

2014 Hellgate 100K (Sissygate) by Dr. David Horton—Dec. 13

The 12<sup>th</sup> running of Hellgate was the last race in the six race Beast Series. In this field, there were 38 males and 7 females attempting to complete the Beast Series. A field of 148 runners (largest starting field ever) started with the hope of finishing within the 18 hour time limit. Over 200 runners desired to run the race. However the goal of the race committee is to keep the field to 140 runners or less to maintain the intimacy of the event, to keep it in the finish line building, and to take GREAT care of ALL the runners. There are NO plans to expand the limit of runners in this race. Many folks call this race SPECIAL and every endeavor will be made to KEEP it that way. If you don't believe it's SPECIAL, just ask anyone who has run the race.

The finish line and site of the pre-race meal is at Camp Bethel. They LOVE the event and gladly host us each year. They prepare us a FANTASTIC meal on Friday night. Following the meal, a pre-race briefing is held where we arrange rides for runners to the start at the Big Hellgate parking lot. The major discussion is the weather and what to wear. Last year, we had TRUE Hellgate weather, 3 - 4 inches of snow and a very cold rain later on. This year, the weather was near 50 during the day and lows were in the 20s and NO precipitation. Because of this, I called it Sissygate. Last year in tough weather, 83 percent of the runners finished. This year, in so called perfect weather, 82 percent finished!!!

One of the unique things about Hellgate is the starting time, 12:01 AM, rather than 12:00, so is that Friday night or Saturday night? 12:01 AM is on Dec. 13. We start at that time so that everyone has to run through the night and MOST runners will finish before it gets dark on Saturday. Also, we ALWAYS sing the national anthem as a GROUP. There is nothing like singing the national anthem in the middle of the night, in the middle of December, in the middle of nowhere, with a group of LIKE-minded crazies.

We have only 9 aid stations and 3 crews of aid station workers, mostly made up of Liberty University students. We go out on Thursday before the race and cut wood and take it to the 5 aid stations where we can have fires. Rather than being 62.2 miles, the course has been measured by MOST folks as being 66.6 miles???. We mark the first 35 miles with reflective streamers, which is MUCH better than chemical lights used by most races that are held in the dark. There is around 13,000 feet of elevation gain and an equal amount of loss.

There were two runners returning who had finished in the top 10 in the 2013 Hellgate, Darren Thomas (Blacksburg, VA) and Brad Hinton (Belle View, VA ). Jason Lantz (Lancaster, PA), Jordan Chang (Blacksburg, VA) and Ryan Paavola (Richmond, VA) are VERY good runners and were seeded 3, 4, and 5.

The women's field seemed even DEEPER. But it didn't turn out that way. There were 36 ladies starting, the biggest women's field ever. However, 14 of them dropped out. There were 112 men starting and only 12 of them dropped out. Why was that? I have NO idea. I guess the men are just TOUGHER???. Three of the men's times from this year are now in the top 10 times of all time.

Seeded first in the women's field was Cathleen Cusick (Indian Harbour, FL). Justine Morrison (Bethesda, MD) won Hellgate back in 2005, the ICE year. Justine has just this year returned to ultrarunning after having two children. Jennifer Edwards (Olympia, WA) finished in second place last year. Bethany

Patterson (aka FAT GIRL, Richmond, VA) was coming off a second place finish at the 2014 MMTR 50 Miler. Seeded fifth was Meghan Hicks (Moab, UT). She and her main squeeze Bryon Powell are the founders of the irunfar.com website. She has extensive and successful world-wide ultra experience.

The men started out very slow. By AS 1, the lead runner was already 5 minutes behind record pace and there was over 20 runners basically together. By AS 2, the pack was down to 10 runners. By AS 3 (13.1 miles), the lead was held by Thomas and Paavola, who were still 5 minutes behind record pace. Lantz was 1 minute back of the lead.

By AS 4 (Floyd's Field, 22.4 miles), Paavola had pulled away to take a 4 minute lead over Thomas with Lantz 6 minutes back. At this point, Paavola was just 2 minutes behind record pace. Paavola continued to run VERY strong, taking it to the record by reaching Day Creek (the last AS, 56.1 miles) and being 12 minutes ahead of record pace. An upset stomach after that AS, resulted in him throwing up 3 times between there and the finish, losing a few minutes on record pace.

Paavola crossed the finish line in an OUTSTANDING time of 10:45:49, a new course record by 7 minutes and Ryan's FIRST ultra win!!!! I am so impressed by his performance. He had already won the LUS and this placing enabled him to win the Beast Series as well. He has raced well all year, but WOW, what a breakthrough for him. Racing expectations for him will now be MUCH greater with this fantastic performance.

Thomas and Lantz hooked up at Floyd's Field and stayed together until Bearwallow Gap AS. Thomas pulled away and finished in a very good time of 11:11:41 to take second in the 6<sup>th</sup> fastest time ever on the course. Lantz took third in 11:20:28, the third fastest time ever. Hinton took 4<sup>th</sup> in a course PR for him of 11:54:48. John Anderson (Crozet, VA) continued his STRONG year of ultrarunning taking 5<sup>th</sup> place in at time of 12:06:40.

At AS 3 (13.1 miles), Morrison took the lead by 9 minutes over Edwards. At AS 4 (22.4 miles), Morrison had extended her lead to 17 minutes over Edwards with Lori Cooper (Henrico, VA) joining Cooper. Patterson was 19 minutes back of Morrison.

By AS 6 (Little Cove Mtn. 34.5 miles), Cooper had cut the lead to 10 minutes on Morrison. Patterson was another 10 minutes back of Cooper. Morrison increased her lead back to 15 minutes over Cooper by AS 7 (42.5 miles) and 28 minutes over Patterson. At Bobblet's Gap (AS ?? 49.5 miles), Morrison had a 23-minute lead on Cooper and 35 minutes on Patterson.

From Bobblet's Gap to Day Creek, the listed mileage is 6.6 miles. It might be a little longer than that???? That is why this section is called the Forever section, because it seems to take forever to get to the last AS.

Morrison's lead had decreased to 14 minutes on Cooper and 16 minutes over a hard charging Patterson. Morrison went on to take her second Hellgate victory finishing in 13:19:07, the 6<sup>th</sup> fastest time ever for the ladies. Patterson passed Cooper on the last big climb back up to the Parkway and Blackhorse Gap, finishing in 13:25:49, cutting the lead to 6 minutes and 42 seconds after Morrison. Looks like Patterson

started her kick too late. Cooper took third place finishing in 13:32:59. Cusick took 4<sup>th</sup> in 14:15:55, and local runner Alexis Thomas took 4<sup>th</sup> in 14:23:28. Thomas also won the Beast Series with this performance and set a Beast time record for the ladies.

Daryl Smith (Hurt, VA) and Kristin Bremer (Towson, MD) took the master's titles in 13:15:42 and 14:51:23 respectively. The grand master's titles went to Barry Lass (Morristown, NJ) and Sophie Speidel (Charlottesville, VA) in 13:31:20 and 15:54:45 respectively. The super master's title went to Marlin Yoder (Harrisonburg, VA) in 16:28:54.

The top 10 men and top 5 ladies and age group winners received an embroidered Patagonia wool zip top, and all other finishers received a Capilene 3 embroidered top. Finishers also received GREAT Drymax socks with the Hellgate logo and a Hellgate bumper sticker. There were 35 men and 5 ladies who finished the Beast Series.

December 12, 2015 will see the 13<sup>th</sup> running of the most SPECIAL Hellgate 100K. Will you be at Big Hellgate Creek at 12:01 AM on Dec. 12, 2015??????????????