

Hi Dr. Horton,

Thank you so much for another amazing race. Here's my story from the trails:

Promise Land 50k++ (34 miles) was awesome! Beautiful, I mean truly breathtaking course - but oh my God was it difficult!! I brought my watch into work today so that I could look at all of my mile splits- but I just accidentally deleted the entire data file!! Aarrgghh! Technology, you win this round!

We started at 5:30 in the dark so I needed my head lamp until we hit the first aid station. Like Terrapin, this race started with a 4 mile uphill section followed by three miles of downhill. I started out feeling really strong power walking uphill and mixing running in every couple of minutes. I lost my husband, Justin, after the first mile and slowed my pace a bit so that he could catch up. We weren't planning on running together for the whole race, but I did want to stay together for more than the first mile! Finally, I just waited at the first aid station for him, he was only about 3 minutes behind me at that point.

The next section was mostly downhill and this is where I had my first inkling of trouble ahead. The slight twinge in my right knee that I had noticed after Terrapin flared up. Every time my right foot struck the ground going downhill it sent a sharp spike of pain through my knee. I was walking/hobbling downhill at mile 7 thinking "This isn't going to work, I'm going to have to drop if this keeps up". Luckily, after the next aid station things started to look up - literally we started uphill again and I got back into the swing of a strong uphill power-walk mixed with running.

This is how the rest of the race played out up to Orchard Falls (mi 28-31): Justin and I stayed together for the most part. If the section was mainly uphill I would power ahead, then wait at the aid station for him to catch up (usually no more than 2-3 min). If the section was mainly downhill Justin would fly by and wait for me at the next aid station. Although my knee hurt on every downhill, I noticed that I only had truly debilitating pain on the very steep or very technical down hills during which I was forced to walk. It was during one of these painful, soul-scraping downhill walks that I had an enlightening moment. I was in a lot of pain and considering dropping out when it occurred to me that the only thing to do in a moment like that was to pray. So, I did. I'm not usually very open with my spirituality, but my little one-on-one with God changed the entire race for me, so I feel compelled to share. I started by listing the things I'm thankful for - the opportunity to be in such a beautiful place doing something that I love; a husband who inspires me, challenges me and loves me for everything that I am and everything I will be; an amazing family that loves and supports me; etc. Then, I asked for the strength to finish what I started and to get through the pain and discomfort. Then, I waited for an answer and it came into my mind like a lyric in a song: "my life is your life". My life is His life, so it didn't matter that my knee hurt or that I was afraid I'd have to quit. My life is His life, so I just gave it all up to Him. And BAM - just like someone flipped a light switch - doubt was replaced with confidence, all of the tension around my knee relaxed and the pain subsided, and I got a huge rush of energy and gratitude and joy that lasted for the rest of the race even through the cold and pain.

Around mile 28 we started the monstrous climb up Orchard Falls. Justin and I stayed together for all of this section. It was challenging but, for me, not as hard as the downhill sections. About $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way up we passed the "falls" for which the trail is named - breathtaking! It started pouring as we started the climb and didn't stop until we reached the aid station at top, freezing and exhausted. The last 4.5 miles was all downhill which meant trouble for me. I spent a full two miles literally talking myself through each step like the little engine that could "you can do it, you can do it, you can do it" (out loud, good thing no one was close enough to hear!) The road leveled out a bit for last two miles and I was able to get up to a good running pace. I came full speed through the finish line at 7:57:26 to give Dr. Horton a big cold wet hug (sorry about that Dr. Horton!) and thank him for an amazing race. Justin came through 17 seconds behind me with Dr. Horton yelling "Hey, they're a couple and she just beat him!" followed by "Smart man!". Smart man indeed. ☺

Can't wait to run this one again next year!

Best,
Emily Peake