

Promise Land 50k 2013

Lynn “slanted eyes” Thomas

Memories of the 2013 Promise Land 50k are proud but painful. Completing the race I signed up for a month before made for a fun experience.



My nerves were high as I stood at the starting line at 5:29 am on April 27th with a group of 350 runners preparing to run 35 miles that day. It was cold so I couldn't wait to start running so I could warm up! The first 4+ miles were straight up hill and mentally challenging. When I got to the first aid station, I threw off my head lamp, grabbed some water and proceeded onto the rest of the course. I remember thinking: THAT WAS THE START?! How am I supposed to run THIRTY MORE MILES?! The task seemed daunting but I decided to keep moving forward and stay positive.

I kept my pace up for the next part of the course and really enjoyed the rolling hills. I passed quite a few runners at this point in the race and loved seeing the sunrise. The temperature felt perfect and the trail was gorgeous with the sun coming up. I took a gel and reminded myself to enjoy the taste of it. I knew that wouldn't last long. I ran alone for a while, passing and being re-passed by a few runners as the field started to spread out. I reached aid station 2 and grabbed some saltines and prepared myself for the next climb in the race.

I was feeling great and kept up my pace. I was starting to stay with the same people for a while and really enjoyed the company. My friend Amanda and I ran together for a long stretch and we kept a strong pace. Amanda and I are both graduating in May and it was fun exchanging stories through this time.

I was feeling great as I was approaching aid station 3 and really looked forward to seeing my fiancé! There was a photographer on the downhill to aid station 3 and I was all smiles for the camera. When I got to aid station 3, I was feeling strong. I threw off my windbreaker and gave it to Matt my fiancé. He told me I was in the top 20 and that I was doing great. Hearing this made me really excited and motivated me to stay strong. I grabbed some gu, filled my camel back, gave Matt a smile and rushed onto the next part of the course.

The next part was probably the most technical part of the course. I remembered this section well with the previous training runs. I remember my friend Jamie Swyers telling me to “LET GO and LET GOD” with the technical parts so that’s exactly what I kept telling myself. I didn’t fall once! I knew I was approaching 15 miles when I realized that some runners were really starting to suffer around me. Runners were starting to walk more and it became tempting to walk, however, I told myself that this wasn’t allowed and to keep running. I was starting to feel a little pain in my legs but kept myself hydrated so I wouldn’t cramp up. When I arrived at Aid Station 4, I knew I needed some potassium to prevent further pain in my legs. I quickly grabbed some bananas and kept running. As I was running, I looked down and realized I had grabbed 4 bananas. Not wanting to waste bananas, I offered 2 to this guy from Virginia Tech and we ran together for the road section of this course.

After the road section of the course, my legs were really starting to feel the pain. The gels started to taste progressively worse and downing them became more of a chore. I was not looking forward to the next climb but thankfully ran into my friends Bethany, Lane and Amanda and their company really made the miles bearable! We all reached aid station 5 and we all grabbed a popsicle. The cold and sweetness of the popsicle just made life better. I don’t think I’ve ever enjoyed a popsicle that much in my life.

Things got a little vague for me for the next part of the course, the miles started to feel longer but being over the halfway point just made me happy. I ran alone for a few miles but kind of enjoyed the solitude and pushing myself. At Aid station 6, there was a sign on the bridge that said: “Do or do not, there is no try.”-YODA. I didn’t get the saying at first (probably due to fatigue...) but once I got it I realized how extremely profound it was and told myself that no matter what I would finish this race.

After leaving aid station 6, I was motivated to push through apple orchard. My legs were in so much pain but I told myself to stay with the two men in front of me. They kept telling me: good job young lady! I truly enjoyed their company and appreciated their encouragement. After hiking with them for some time, I decided to pick up my pace and caught up with my friend Amanda. Amanda and I finished hiking Apple Orchard together and we were SO excited to FINISH. We pounded out the miles and enjoyed it. We both agreed that we would run the rest of the race and there would be no more walking. We both reached the final aid station together and I think we were both running on adrenaline at this point. I forgot all about the pain in my legs and I was just ready to cross that finish line.

We both took off from aid station 8 like we were on a mission. I couldn’t believe that I was actually going to finish my first ultra! I was beyond thrilled. I tried to keep up with Amanda and my friend Scott Taylor but their long strides kept them

at least 200 yards ahead of me. I saw Scott Taylor's head turn into the area of the finish and I knew that it was go time. I picked my pace up and turned into the finish area. "100 percent, no regrets" is what I kept telling myself. My legs were slow but I was pushing. I crossed the finish line and gave Dr. Horton the biggest high five. He responded with "SLANTED EYES FINISHED!!"

This race was truly a learning experience and I'm so glad to have completed the 2013 Promise Land 50K.