

## Holiday Lake 2010

My first thought a few days before the race was "What have I gotten myself into?" I was just a month out of physical therapy due to a significant IT band issue . Another illness, work commitments and life in general had made a horrible impact on training properly. I hadn't even run a marathon before. My longest run ever had only been 20 miles on a treadmill due to all the snow we had gotten in the Metro DC area. Could I really pull off a 50k in these conditions?

I was seriously starting to question my training and running the race until I received the last email from Dr.Horton, and I quote:"If you are scared away from the snow, and you are a big sissy, and are not tough enough to run on Saturday, please let me know asap." That sealed it. I started packing my race gear like I was going into battle. Which I was.

I drove down with my family Friday afternoon and stayed in a camper on my mother-in-law's farm in Farmville about 30 minutes out from Holiday Lake. I met up with my running partner, Christine, at the pre-race dinner Friday night. I had talked her into running this race with me and I just KNEW she was cussin' me. The dinner was great. The atmosphere was very fun and all the other runners I met were very friendly. Dr. Horton's humor and enthusiasm were very contagious. After the prize giveaways (I got a nice Montrail cap) Dr. Horton sat down with first time Ultra runners and gave some advice. Some of the things he went over:

How to tell if you are running too hard.

Men, duct tape your nipples.

How you should fuel yourself for the run.

Wipe yourself well to avoid butt rash.

and his key piece of advice, Patience. Practice patience on the course.

Did it quell my nerves any? Not really, but at least I knew there were others that had similar circumstances as myself. I said goodbye to Christine around 9pm and made plans to meet up with her at the Check-in at 6am.

The first thing I see Saturday morning when I wake up is that it's snowing and there is about a half inch accumulation already. This ought to be fun. I arrive at the start at 6:20 due to slippery road conditions. I check-in ,meet up with Christine, and get to the starting line very quickly. Everything is happening super fast. No time for mental prep at all and my adrenaline is in overdrive. After all the runners sing the National Anthem the race is on. Here we go!

Two miles into the run and I knew this race was a different kind of animal. I had never run on snow before and my body needed time adjust. It was almost like running on sand at times. The fine powdery snow taking a lot of energy out of your legs. I started feeling my left hip flexor twinge and I wasn't even at the 1st aid station . Ugh. I started repeating a mantra in my head. "Run slow but strong."

My fuelbelt was also giving me problems. It kept sliding off my hips and pulling my shorts down. I was constantly pulling both the belt and shorts up. Christine asked from behind me "You lose weight or something?" I made a quick stop at the 1st aid station and fixed the fuelbelt issue. I had forgotten to tie my shorts so they slid down easily. I also moved my fuelbelt to the outside of my vest to make it tighter. It never gave me any problems after that.

The next obstacle was "the creek". It was smaller then I expected. I could have jumped it if there hadn't been a slowdown from other runners. With my feet freshly wet and cold I continued to run and came upon the real "creek". This one was much wider. I barreled though it and kept going.

My running partner, Christine, pulled away from me at this time as I knew she would. She is a strong runner and I expected her to do well in this race. My foot started hurting at about mile 11 and I could feel the a blister coming on. It would have to wait until the turnaround to do damage control.

The front runners started coming at about 13 miles into the first loop. They all looked fresh and I eyed them with envy as they flew by. I met Christine at mile 15 as she was on her second loop. She was looking strong. We high fived and I wished her luck.

I came into the turnaround at 3:12 not too bad a pace. I went to my dropbag for my medkit and dry socks. When I tried to untie my shoes I started laughing. I couldn't do it. The laces were frozen solid. I opted to just pull them off and inspect my damaged right foot. I had a huge blood blister the size of a marble on my second biggest toe. It was painful and when I went to fix it I realized I had forgotten my medkit. Oh well, I took a safety pin from my number and lanced it. Blood came jetting out. I know you aren't supposed to lance blood blisters but I had to relieve the pressure. I did find some tape and took some time to bandage the toe with it. This took a lot of time because by now my hands were pretty cold and were not cooperating. By the time I ate something ,refilled my waterbottles and took off for the second loop it was 3:35 into the race. I spent WAY to long in there.

I wish I could say the the rest of the race went spectacular and that my second loop was faster. I cannot. At mile 18 my legs turned to rubberbands. I walked every little grade I ran into. I kept telling myself "make it to the next aid station."

Right before the aid station at mile 20 there was a man with a cross, I later learned he had actually ran while carrying it. He was encouraging everyone on saying "God bless you all." I really needed at the time. At the aid station I started to chow. I figured I was bonking because my nutrition was poor. I had some cookies, some donut holes and then some trail mix. I refilled my water bottles and started walking the uphill climb from the aid station. By the time I made it to the top I had gotten my legs back and was able to start running.

I chatted with lots of runners along the way. They were great. They gave lots of advice and encouragement. They kept me going and made the difficult miles endurable. When I passed struggling runners I encouraged them as well, letting them know they could do it. Just keep pressing. When I made the last aid station I was so relieved.They cow belled me in and filled my water bottles. I have to commend every aid station worker that day. They were phenomenal and their hard work is appreciated. They sent me off with 3.8 miles to go.

I knew I was at the back of the pack but I didn't care. I was about to finish my first Ultra but I do remember cursing those extra "Horton Miles". When I hit the blacktop my energy surged again and I finished strong. My family was waiting for me and cheered me on. My son and daughter ran across the finish line with me. 7:50 flat... Slow but proud.

My running partner was there as well. She did a fantastic job and finished 6th female overall. Way to go girl!

This was such an adventure for me and the snow which made it that much more difficult also made that much more unforgettable. I can't wait for my next one!!!