

Holiday Lake 2009

I love ultras. I love the fact that more and more people are running ultras. More ultras mean more people running which means more people who are healthier, etc. In the end, it is a win for everyone involved with the sport of running. However, this particular race opened my eyes to a few things I believe need to be highlighted:

1. Ultras, just like other races, have a variety of competitors. Each competitor has a unique agenda and goal. If you don't have something positive or encouraging to say, then keep your mouth shut. Don't make comments like "You really look bad. Too bad you're not living up to the race shirt you're wearing."
2. If two runners meet head to head on a trail, each runner moves a little to the right and both pass safely. Sometimes, one runner has to give a little more to the right side of the trail. Also, faster runners deserve the right of way. As I was coming to the turnaround, I gave ground to the speedsters in front of me. However, on the return trip many of the runners I now faced barreled down the middle of the trail, refusing to give even the smallest of margins. Of course, I scooted up the right side of the trail to avoid a collision. Remember the rules and the courtesy.
3. At the aid stations, crew members should not get in the way of the runners and aid station workers.
4. Don't make excuses, either you ran well or you didn't. Don't bad mouth the race director or the aid station workers. Don't complain about the distance between aid stations or the offerings at each refueling station. If you don't have something positive or encouraging to say, then keep your mouth shut. Don't say things like "If I'd had a better place to park and get ready, I might've been able to run a bit faster."
5. David Horton is a wonderful person and a great race director. However, he is not God. He did not make the ruts on some of the fire roads or the rocks on the trails. The course was not an example of "poor race management." If you don't have something positive or encouraging to say, then keep your mouth shut.

Now, of course, some of you might be thinking that I should take my own advice and shut up. However, as both a race director and a runner, I know that the negatives of an event can sometimes overshadow all the positives and potentially impact the future of an event. I do not want Holiday Lake to go away. So, I am gently reminding all those who read to consider the above 5 points. Perhaps, my reaction was leftover from feeling really bad on the second loop. However, that is part of the ultramarathon game. At some point you feel bad and you work through it.

There's an elephant in this story. It's the one that shows up in an ultramarathon when runners unaccustomed to the traditions of ultrarunning fill up many of the starting slots. This elephant is not time or place or award.

So that I can end with an encouraging word, I will offer this final comment. The sport of ultrarunning is alive and well. I welcome the large number of finishers and competitors. In the end, greater numbers will equal greater good. But some gentle reminders will, at the least, do no harm.

Christopher Calfee