

Friday night, headed to the dinner with Zach and Lindsay. Delicious lasagna, spaghetti, and cheesy bread got me all primed and ready for what would come the next day. “The King” got up on his throne to give his usual schpeel to include taunting, encouraging, challenging, and prize-giving. Another race, another night of no door prizes... I was exhausted by the time we left so when I got home a little after 9, I was ready to crash. Unfortunately, my roommate has a very obnoxious half lab/half husky that just gets extreme amounts of joy from barking. From the moment I walked in the door until the moment my eyes finally closed, that dog was whining. But I digress. Uneasy sleep with a few awakenings throughout the night.

4 am came way too early, but I got up, fixed a nice big bowl of oatmeal and a cup of coffee, checked and double-checked my stuff (I had packed everything the night before) and headed to Zach’s. Slept most of the ride and got to Holiday Lake 4-H Club at about 5:40. Moved inside, savored the warmth, and got all the last minute things together. Relieved myself after a long line, just in time for a beautiful National Anthem, a prayer, and finally the cheers of 350+ runners heading into the night to suffer the glorious experience of running 50 (or more!) Kilometers.

The race started out great. A little cold but the sun would eventually fix that. I had my 1.5 liter Nathan race vest filled with electrolyte tablets, some gu’s, cliff shots, and sport beans... and toilet paper!! Ran with Jordan Whitlock and Holly Bugin for most of the first half, with some leap-frogging. The first 4 ticked by, the second 4 ticked by, and finally to AS 3 at ~12 miles. I was still feeling strong, though I bumped my watch during a pit stop so I was running free! Got to the turnaround in about 2:06 (about the same time as last year). I dropped my pack here after getting some nutrition out; I guess the tube froze so I could not get any liquid out of my pack. I was carrying dead weight. From this point on my system was: chug a cup of gu, grab some bugles and pb&j, and eat that while I drank a cup of water. The plan worked fantastic!

As was expected, I slowed quite a bit on the second loop, leap-frogging with Holly throughout, but maintained a decent pace and passed as many people as passed me. When I reached the AS with 8 miles to go, I was greeted by the news that I was the first LU student! Things went well until I got back on the Single-track by the road with ~6 miles to go. I knew this part would mess with my mind so I just had to keep telling myself to keep shuffling; no matter how slow, don’t walk! Finally reached the last AS and knew I was almost home. Downed my last gu as we went through the picnic area, and just tried to keep chugging, keep chugging.

“1 Mile To Go” spray painted in red on the ground is one of the best things I’ve ever read. I knew just a slight uphill, a tad more single-track, and then the road awaited me. I ran faster; when I saw cars I ran faster; when I saw the finish line I was sprinting. I could see “4:23:...” and knew I would be getting a PR today! Finished in around 4:24:30, was reminded that I beat Dr. Horton’s seeding (20th, and I finished 15th), and awaited my “Fastest LU Student” fleece blanket! Many nights will be spent wrapped in this beauty! Zach finished shortly after, and then I jumped in the shower, drank all of my bladder pack (wasn’t frozen anymore), and got a few morsels from the potluck. Lindsay came in about an hour after me, and then after sunbathing for quite some time, and talking to some of the friends I have made in this amazing community, it was time to head home.

While this race is entirely different from the rest of Horton’s Ultras, it is fun and challenging in its own way. There are not many excuses to walk due to terrain so it really wears you down. It truly is an Ultra RUN. Though I am a little dismayed I will not be able to complete the LUS or Beast Series this year, I savor every time I get to spend a day on the trails. The friends, the challenges, and the food! All make it worth it in the end. The same thing happens every race: I start asking myself “why am I doing this?!!”, and then at the finish I get the blues that it is over. Such is the life, and I suppose it always will be.

My many thanks to the Holiday Lake staff, the awesome AS and other volunteers, and Dr. Horton for the amazing races he puts together. I will see you at the Promise Land!!

Dylan Perry