

Dr. Horton,

Thanks for putting on such a great event. Your attitude from the pre-race dinner to the end of the run was contagious (in a good way!). As I watched Kevin Smith start his Promise Land journey Friday evening I wondered what the course would have in store for me. In a few short hours I found out.

I became interested in Promise Land after a good friend of mine that I run with told me about his Promise Land run some 10 odd years ago. I became intrigued with the idea of an ultra-run, especially through the mountains. So here I am at the starting line, tank top and shorts, temps in the low 40's. I gave my beautiful Wife a kiss, Mom & Dad a hug, listened to the makeshift singing of the National Anthem, your prayer, and was off.

As the masses started up the incline I quickly found I didn't need my 1 dollar handheld light. I continued up this section until about half way, where I found it a good idea to walk. Then, after AS1 we hit the single track and continued up. Eventually, I got to what felt like one of the few downhill sections of the course and started to run this part as fast as possible and passed quite a few runners here. This seemed to be the same cycle up through AS2 as many runners and I played leapfrog. I really enjoyed the short out and back to the AS2 as you can see who is nearby. I remember this next part being a lot of power hiking as it was particularly steep.

Once at the top of the mountain I found a nice groove on this relatively flat section. I spoke with a few runners, one of which I lea- frogged at Seneca Creek Trail marathon 2 months prior, and another who said we should get a time bonus for being over 200 lbs. Coming into AS3 I was pretty stoked to see my Wife and Fam again so I gave them some fist poundage and continued on. This next section was one of my favorite parts of the course, 4ish miles on steep downhill technical trail. I blasted down this part like a mad man and passed many runners here. Also felt good to get the feet wet in 2 stream crossings.

The next 10ish miles or so were pretty uneventful but went by really easily as I was in complete awe over the beauty of the course and the awesome weather. I had 0 nutrition problems or G.I. problems over this next part and then next thing I know, I'm hitting an aid station at which point I was told that the "climb" was coming up.

I remember glancing at my watch at the start to this climb and thinking, damn, I have been running 5 hours 10 min and feel pretty good. This quickly changed about 300 feet into the climb when I felt like the hammer had been struck down on me. I literally wanted to lay down on a rock and cry myself to sleep. It's crazy how nutrition can completely rock you mentally and physically so fast. I told myself to keep moving or I would never get to the top and almost as if by accident, I brushed my pocket and remembered I had grabbed a Cliff Shot Block at the last aid station. Dr. Horton had informed us newbs about these on Friday night and how quickly they can give you energy. He wasn't joking, literally 5 minutes after I ate it I felt like a new man and started muscling up this climb. Once I passed the falls, the rain fall starting coming. Followed by wind, more rain, hard hail, cold, and slowly numbing arms and hands.

What once felt like it would never end, finally did. I reached the top to be greeted by Wife and Fam at which point I pretended to feel great, which in turn, actually did make me feel pretty good. I hit this last aid station and got the AMAZING volunteers to assist me opening another pack of Cliff Shot Blocks. I pounded these blocks, tossed my bottle to my Wife, gave her a kiss, and told her I would meet her at the bottom QUICKLY. I felt great. I blew through this ankle deep mud/water, steep, downhill tech section on a mission. I had to of been hitting 7ish min/mile here and passed 14-15 people from the last aid station to the finish line.

It felt great to finish my first ultra here (6:44). The weather made it that much more epic. I gave Dr. Horton a strong handshake in which he informed me my hands were freezing (very accurate). I could not have asked for a better first experience at an ultra. I definitely look forward to returning next year. A big thanks to Dr. Horton for a spectacular event and the volunteers who made it possible.

Brad Siske