

2012 Holiday Lake 50K++: The BIG YEAR: 17th Year

By David Horton, Race Director

What is the ++ for? Holiday Lake 50K (HL) is a two-loop course, with the second loop being run in the opposite direction of the first loop. The course used to be close to 34 miles. But the best that I can tell now is that each loop is just over 16 miles making the course a little over one mile too long. Not so bad! HL is also the first race in the Lynchburg Ultra Series and Beast Series.

HL is known as a good course for first-time ultrarunners. Aid stations are about 4 miles apart, the course is relatively flat (just over 2,000 feet of elevation gain), it is not very technical, the course is well marked, and there is lodging for the race at the start/finish. Because of that (and the lovable race director), there were over 40 runners competing in their first ultra.

We had 361 starters this year with 346 finishers. As far as I know, this is the largest ultra ever held in Virginia. Because of the narrow trails and lodging, we plan to keep the field at 400 runners in the future. With the growth of ultrarunning, that means that not every one that wants to run HL in the future will be allowed to run . . . the price of progress, I guess.

I expected a new course record to be set in the men's field this year. Matt Woods (Falls Church VA), the course record holder set last year, was back to win and make it 3 victories in a row at HL. Local runner, Kalib Wilkinson, challenged Woods last year, leading through the last aid station and then DYING in the last 4 miles due to low blood glucose. That was Wilkinson's first ultra as well. After having run a few ultras in the last year, it was expected that he would run better. Shaun Pope (Akron, OH), was also expected to give chase.

In the women's field, Ragan Petrie (Arlington, VA) had been running great in ultras in the last two years. Leah Daugherty (Virginia Beach, VA) had recently run a 4:03 50K. Bethany Patterson (Richmond, VA) was a previous winner and was rounding back into her pre-baby shape.

Through aid station 3 (12.1 miles), a group of 4 runners had pulled away. Wilkinson checked in at 7:46 with Nick Gramsky (Vienna, VA) one minute back, and Woods and Pope another two minutes back. By the end of the first loop, Wilkinson had pulled away to a 3-minute lead on Gramsky and a 6-minute lead over Woods and Pope.

Wilkinson continued to pull away through the last aid station and it looked like the only question was . . . is he going to break Woods course record? When I saw him slightly before the last aid station, he looked strong and it appeared he was headed for a new course record. However, he said that between the last aid station and the finish, he got dizzy and weak again, my guess, low blood sugar. Wilkinson crossed the finish line for the victory in 3:33:00, missing Woods course record by just over 4 minutes.

Woods took 2nd in 3:47 and Pope was 3rd in 3:49:34. Doug Fernandez (Richmond, VA), age 51, took 4th in 3:57:38. Running the best race of his life, local runner Jason Captain finished 5th in 3:57:55. Patrick McGlade (Fairfax, VA) took 6th place in 3:59:09. Six runners in 4 hours is a lot of very fast runners running very good times.

John Price (Virginia Beach, VA) was given number 17. Price finished HL this year for the 17th time in 17 tries, the only person to have done that. Price also ran across the U.S. last year. The 6th place finisher, McGlade ran across the U.S. two years ago. I also ran across the U.S. in 1995. There are only about 250 men ever to run across America with 3 of them at HL.

Martha Nelson (Washington, DC) took the women's lead right away and checked into aid station 3 (12.1 miles) at 8:00 a.m. Daugherty checked in 4 minutes later with Patterson another minute behind her and Stephanie Manny (Virginia Beach, VA) one more minute back.

The position of all the ladies stayed the same through the last aid station with Nelson's lead actually increasing to 7 minutes. However, Nelson starting some projectile vomiting with her pace slowing dramatically at this point.

Daugherty took advantage and seized the lead and the victory crossing the finish line in a new course record of 4:23:52. Patterson also passed the fading Nelson, taking 2nd place with a new PR on the course finishing in 4:28:17. Nelson crossed the finish line 10 seconds later. Eight more ladies finished before the 5 hour time. Eleven ladies under 5 hours is amazing!

The masters titles went to Chris Calfee (Moseley, VA) in 4:35:18 and Riva Johnson (Carlisle, PA) in 4:35:25. How close is that? The grand masters went to Fernandez in 3:57:38 and Marty Lindemann (Manassas, VA) in 5:51:57. The super masters titles went to Dana Beyeler (Russell, PA) and Debbie Trainer (Richmond, VA) in 4:43:06 and 6:02:22 respectively.

Bethany Patterson and David Snipes (Midlothian, VA) completed the HL race for the 10th time and received a special embroidered golf shirt for circling Holiday Lake 20 times, 10 finishes.

Best Blood was awarded to Andrew Charron. Andrew was running in his first ultra and slipped on one of the bridges beside the lake. He had to get 17 stitches to sew up a gash on his leg that was 8-inches long and deep enough to see the bone. Ragan Petrie tried (NOT) to get this award with her fall before the last aid station, breaking three ribs . . . sorry no blood Ragan!

HL 2012 was a special event for lots of folks. As the founder and director, I really enjoyed the event as well. If you don't believe me, go to extremeultrarunning.com and read all the stories from the first timers and others.