

Holiday Lake 50K++ 2012

or

"See that big lake over there? Let's run around it... twice!"

By Steve Hinzman

February 2010 was my last and at that time only foray to Holliday Lake for the annual ultra-marathon and that experience was less than satisfying to say the least. Many of you will remember that as the snow and ice year and while some were unhindered by the conditions I was most definitely hindered by them.

After Hellgate 2010 followed closely by a very frozen Frozen Sasquatch 50K in January 2011 and then decided to give myself a break. "Just a couple of weeks" I told myself and before I knew it 2 weeks had turned into an entire spring/summer of leisure. Ah those were the days. The trouble with leisure, in my case, is that it leads to my clothes no longer fitting and an overwhelming desire to leave my shirt on at the beach. September rolled around and I decided enough was enough and I had to get started so in October I went for a run. UGH! I couldn't believe I had become so out of shape. Then fate stepped in and at a family get together several of us issued challenges to each other to run another Frozen Sasquatch in January and I had something to aim for. Mind you we were only going to do 25K and at the time I felt that was a reasonable goal. "So" I said to myself, "If you are going to do it then do it! Make a commitment and get to work". So I decided to add HL to my race schedule.

That's basically how I ended up driving from South Hill to Appomattox in the wee hours of the morning last Saturday and boy am I glad I did. Everything leading up to the start was mostly uneventful, no snafus to speak of although I somehow missed the singing of the National Anthem and I regret that but I lined up way at the back with no real goal in mind other than to just relax and finish.

Start to AS1

Well as soon as someone said "Go" I forgot all about relaxing and took off (for me). The run up the hill and the traffic jam at the stairs flew by and before I knew it I could hear the whoops and hollers at the first aid station. I knew I was pushing too hard and there was no way I could keep up the pace but I was just flat unable to slow down. The only issue in this section was a rolled ankle that bothered me more mentally than physically and soon it was a non-starter.

AS1 to AS2

Mostly uneventful. I was still keeping a pace higher than I wanted but I felt really good. That feeling would go away later. The creek crossing was fun but to avoid falling in the creek I was really watching my foot placement so the picture that was taken there will be poor at best. Oh well.

AS2 to AS3

I spent most of this section just running. I chatted briefly with a few folks and spent a lot of time planning the second loop and trying to guess my time into the halfway point. This section passed very quickly and I really love that little downhill into AS3. I don't really love it all that much on the way back though.

AS3 to AS4 Halfway

Maybe a quarter mile out of AS3 I heard someone ahead of me yell "Runner Up" and I looked up the hill to see Kalib Wilkinson (sub 2:20 finisher at Boston last year) flying down the hill. His feet didn't even seem to be touching the ground. I don't think we've heard the last of him! What a talent. A few minutes later I caught up with Marianna and she was maintaining a really good steady pace that felt great so I thought I would pace off of her for a while. I hope she's not too upset with me because I dogged her steps all the way to AS4! One of the things I really like about HL is the course layout. Running the first lap clockwise and then retracing your steps on the second lap allows one the opportunity to see the faster runners as you're coming into AS4 and the slower ones coming out.

AS4 to AS5

At AS4 my lovely wife Gwen was waiting for me and my thoughts were to get a drink, change to a dry bandanna, give her my sunglasses (as they were unnecessary) and get out as quickly as possible. Well I got a drink but that was about it. What makes me go brain dead when I reach an aid station? Rhetorical question please don't answer. Anyway I remembered all the stuff I didn't do as soon as I got 150 yards up the trail. C'est La Vie. I met Sheryl very shortly after leaving 4 and thought to myself "Well I'll see her again shortly" She was looking strong and I knew she was a better runner than me...

AS5 to AS6

I walked the climb out of 6 (truth be told I was walking most of the climbs by then) and tried to re-hydrate and get some food in me but my stomach was uncooperative. I never lost it but it was close here. That seemed to pass quickly and I started jogging again at the top of the hill. I could feel my body starting to rebel at this point so I decided to go into step counting mode. I would walk 100 steps and then try to run a minimum of 440 steps. I find that by concentrating on the counting my mind is distracted from the aches and pains I'm feeling.

AS6 to AS7

All I really remember about this section is the fact that I was walking more than I wanted to. I kept telling myself that I was saving something to the last section but there wasn't really anything to save. I kept seeing the same runners over and over. We all seemed to be in the same predicament. I'd pass them then I'd slow and they'd pass me.

AS7 to Finish

I fueled up best I could at the last aid station, filled an empty water bottle and headed out. This section is very runnable with great footing and I tried to run it, I really did. I did better than I thought I would. I was able to put together some relatively long runs followed by short recovery walks but I was out of salt and I could feel the cramps coming. Shortly after passing through the open area where the shelter is I heard someone behind me shout "C'mon let's get this thing done" and I turned to see Sheryl motor on by me. I knew she'd catch me when I saw her at halfway so I wasn't surprised. She did give me a little motivation though and I picked up the pace and before I knew it I was reading "1 mile to go" on the ground. I decided to "run" the last mile no matter what and was able to do so although the last bit on the pavement hurt a lot. I came into sight of the finish and heard Gwen and several others shouting and I tried to pick up the pace and keep my head up and crossed the finish line at 6:13:03.

Post r un

All I could think of was a shower and something to eat. I was honestly spent. I know 6:13 isn't fast but it was an event and distance PR for me and was 17 minutes faster than my goal so I was pleased. I need to get better at pacing. I say this after every race but it's true. I need to get in control of the adrenaline at the start and work on saving enough so that I can get some negative splits. It's frustrating to feel so bad at the finish!

Tons of thanks go to my wife Gwen. Those of us who run know and some of us will admit that ultra running is a sort of selfish indulgence. While I'm out for four hours enjoying the countryside on a long run Gwen is back home doing laundry, paying bills, cleaning house, cooking and just generally keeping us headed in the right direction. I couldn't do this without her! Also thank you to Dr. Horton, his wife Nancy, Clark Zealand and his family, all the volunteers and well wishers that make this sport so enjoyable!

ON TO TERRAPIN!!!