



Holiday Lake 50K++ (LUS Series #1) 09 Feb 2013 @ 6:30 am

Race Director: Dr. David Horton, Liberty University

Weather: Clear skies, light winds and 23 degrees at the start and mid 40s at the finish

Location: Appomattox and Buckingham State Forest, Appomattox, VA

Race Report: Donnie Chapman, Clarksville, Maryland – Bib# 36

Results: Gun Time 4hrs – 43mins – 54 secs.

Course 32+ Miles on Garmin 205

40th overall out of 328 finishers with 335 starting

1st 50-59 Male out of 47 finishers

I mailed in my HL50K registration shortly after Dr. Horton's race opened up. I plan on running the LUS series this year and to concentrate on ultra-marathons in 2013. The \$75 cost is reasonable per runner since it included the pre-race dinner and a nice Patagonia finisher's shirt.

I drove down on Friday afternoon and made it to the dinner on time to pick up my number and the very nicely designed entrant's cotton tee shirt. I was greeted by fellow Marylander Kevin Green, whom I last saw at the Stone Mill 50 Miler in Maryland in November.

Dinner and packet pick-up were in the 4-H Center in the state park. I sat down and met some very nice people from Virginia. Some were first time ultra-runners and some were long time experienced runners. After eating a selection of pastas, it was time for Dr. Horton to entertain us.

Dr. Horton never lets up on his interns and tonight was no exception with "Airhead" and "Chicken Boy" getting picked on the most. Dr. Horton discussed his heart surgery that took place 9 weeks ago and he looked and sounded terrific. He wore a white cotton shirt with a line down the chest that represented his scar from the heart surgery. Pre-race information was given haphazardly as he would stop to pick on someone or go off-topic very quickly. All of it is highly entertaining and I could sit and listen to him all night long.



When no one had questions about the race, most experienced runners left to either camp, stay in one of the cabins or head to more cushy confines. Dr. Horton was giving a talk to those running their first ultra. I decided to head out and get my running clothes together with the number positioned on my left side of my shorts as we were instructed to do.

I wanted to sleep until 4:45am but I awoke prior to 4am. After I lay awake for 20 minutes I heard other runners scurrying about so I decided to get dressed and head to the 4-H center to check in. I saw first time ultra-runner Brian Robinson from Appomattox, whom I sat with at dinner the night before, getting prepared for the day's run. I made my way towards the door and saw Steve Dobson from the Frederick (Maryland) Steeplechasers. We have run a number of the same races the last few years and I try and stay with Steve but he usually is stronger at the end and finishes ahead of me.

Ten minutes prior to the race start Steve and I headed outside to line up. I wanted to get up towards the top 50, but I think we were mid-pack of the 335 runners that started. After singing the National Anthem as a group, Dr. Horton starts the race right on time.

I decided in the morning that due to just a slight wind, I could go with shorts and a single long sleeve shirt, gloves and a baseball style running hat. I was really nervous when I saw most runners with 2 to 3 layers on. After taking 10 seconds to get to the start line we ran up the paved road for over a half mile before entering the woods. I was able to warm up quickly by getting around some runners off to a slower start. Once I got to the woods I ran very gingerly as I went without a head lamp and had a very inefficient hand-held flashlight that was basically useless. With just over two miles into the race there was enough civil twilight to see with the naked eye and it helped me relax on the rolling single track.

The first 4 miles I held steady on single track content to lie back as daylight expanded. As I approached the first aid station, my plan was to drink water most of the day and skip food unless I felt hungry. After chugging two small cups of water, I forged ahead on fire roads.

Somewhere prior to mile seven we passed through a wide stream that I decided was easier just to blast through. The water was quite cold, but after a ¼ mile I had regained my full stride. The course overall turned out to be harder than I expected. It changed every few miles between fire roads and single track. As soon as I tired of the fire roads, I would be right back on single track. The course seemed liked it was always going up or down and seemed tougher than the 2000 feet vertical elevation change in this 50K.

After the second water stop runners began to spread out and there were few runners within my sight lines. I met Brian from Richmond, who was running well. I bid him farewell as he forged ahead of me around mile 10.

Each aid station had very friendly helpers, and I kept up my diet of water. By aid Station # 3 I added a small cup of ginger-ale to my hydration. I am not sure even what food was available since I was content to skip eating. My stops were all under 1 minute in my estimate.

During the last 4 mile section into the start / halfway / finish line, I spot 1st place # 13 runner with no one behind him on his 2nd loop. When I pass by Keith Levasseur in 2nd place, I believe he and others very close by may have been behind by 10 minutes or more.

The last 3 miles are single track along Holiday Lake and quite beautiful. It was also great because I would pass by every runner on the course. The second 16 mile loop was in reverse, so each runner saw each other on the course.

I was in a large group as we approached the turn-around, but I was content to stay in single file and not risk trying to pass as lead runners were coming at us. I ended up leaving the mildly chaotic halfway point with Brian from Richmond and again I was content to stay behind him as he tiptoed along the single track against hundreds of runners. With a mile prior to the first return aid station I pressed the pace and started passing a few runners.

Miles 16 to 28 were mostly ebbing and flowing with runners I had seen throughout the day. There were several top woman finishers around me as we all pressed for home. With 4 miles to go I was completely alone but I went by a few struggling men runners. At mile 29 I almost took a wrong turn over a bridge and I completely stopped, undecided on a direction. After swearing for 30 seconds I decided to go straight and finally spotted a woman behind me so I guessed we were heading into the last stretch.

With 1 mile to go I spotted the line on the wide path. I initially thought it was a turn right arrow, but I realized we headed up hill to exit the woods. Finally the road appeared and I took the steps because the short steep hill looked muddy. The steps felt painfully slow because with one mile to go I realize not only can I break the 5 hour mark for the first time, but I now have a shot at 4:45. As soon as I hit the road I picked my pace up past my heart's comfortable level, but I wanted a 4:45. As I came down the road there were a few small groups of people cheering and after one last steep section, I hear Dr. Horton call out # 36 – Donnie Chapman. He says that I have an excellent time and shakes my hand. I am barely able to say thank you as I catch my close-to-hyperventilating breath.

After catching my breath, I went back to pick up my awesome bright orange Patagonia finisher's shirt. I looked for Keith Levasseur, but I didn't see him. I stumbled to my car to grab an adult beverage and put my finisher's shirt on.

I headed back to the finish line with the temperatures in the upper 40s and a nice sunny blue sky. The state park setting and great weather made for a party atmosphere at the finish line. Keith spotted me to tell me about his 5th place finish. Soon he went back to find Grace Tran and cheer her to the finish. We watched Dr. Horton give Grace a great big hug and we all hung out and shared our stories. I also met lots of other runners at the finish line including Gray Weaver from Arlington and Kaylyn Peck from Lutherville, whose father I have met during several Maryland ultras.



I wish to thank you, Dr. Horton, for a well-designed ultra-course. Thank you to all the on-course volunteers, those that worked at the 4-H center and all the Liberty University students that volunteered to make the pre-race, race, and post-race a great experience.

Per the finishers list sent by Dr. Horton, I believe I was first place in the 50-59 year old age group, which I didn't think I had a shot at with so many quality runners in the field. This was my first time going under 5 hours in a 50K. Thank you to the wonderful community of ultra-runners and my many great running friends in Maryland that have pushed me to another level.

