

Sitting in the emergency room three days before the race waiting for an x-ray on suspected fractured ribs, I was pretty sure I would not be running. I wasn't too disappointed either, because the only training I had been able to do was shoveling snow in DC and the one game of snow rugby that had put me in the ER. But then the x-ray came back as just "heavy bruising" and David Horton's email arrived suggesting not attending would be sissy-like, and I knew I would be running after all.

It took my mate Joe Schramka and I more than 7 hours to drive to Holliday Lake because of the multiple accidents coming out of DC, and we didn't hit the hay till after midnight Friday night. We missed the pasta dinner, and instead had what has become our customary pre-race meal: 3 day-old Wawa pretzels and a 6-pack of PBR.

For two back-of-the-pack runners like Joe and I, the first 15 miles of the race went super-smooth. I'd never run with Yaktraks before, but they seemed to make a big difference. We had a nice pace going and were regularly passing folks. The snow was heavy on the legs, but we both remarked how much fun we were having. Maybe digging out stranded Jaguars and Priuses for our over-optimistic neighbors was perfect ultra training after all.

At 15 miles I started spitting up blood, and, given my rib injury, I got a little worried. Joe stopped, check me over, and pronounced me a "girlie-man." So we kept going. At the turnaround he showed a little mercy and offered me the chance of quitting, no-questions asked. So I called him a "girlie-man," and he bolted off, cursing me in Polish.

The second half was tough. I stopped coughing up blood, but didn't have much else going on. The trail had compacted and was easier to run, but I still walked the slightest of uphill. Running was slow-motion. I got passed a lot. Joe was faring better, but left several patches of blue-gatorade puke along the way.

Joe finished just over 7 hours and I finished just under 8 - both about 1.5 hours over last year's times, which gave an indication how much tougher the snow made the course. We had a nice chat with Lewis, who carried the wooden cross for 17 miles. He prayed for our car to remain sound during the journey home, which it did, for us to remain awake for the ride, which we barely did, and for the food we ate to be comforting, which it was. He didn't mention skipping the hour-long wait for a table at any restaurant due to Valentine's Day, so we duly waited, sitting on the bench in the lobby, feebly trying to explain to all the couples standing around giving us the stink-eye that we were too tired to give up our seats.

All in all a great weekend, and I hope Terrapin ups the stakes with a full-on blizzard.

David Ratcliff