

Holiday Lake 50k++ 2012 Race Report

When I lived in Europe, I came in to the habit of referring to a vacation or fun time as a "Holiday". So any race called Holiday Lake sounded right up my alley. I had wanted to run this race last year, but due to work commitments I had to skip it.

Several of my "Team Gaylord" friends had signed up too, so we made a road trip of it by carpooling down. Three beautiful girls and me being the only guy sounded really good to me! We swung in on Friday to pick up our bibs and then we headed right back out to Lynchburg to eat at Waterstone Pizza. 4 great beers, a Thai chopped salad, and a Spicy Shrimp pasta later; and we were off to the hotel to crash.

Morning came early as a 4:45 departure was in order. We arrived and I immediately got to the restroom for a #2 before the race. Downed a GU, Caz Bar and Ensure so that I had a good base calorie layer at the start. I had decided to run with my VHTRC long sleeve, an Orange Vest, and running shorts (I've found that unless it's below 25, shorts are the way to go). I checked in and dropped my bag at the start, then gathered with the other 370 or so runners. I soon started to reconsider my clothing options as I was a bit chilly and starting to shiver. "We better start running soon," I remarked to one of the girls. The traditional singing of the national anthem and then we were ready for the fun to begin. Slow start as everyone is bunched together and a little hill on pavement up to the trail made me well aware that I was going to have to stop and go #2 again. I was running next to Denise, but as we got off the road onto the trail, things bottled up and soon I found myself behind a lot of people that aren't used to running in the dark or on trails. But I was desperate to find a good spot to head off and take care of business. At 1 mile, I slipped off the trail and found a place to squat, while everyone (and I mean everyone) passed by me. With my orange vest, I was hard to miss and Toni yelled out a, "Is that WHTom over there?" to which I let out a "Whoop! Whoop!"

Back on the trail, I felt SO much better and quickly caught up with the back of the pack. The unfortunate thing about having my standard beginning of the race dump, it puts me behind EVERYONE in the race. So now I was stuck behind countless "New"/"First race"/Slower ultra runners. God bless them and I love that they are all out there, but it provides for some real tricky passing and maneuvering on my part. I even got a, "Show Off!!!" from someone as I flew by them and down a steep little down hill single track. I felt good as I passed by Toni and then Sara, where we chatted quickly before I sprinted off.

My goal was to soon catch Denise, but I was trying to conserve my energy. I felt good enough to blaze 8:00/mi, but I didn't want to blow up later on. I blazed thru the first aid station without even stopping and soon saw Denise up ahead. I caught up to her at around 4.75 miles and told her that she was running too fast! It had taken forever for me to catch up with her!

I was having a blast, feet were feeling great and I was really happy with my clothing choice. I hit the creek crossing that came up to your knees at 6.75 miles and thought, "I can't wait to hit that on the way back, it's going to wake up my legs and give me a kick into the finish!"

At Aid #2, I grab more water and was happy to find Clif Shots and plenty of food to eat. Then as I started to head out, it hit me again. Off to the brush so that I could do numero 3, #2! Back on the trail, I felt good and kept my good pace going. I ran into the race leaders heading back and gave them each a cheer. I came into Aid #3, grab more water and headed right out.

This had to be my favorite section of the race, both going into the turnaround and heading back to the Finish. Fun ups and downs, the only tough climbs of the course, nice single track, stairs, and pretty views of the lake. Not more than 1 mile in and I came upon a guy on his return trip that was puking. On I went and saw several of my friends and other VHTRC runners enjoying the race and looking strong. I zipped into the turnaround, found my bag and ate! 1 Ensure, 1 Fruit puree, 1 chocolate coconut water, and plus some Pringles, a banana and a few boiled potatoes. Then off I went!

I saw Denise right away and then Sara and Toni shortly after. But I soon began

to think that eating that much stuff at the Aid was a mistake. I was feeling pretty uncomfortable and I soon thought back to that Puking guy earlier. Was that going to be me?

I wasn't feeling it by Aid #5, but I filled my water bottle, downed a GU and pushed on. I never really stopped and walked or felt sorry for myself as I had done in other races, but I was stuck in a low gear. I'd find energy here and there for a short time, only to be playing yo-yo with a few other runners around me. I was daydreaming and couldn't wait for that creek crossing.

I only grab a few things at Aid #6 and headed out, knowing that the creek crossing was only about 1.5-2 miles out. Even just the thought of that, picked my pace and spirits up. And it was ON, once I hit that creek! I could feel the cold water sting a bit as I hit it and then that rush of warmth to my legs as my body and brain tried to figure out what was going on. I was cruising!

I flew past at least a dozen or more runners! My pace dropped down to 9:00 miles in miles 26, 27, 28, and 29... slowed a bit for some up and down terrain in 30, 31... Then I ran an 8:00 the last mile of the race!

I could hear Dr. Horton's loud boisterous voice yelling encouragement as I ran into the finish. And I always look forward to that hearty handshake and twinkle of delight in his eye, that lets you know how proud and happy he is that you came out to run his race.

I collected my finishers shirt and went over to the car so that I could have my "recovery drink" and have ones ready for the girls when they got in. I can't wait until next year when I can take another Holiday!

James Ingrassia