

My First and Fears

Diarrhea. Or chafe. Worse yet, chafe from diarrhea.

“What could go wrong?” I mused. With brow furrowed, my finger hovered over my keyboard. I had partially filled out the registration form.

Memes. The type of memes that live in infamy. One’s that involved bloody shirts or bodily waste, normally accompanying faces in various forms of twisted grimaces.

“Will I be THAT guy?” Not a runner by choice, but by necessity. Getting older, getting fatter- wanting to end my thirties better than I entered. Striving to be a better hunter, better human, more disciplined. A “runner by necessity” with a shady past of poor training, I trained poorly for my first ultra.

5 weeks out, I ran a few 3-6 milers- the first time I have run in several months. I ran an 8 miler, the longest by myself. My longest ever run was the first practice loop several did a few weeks out. I ran a 12 miler with friends. One week out I ran 20 at Holiday Lake, more for mental than anything else. My record, and it averaged 11:50. Total of approximately 75 miles. Then it was race day.

Prior to Saturday, my longest race was the Terrapin Half the year before. “Run the Terrapin” they said- “It will be fun” they said. “Oh, it’s more hiking than running” Hey- I’m down with that. I don’t run anyways, I like to hike. Besides, what’s the worst that can happen? 3 hours and 30 min later, I winced across the finish. I questioned my sanity and my choice of friends.

I registered, and was the second to the last to do so. Fitting, because that was how I planned to start and finish. When the race began, I stayed in the rear. Within 200 yards, I was dead last. Again, that was by design. Not knowing what to expect, I knew I couldn’t do any worse. I made the half at 3:13ish, and was welcomed by my family with signs and kisses. I finished at 6:56, but never questioned my sanity- or my choice of friends.

My band of brothers consisted of my Pastor Jonathan Watson- a veteran of this race and many others. He also happens to be my boss. We serve at Bible Baptist Church, he as senior and me as associate. Jason Elliott, a fellow first time ultra runner. He is our Sunday School superintendent. Michael Campbell, a speed goat that could have finished and had a good nap in before the rookies made it out. He is a deacon at BBC. We four grew up in this church together, terrorized the place, and look at us now.

My injuries consist of blisters, a toe nail off each foot will eventually fall off, and sore IT bands. No diarrhea, and no chafe. Can I get a witness?

My advice to those on the fence about trying this as a first ultra is this- do it. This is a great run for newbies. Believe me, I know.

My help and strength for this race came from many places. First of all, it is of the Lord’s mercy that we live and exist, and have this body to enjoy and push to its limits. My running partners that enjoyed and suffered it out with me are men that I would ride the river with. My wife Stephanie, a dear woman that believed in me, worried about me, encouraged me, and welcomed me across the finish line with a sweet kiss. My family is precious to me, and for that moment I may as well been Superman to my children.

I ran an ultra. This one was by necessity. The next will be by choice. Runner #237- Jerry Boyce