

Promise Land 2011 Race Report

Mike Donahue

This was my 4th Ultra and by far the toughest one to date. I did not set any pre-determined goals only merely to finish which I knew I would do unless I got injured along the way. Looking at where I placed in last year's Holiday Lake 50k (with snow) and the Terrapin Mountain 50k, I figured that I would complete the PL in around 7 1/2 to 8 hours taking into consideration the terrain. Since I never stepped foot on the course before, I knew that I was at a mental disadvantage than most others. Its funny how many runners I talked to the night prior asking for advice on the course and the most common reply to me was "go out as fast as you can". You got to love Ultra runner's sense of humor. I really enjoyed the whole pre-race atmosphere on Friday evening despite the drizzly weather. I don't know what was more memorable though: the incredible amount of food and deserts, Frank jumping bonfires, marriage proposals, or Horton telling everyone that "if you get lost, you're stupid". Nevertheless, the whole evening was filled with laughter and fellowship and, to me, made for an awesome race experience like no other.

I couldn't help to wonder if everyone else felt the same way I did as we progressed towards the Sunset Fields aid station. Being a first-timer on the Promise Land course, the only information that I knew about the route was what I could interpret via emails. Being able to comprehend topographic contour lines, I knew that the "last climb" was going to be a killer but never thought I would continue asking myself along the way "when will this hill end". I knew that I said a few prayers along the way and with the faint sound of cowbells and cheering; perhaps God answered them for me as I slowly approached the Blue Ridge Parkway. There was an incredible amount of emotion that seemed to hit me as I passed through the last aid station. There were a number of thoughts that flashed through my mind at this point such as: "there was only 2 miles left"; "it was all downhill from here"; "I am going to make it"; and "my God, it's almost over"! Despite hitting the wall on the climb to Sunset Fields, I was running surprisingly well. With 1 mile to go, I was at 6:53 and made all effort to cross the finish line in under 7:00:00 which I was unable to do by 32 seconds. Hearing the cheers from the spectators and the other runners made it easier to gut through some of the aches and pains to finish strong....

My recovery went better than I expected. I took advantage of my 6 hour car ride back to Georgia and iced my knees along the way. I ended up jogging 6.5 on the following Monday and running 8.5 two days later so I think that the icing may have helped with a speedy recovery. I hope to see everyone for the MMTR and wish everyone the best of luck with exceeding their physical and mental goals for the year. More importantly, I hope everyone stays injury free.

Keep running and bring a friend along with you! Psalms 144:1

Mike "#82"

