

Dr. Horton,

Thank you for hosting such a fun and well-organized race. The longest run I ever did before Saturday was 24 miles, and I tend to get lost a lot, so I would never have signed up for Holiday Lake if Anne Jones hadn't talked me into it. Come to think of it, she talked me into that 24 mile run, too...but anyway, my friend Sharon and I like running the trails on Brush and Gap mountains, and Holiday Lake is flatter, so how hard could it be? Being overconfident goes along with getting lost a lot, wouldn't you agree?

I like getting up early, and the weather was perfect, 24 degrees and clear, and I even brought a flashlight for the start. It was so pretty seeing the twinkling lights from the pack of runners going up the hill. I suppose it's not good trail etiquette, but I tried to pass some people when we got on the Lakeshore trail because at that pace, it would take all day to finish. It thinned out some by the time we got to the first aid station, and our crew Lynne and Magda yelled, "Hi, Kim!" but when I saw it had already been 37 minutes, I didn't stop, and tried to pick up the pace a little. The other runners were all so nice, and some of them had interesting costumes. Most of them had less gear and lighter clothing, and I worried that I had misjudged that. I carried 50 ounces of water, shot blocks, electrolytes, and chocolate almonds in a backpack, and I wore tights, a jacket, a headband and two pairs of gloves. (This may have been some post-traumatic stress from getting stuck in the snow on White Rocks Road last December.)

At seven miles we crossed Holiday Creek.

We had been there on Friday because someone said there was a bridge, but all we saw was a log that would have taken too long to cross. Magda threw some rocks in, but by the time I got there on Saturday, they were iced over and my feet got soaked. I was wearing the wool socks Anne gave me, so that wasn't bad. When I got to the second aid station at 8 miles, I hadn't made up much time, so I skipped that one, too. It was light by then, and very pretty in the woods, and I passed a few people, and a few people passed me, but with 25 miles to go, I didn't hurry. My goal time was six hours, which was ten minute pace plus thirty minutes of rest, but since everything was downhill on the first loop, I knew I wouldn't be making up time on the second loop, and I skipped aid station 3 also. For a few miles, I ran with a guy named Kevin who was running his tenth Holiday, and I gather that for ultrarunners, Holiday is a cake walk, but I also gathered that trail runners as a group are kind, decent, hard working people.

We got on the Lakeshore trail again as we approached the turnaround, and I thought I might fall off the narrow trail into the lake trying to avoid the fast runners coming back the other way. I counted the first 20 or so men, and then started counting the women, and I was in tenth place at the turnaround! I didn't stop at that one, either, but it didn't take long for Kim to pass me, and then two more young women glided by. I was still feeling fine, but I didn't want to spend the next 16 miles stressed out about what place I was in, so I let them go. I walked up a few hills, though none of them were as steep as what we are used to here in Blacksburg, and ate some more chocolate almonds. I skipped aid station 3 again, and another woman passed me, and she looked so strong and so fresh that I knew I'd never catch her. I heard someone following me for about a mile, and when he passed me, he said my pace was good, so I followed him for the rest of the race, which was a Godsend. I think he might have even waited for me a few times when I stopped to walk. He stopped at aid station 2 and I skipped it, but it didn't take him long to catch back up. Then we got to the creek, and it felt so good to run through the icy water! At that point I'd run farther than I ever had in my life, and seven miles to go didn't seem too bad. I skipped the last aid station because I just wanted to be done, and a woman in pink passed us and said, "We'll be done in less than 30 minutes!" When we got

back out to the road, one of the volunteers yelled, "Just an easy downhill sprint, and you're done!" That was the slowest sprint of my life. Still, I finished in 5:22, way better than my goal time, and I wasn't even sore the next day. Sometimes it's better to be a turtle than a hare.

All in all, it was a great experience. Thanks so much!  
Kimberley Homer  
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