

## A Changing Tide and Aligning Stars

By Carrie Lombardo

Promises. Promise Land 2012 started at the finish line of Promise Land 2011. A misadventure with my partner Reckless Abandon landed me in a painful predicament that led to a goal not met at last year's race... As it goes in trail running. I wanted to go back to PL 50K++ for a few reasons. I wanted a chance at my goal time from last year, I wanted to run that course again because I think it is one of the most beautiful places to run, I wanted to bring anyone who would come that has not been there, and I do love the atmosphere of the Horton/Zealand races. When I completed 2012's race calendar I promised my kids no 100's this year as well as less racing. I did put PL and hopefully I will put Hellgate on this year's calendar, as the only traveling races.

A Changing Tide. With 2012 came a major back off in training because of the above promises, as well as I was seemingly sick all the time. It felt like every time I finally had time to get out for a nice long run I had a stomach bug or a bad cold. The coup was 4 weeks ago, coming down with strep throat, a sinus infection and big bout of laryngitis. This kept me from running and kept me from finishing at Traprock but it did not allow for shirking the duties as mom. "A job that keeps on giving" thank you for that quote Snobody, hahaha. I realized going forward into 2012 was going to be challenging to tailor my training to be passable for running the races I wanted but not taking away from any of the kids events...this is a very very tough challenge. I did not expect the curve balls of recurrent sickness. I made good and bad choices during this time. I am sure I did not rest enough, I am not sure that was possible. I am sure I did not run enough, but that might have been a good decision. And I worried a lot about whether or not to travel to Virginia.

Aligning Stars. As luck might have it Snobody and Soupergirl decided to join Forrest and me on the road to Promise Land. A road trip with lots of great company for me is a good running start. With last minute cold feet I did not make the call to say I wasn't going but instead packed up at 8:30 on Thursday evening as best I could and made an attempt at a good night's sleep. Egh. Some sleep is better than none. At 7am everyone showed up on my doorstep, packed up, got hugs all around from the kids and departed Middletown CT for Bedford VA. The car ride down was long but fun, lots of chatter, Cabela's stop and lunch at Heckeyes, in honor of Ultra ☺. We arrived at 7ish set up camp, checked in and listened to some of Horton's "prerace" talk. Horton's prerace talk doesn't have too much to do with the race. He calls people out, talks about course records and tells us we are not tough enough, but it is all fun. He also raffles off and tosses out some great items. Ultra Aspire waist packs, Dolce and Gabbana sunglasses and dry wick socks were this year's highlights. I also had some time to catch up with some of the women runners I have met along the way, Dorothy who helped me immensely through last year's Beast since she had done it before and Jenny, who witnessed my fall last year. Jenny said "Don't you worry this is the best place for all your stars to align, you'll have a great day tomorrow."

The night before a race sleeping is almost nonexistent, will the alarm go off, I have to pee, that means I have to go out in the cold, btw, it was in the 30's Friday night in VA. You know all that nonsense the night before... It is a blessing when the alarm sounds and you can just get underway. I had just the right amount of time to prepare and stepped up to the start, all 4 of us together, and slogged away from the campground as the race began. It did not take long to pass the 1 mile mark and Forrest took off, I would not see him the rest of the day. Snobody I caught glimpses of through the rest of the long early climbing but when the dark side descent came he was gone! Soupergirl and I maintained a good walking pace up the steep part of the hill and out of the first aid station and onto the single track. The sun came up and it looked as if it would be an ok race day. And so it was, Soupergirl and I descended the dark side, crossed both sections of Cornelius Creek (swore at last year's rock), ran the road, lots of more up, where Soupergirl pulled away on the climb, as the clouds rolled in and the rumbles of thunder started in the distance. By the time we (Souper girl and I, back together) went in and out of

the aid station to climb up Apple Orchard Falls the rain was pelting down, and it hurt, it came in waves of rain and wind accompanied by lightening and thunder, most of us totally unprepared dealt with 3 miles of climbing up the falls with numb swollen clawed hands. Luckily in this element, although very unprepared as I was, I am very motivated. I realize to slow down is ill advised and made a point to try to climb hard enough to stay warm, this was not possible. But I climbed on. The falls were as beautiful as last year despite the weather. I reached the top of the falls, knowing it was mostly downhill to the finish, I took off running. There was nothing to loose at this point, I could only get warmer and if my anything was going to hurt it was going to be over soon anyway. Once I reached the nice single track down hill I had two thoughts, one, run like hell, and two, don't fall because your hands are not going to open and protect you. I came out onto the road just as the thunder clap was loud enough to make you jump out of bed in the middle of the night. The skies let down one more pour to take me almost to the finish line, but I was warm, running fast. I crossed that line happier than I have been in weeks. I had a GREAT day. I accomplished some of my goals. I did not meet my goal time but I did not try. I brought Soupergirl and Snobody to see one of my favorite places and I had fun. Jenny's prediction had been right on.

There were a couple Bimble's out there with me in abstencia. Fearsome, thank you for your pace, I spent most of the day adopting your consistency. Mr. Bimble, thank you for timing, I looked at my watch and every 15 mins I took a drink whether I could stand it or not. I actually got to the point that I could time the 15 mins almost perfectly ☺. And the Bimble who saw me through the day, Thanks Soupergirl , for the chatter and at least visual company all day long, whether a little ahead or a little behind it was nice to know you were right around me!!

So, who's coming along next year?