

This year Holiday Lake 50k++ was a unique experience from the standpoint of running right after three consecutive days on my back with a sinus cold/flu sickness. Expectations changed from the aimed 4:17 finish to even contemplating a race finish. I wasn't sure how the body would hold up going into the prerace dinner/family gathering. My confidence only grew after discussing my "dilemma" with other crazies like Frank "The Tank" and his wife Christy, who both gave me the mental push to commit. I embraced true justification when Micah Jackson shared a trick of David Snipes to cure the body – ½ gallon of orange juice the night before.

I arrived ready to embrace the fate of the race with the determination to finish at whatever cost. I joined my sister at the starting line to wish her well on her first ultra (She did finish ☺). I took off with the start ready to see how the body would handle a brisk, comfortable pace. As I climbed the hill and entered the woods, I knew that I didn't have all my engines and that this would be a race to battle myself to the finish. The race reminded me of why I enjoy training/running ultras time and time again.

The philosophical energy produced within the ultra often forces one to dig down and sort through issues, especially if expectations aren't being met. Honestly - the first eight miles was extremely rough and I had to stay zoned. As I attempted to find a rhythm, my mind went back to my college philosophy of kinesiology class's main question: *"Why do we compete?" Is the response for glory or experience or both?* I found myself contemplating this issue as I focused on the putting one foot ahead of the other. The jockeying for position on the trail along quiet lake reminded for me the experience outweighs the glory. I run ultras to experience silence, nature, the limits of the body, the comradery of the race, etc...these are reasons that draw me to the ultra.

My stomach and hydration issues were fine throughout the race, as I made sure to keep calories coming throughout the race. I mainly focused on getting PB&J in the beginning and transitioned to pretzels on the latter end. I used a few gels accompanied with a hand held. The challenge was listening to my body. I was torn between keeping sickness in check, but push my body to compete. I'm not sure I found the balance, as I focused more on not letting my lung hack overtake me. I experienced difficulty between miles 20 – 24, as my chest cold decided to act up. Shout out to Susanna Greever for the "cup of magic air"...it helped the lungs. After mile 24, I regained partial race rhythm and knew I would complete the race. I just told myself I needed to finish.

Though the circumstances to the race weren't what I had planned, overall I was surprised how my body handled the race. I believe this was a healthy challenge for me to overcome and test my body/mind. As I drove home from the race, I thought a lot about how thankful I am for ultras and for people like Dr. Horton. The community cultivated through these events creates a vibrant opportunity to expand friendships and to feed one's soul. These races provide an opportunity to push boundaries in the mental, physical, spiritual, and emotional categories. In a modern society that continues to disconnect from humanness, nature, and the sense of body, I am grateful for an outlet that mends the connections between body, humanity, and nature. Society needs the ultra.

I look forward to spreading the gospel of ultras and participating in the future.

Matthew Day