area" in the rules, we will allow runners and crew to correspond about what they may need at the end of a "yard", but this should only be done when they pass through the starting line the first time and at the spectator area by the house.
- Stopping at the portable toilets during the loop is permitted during the loop.

Worldwide Backyard Ultra Rules.

These are the rules laid out by Laz that all affiliated Backyard Ultra events must abide by. If runners are caught not following rules applicable to runners, or act in bad faith during the event, they will be disqualified. We will be enforcing these rules for the integrity of all Backyard Ultra events.

***Please see Rule #4 that does not allow trekking poles - this was asked several times. They are not allowed, being considered as artificial aid by Laz.**

1) Course

- . Loop or out and back
- . Must be 4 miles and 880 feet in length
- . Metric equivalent 6.7056 kilometers

2) Starting Corral

- . Measured to fit entire starting field
- . Corral stays the same size throughout the event
- . Participants must be in the starting corral at the bell

3) Starts

- . Each loop starts precisely 1 hour after the last
- . Warning must be given 3, 2, and 1 minutes prior to start
- . All competitors must start at the bell (no late starts)

4) Loops

- . Except for restrooms, competitor may not leave the course until each loop is completed
- . No non-competitors on the course (including eliminated runners)
- . No personal aid during a loop (common aid stations are allowed)
- . Each loop must be completed within an hour to be counted... including the final lap.
- . No artificial aids (including trekking poles)
- . Slower runners must allow passes.

5) Timing

- . Timing of the loops is optional

6) Winner/Results

- . The winner is the last person to complete a loop
- . All others are technically DNF
- . Results of each runner in terms of distance covered are to be given.
- . If no runner can complete one more loop than anyone else, there is no winner.

7) Cap

- . Race must be open ended, without a time capacity.

Toilets.

There will be portable toilets that may be accessed during the loop. This is the only reason that runners may “leave” the course. The position of the toilets will be directly after the start, along the side of the course, so you will not actually be leaving the course.

Runners may also access these toilets in the Transition Period, but it may be a risk to use them during this time, in case you get “stuck” using the toilet when the bell is rung. You will have to make the choice to use the portable toilets “during your loop” or after you finish your loop.

Runner Tracking and Results.

We will be keeping track of contestants as they cross the finish line by recording their bib numbers into our app-based results system. This will ensure no contestants are cheating. Since the course passes back through the start/finish line twice per 4.1667 mile course, we will be tracking those numbers each time.

We will be updating a spreadsheet that we'll post to social media where your friends and family can follow along. This will be on "SEOTR Events" social media platforms.

Periodically, we will be posting updates on the SEOTR Events Facebook Page, with information on who has dropped and who remains, and this is where family and friends should be directed who are at home "watching".

While everyone but the Last Person is considered a DNF, the results will list everyone's finishing distance on UltraSignup.com.

Course Information.

Note The course has been measured by a wheel that is accurate down to the foot after many measurements and fine-tuning. Your GPS watch will not be as accurate as the wheeled measurement, and will likely show skewed and inaccurate numbers, so please trust that the course is accurate. Understand, that due to frequent sharp turns and switchbacks on the course, your GPS will likely measure less than 4.16 miles.

Day Course.

- The day/trail course is simple.
- Each 4.1667 mile loop is actually two loops. Each of these two loops is 2.083 miles.
- The day course has between 450-475 feet of elevation gain.
- The day course is a mixture of double-track trail, gravel, grass, and dirt. There is no pavement during the day course.

A public link to the course on Strava can be found here: <https://www.strava.com/activities/4885410478>

Night Course.

- The night/road course is even more simple.
- Likewise, it is measured to be 4.1667 miles.
- The night course is out and back.
- The night course has a gradual 150 feet of elevation gain.
- The night course opens with a stint of dirt and gravel, before entering pavement.
- Respect all the homes that you pass by on the road section. There are about a dozen driveways that you pass on the night section. Dogs will be barking.

New policy Runners will be required to wear a reflective vest or shirt of some sort to provide more visibility.

***Runners should run AGAINST traffic and in single-file, without going out into the middle of the road.**

***When turning around on the night loop, please do so consistently and quickly while watching for traffic and other runners.**

Course Markings.

The day loop will have all intersections flagged off to allow the course to easily be followed. There are no overlaps, opposite directions, or intersecting points along the loop. It's a pure perfect loop that is run twice to make 4.1667 miles.

The night loop on the road will be minimally marked, with some reflective streamers throughout the road, and a cone and spray paint at the turnaround. We will clearly mark the turn back into the driveway so runners don't miss that, as well as have someone stationed out there to distinguish the location.

Crew Members.

Each contestant may have one crew member at the Runner Space during the transition period at any given time. You may have more than one crew member that can take turns, but the other crew member needs to stay clear of the runner area when they are not crewing. Other crew members may ramble about the property. This is due to the limited space in the runner space, to allow that space to not become too congested.

Crew is important to help the contestant get ready for the next hour and act as a resupply. There is plenty of other space on the property for any other crew members to view the race, but we need to keep the Runner Space clear when the field is still big.

Caveat to the one crew member rule.

Once half of the runners drop out (last year this was around hour 15) two crew members can start helping their runner. Since the field is smaller, there will be more space and it will be open for remaining runners to have more people help.

*Crew members are not allowed to offer aid to their contestant while their contestant is running the loop, only once they complete their 4.1667 mile loop, but can correspond. See rules above.

Resupply Locations Close to McChesney Ridge.

Crabtree's Market (3 miles away)

12225 OH-348
Lucasville, OH 45648

Hours

Saturday: 8AM-7PM
Sunday: CLOSED
Monday: 8AM-7PM

Dollar General (3 miles away)

12331 OH-348
Lucasville, OH 45648

Hours

Saturday: 8AM-10PM
Sunday: 8AM-10PM
Monday: 8AM-10PM

*Larger businesses and an array of stores in Lucasville, Ohio (10 minutes away) and Portsmouth, Ohio (25 minutes away)

Volunteers.

If you have already signed up to volunteer, wait for another email for me, or simply show up willing to lend a helping hand. There will be lots of little jobs during the weekend, but primarily more to do when the majority of the runners are still remaining in the event. If you are an early DNF, or are a crew member or spectator, consider being part of OBU as a volunteer!

If you have not signed up to volunteer, and are interested, you may sign up to volunteer at this link:

<https://seotrevents.ivolunteer.com/>

The End and Prizes.

The end of Ohio's Backyard Ultra is when one contestant completes a loop under an hour without another contestant doing so. At that point, they are the winner. There is a possibility of the final two runners not completing a loop under an hour, thus meaning there is no winner.

The winner will receive a cash prize of \$500.00, along with a commemorative "big check" to keep as a decorative piece.

The winner will also have their name engraved into a plaque shaped like the state of Ohio that will list the winner of every OBU. This plaque will stay at McChesney Ridge and will be hung up during the event.

Thanks, and I look forward to seeing everyone!

Michael Owen
Race Director