

The 2nd Loop

Holiday Lake 50k++

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After a hiatus from any racing since 2002, I decided 2009 would be the year I would again pin on a race bib and try to push myself to a new level. What better way to accomplish this than to do my first ultra and one of David Horton's at that. The race application was filled out and sent in and the training program was working well. Then the first of December I had a major set back when I had a severe allergic reaction to an antibiotic I was on that resulted in me being in the hospital 4 days with 2 of those being in the ICU. One thing I kept thinking about is will this keep me from doing Holiday Lake?

Well, after 3 weeks of no running I was sure I would have to readjust my goals for 2009 and withdraw my name from Holiday Lake. When I emailed David to tell him I would not be able to do HL he responded, "you can NOT drop out." He talked me in to coming up to run 1 loop and if I felt good run the 2nd. I thought this was a reasonable idea (little did I realize the persuasive powers of Horton) since my long run at this point was 14 miles and 16 would be a nice logical increase for the following week.

So I find myself at HL on Friday night and hear Horton tell 200 or so people that I am going to run 1 loop but I really should run 2. Now the pressure is on!! At the chilly race start I am still uncommitted to doing the 2nd loop, taking that wait and see attitude. On the 1st loop I felt really good keeping a comfortable pace, chatting with fellow runners and getting to know Steve Brown a fellow Roanoker a little better. So at the turn around I made the critical decision...I would start the 2nd loop. My thoughts at this time were: I had over 5 hours before cutoff, it was a beautiful day, I could walk as much as I need and I would be on trails – not a bad way to spend a beautiful Saturday!!!

The 2nd lap was an unbelievable experience. A mile or so before the 5th aid station I meet up with Scott (a student of Horton's) and we ran together until just after the last aid station. Seeing Horton at the 5th aid station was a highlight, after a high five from him, a PB&J and a full bottle we went on. It was nice to have some company over those miles to help distract the distance being covered and the tiredness creeping into the legs. The best description of the last 8 miles was getting in a zone and staying there knowing that I was about to accomplish something I had never done before and at the start of the day I was not sure I could.

Crossing the finish line was a huge relief and a sense of accomplishment. Seeing Horton, getting a handshake and hug and him saying, "aren't you glad you did it?" YES, I am glad and I will be back! Thank you David Horton, all the volunteers and aid station workers, and runners I shared the trail with!