

## New Course, New Strategy.

Caroline Williams

For the persistent back-of-the-pack person like me, the time of 6:41 and change was a total surprise. Did all the stars line up? Did Hell freeze over?

I was a bit anxious to see what the new, added trail sections would bring. Why would David extend the time limit if HE didn't think it was tougher than the old course! As usual, I wondered about the trail conditions, if the weather conditions might affect that much. Typical things that most of us think about.

David emailed me and told me that I should like the new course. He was right. The course is entirely runnable--excellent for long stretches of speedwork. And it was a beautiful day--a day when I could follow my plan to do some quicker leg turnover that I had been practicing on the dreaded treadmill at my gym. I saw some sections where it could be muddy if it rained a lot, but not that day. The trail conditions were perfect, and it was a perfect, sunny day.

People I meet at Holiday Lake (and other runs) always make the race for me. It's never about the finishing time, or the conditions, as challenging as they both may be. I simply enjoy the beauty of the course, and the moments shared with my fellow runners. People like Jean Richards, Kari Anderson, Vicki Kendall, Barb Isom, Anna Bradford, Peggy Ankney, Krista Petersen, even Rebekah Trittipoe and Justine Morrison, and other female and male runners whose names I'm having a hard time recalling at this writing. Our sport is an individual as well as a group sport. Each of us must carry our own load. No one can move my legs for me. But anyone can motivate, empathathize, and cheer me on.

I thank David Horton not only for putting this and other races on year after year, but for being so enthusiastic, energetic, so motivating year after year. Yes, he has been doing this LONG before I even dreamed of being an ultrarunner. I just stand in awe of people like him who has loved and enjoyed this sport for so many years. I still feel like a toddler in this community after starting out with a few races in 2002. I'm still learning, and ever more enjoying the trails, and familiar faces, and now, some new and YOUNG faces! So glad to see you young folks out here!

I don't know what I did, but after a few years of barely squeaking in just under the cutoff or just after the cutoff, it is sure a good thing to see my finish time drastically improve. So when Horton asked me about drug testing, my response should have been, "I've been spending some time at the DEA's fitness center. No membership fee is required, just blood, sweat, and tears!"