

I was invited to a training run at Holiday Lake by Debbie G. on January 15. Afterwards I asked myself "Could I turn around and do that again and maybe not fall?" and I thought "yes!"

Still, I went home and backburned the thought. That next Monday January 23rd I put the check in the mail and told myself that if the flag was still on the mailbox when I got home from work, I would pull the application. Well- the mail came early, and the next day came that first 50k email. What happened to snail mail???

The next weekend I went for a run again trailing behind Debbie G., and while I didn't fall this time, I did get lost. I'm not sure how a Pre-K Teacher can confuse a red rectangle with an orange diamond, but I did. By the time I caught up with my ride (God Bless her), I had maybe done 19 or 20 miles, and decided to call that my long run. My brain was tired and I was also questioning my sanity.

When it comes to running I am by far slow, steady and stubborn at best, but I needed a new challenge and at this particular moment, an ultra fit the bill. So essentially, I decided to do this run on a crazy whim. I have done enough marathons to know and respect the greater distance, yet the idea of 7 more miles really played with my head those last few days. I told myself it would be OK. I knew if I didn't do it now I would never do one at all.

On race morning I was pretty impressed with myself simply because I got to the start on time. I had 3 goals: leave the house by 4:45, start at the back of the pack, and finish standing up. Anything else would be a bonus. After several falls and many miles alone with just myself and my IPOD, I started to tell myself there was no shame in dropping out. I actually started to be OK with the thought of doing so. When the short blustery snow blew in for 5 or 6 minutes I started to embrace the thought.

The girls that were pulling up the streamers behind me as I came towards the 5th aid station were very patient and supportive. I offered to stop when it snowed a bit, and at the last aid station when I knew that sub 8 finishers t-shirt was gone for sure. But then they reminded me that it wasn't about the shirt, but the reaching the finish. One of them said "you have to finish your first ultra, it's only 4 miles! It's your race."

My old jock ego told me I could muddle through a few more miles, but common sense kept saying "what r thinking?". Yet, I kept going. I told them to go ahead of me, that I would find my way back. This was between me and myself now. I knew where my car was parked. It was all good!

I am so glad common sense did not prevail, and that foolish ego of mine wouldn't let me stop. When I was finally coming down the last 300 yards, the photographer was pulling away in his van. He rolled down his window and asked if I wanted a picture at the finish line and then he kindly turned around and got back there in time to take it. So, two falls and over 8 hours later I can wear my orange shirt with pride, and I'll even have it in print!

Like I tell my pre-k students everyday, not everyone gets to be the line leader. Someone has to be the caboose. I'll take that...this year!

Ava Rupert