

Newbie at Weymouth Woods 100K Trail Run 2012

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Finisher #51

The first Weymouth Woods 100K Trail Run was open for registration. I wanted to participate but was not healthy enough to enter. In January 2010, I was just 5 weeks out of the hospital after major cancer surgery. As I live only a mile from Weymouth Woods and the doctor want me to “walk some”, I went over and “tried the course” on Friday afternoon before the run. I began walking per doctor’s orders but then soon tired of that, so I tried to slowly run some of it. That was almost a big mistake and barely made the entire 4.47 mile loop.

In January 2011, my wife was very sick with cancer and I could not be away from the house the approximately 20 hours it would take me to complete the run. So, two events and no me out there. It was still on my “bucket list” as they say.

This year, 2012, was “meant to be”. I was hesitant about entering and procrastinated almost too long. I had 69.76 miles at Hinson Lake 24 Hour Ultra Classic in September 2011. Weymouth Woods was going to be almost as long, 4 hours shorter time, and a much tougher trail. This was going to be a tough one for this 67 year old, and when I checked the website for who had registered there were only 3 slots remaining of the 75 limit. I had to register online that day: I pulled the trigger....committed.

What had I just done to myself? After Hinson Lake I knew I was in trouble. I run with the Sandhills Striders running club in Pinehurst (Moore County) NC. I normally run 5K and 10K races. I had run Hinson Lake three times, and ran my first half marathon in November. Not much experience on the ultra trail.

I didn’t do much training: not as much as I should have. I went to Weymouth three times. The most mileage of any of these was 18 miles. That limited amount surely didn’t instill confidence in me to do 62 miles. And besides, my right heel was sore. It could have been plantar faciitis or a bruise.

I had no “plan”. On our return trip from the Frozen Toe 10K in Roanoke VA January 7, a week before Weymouth Woods, Jim Bevers and I made a “schedule” as we were coming down the road at 70-75 mph. The “schedule” had me finishing at 02:40 a.m. I needed a “buffer” just in case I fell behind.

Three fellow Sandhills Striders said they would “crew” me on race day. I would run the first four laps (18 miles) without anyone. Deb Ryan joined me around noon and go with me for two laps (9 miles). She would drop out after that. Annette Barnett and Jim Bevers (also MTC’er) were to crew alternating 2 laps after that until the end....whatever that may be. Annette said her sole goal was see that I “finish this beast”. Jim was on the first shift of two laps. He had never been there and needed to get familiar with the course before dark. Annette had been with me on a couple of training runs and knew the course and its difficult places.

Right now I will tell all that without these three supporters I could not have completed this. This would have been a DNF. It doesn't matter how many times I tell them, they just do not know grateful I am for their dedication to my finishing. I get all the "atta boys" but they are the instruments of my success.

It was cold (for Southern Pines) this morning. I didn't have all the nice running garb most other runners were wearing. I was dressed in layers. I did make a mistake in putting my bib on my top layer sweat shirt. After the first lap it had to come off and I lost some moving my bib to my leg. My fingers, even with gloves, got numb and could feel absolutely nothing. I do not think they actually froze but I wouldn't have known if they had.

The first four laps went well, except for falling twice. Luckily the landings were in fairly smooth places and not in the many roots across the trail in various places. I had removed the sweatshirt and stocking hat. Everything else stayed the same. I was comfortable and moving right along. At the end of four laps I was 5 whole minutes ahead of the "schedule".

Deb joined me at 12:10 and ran her two laps with me. We did well although we did fall a bit behind. She kept me focused on the task. My foot was causing no problems with the help of Tylenol. I didn't have electrolytes with me so Irene Russell (another Sandhills Strider and MTC'er) shared hers. John Robinson (also a Strider, MTC'er and super ultra runner) gave me good advice regarding electrolytes, food, and fluids. Deb and I completed these two laps behind the "schedule" by four minutes and approximately 27 miles.

Jim came on board for laps 7 and 8. I do not remember on which laps I fell but I fell two more times for a total of only four. The only injury was a dime sized strawberry on my right knee. I understand some didn't fare as well. These two laps seemed fairly routine. I could tell I was tiring and Jim had to keep my focus on task. We finished lap 8; I had lost another 11 minutes. Now I was 15 minutes behind the "schedule".

Annette started her first shift, laps 9 and 10, at 5:35 as it was beginning to become dusky. It took us 3:20 to complete these two laps. Annette had to stay on my left side as I started running to the left into the trees and bushes. At times, when the trail actually turned left I would tend to go straight. The batteries started getting weak in my handheld flashlight. I apparently broke something and tried to determine what had happened. After a few minute we had to trash it and move on with only our headlamps. Now we were 40 minutes behind...not good when I only had an hour twenty buffer at the end.

Jim picked up for laps 11 and 12. Annette cautioned him about my pulling to the left syndrome. Jim is a number cruncher and actually got me refocused and got me to force my running a little more. We lost another 10 minutes on lap 11. At that time we had to stop and attend to a "hot spot" on the side of left foot. I had to raise my gaiter, and pants leg; remove my compression sock, tend to the spot and then redress. We lost 14 minutes on this lap. Now we were 64 minutes behind...definitely not good. This was not looking good for a finish. I had been losing too much per lap and at this rate I would DNF.

Annette came back for lap 13 and 14. She tried her best to keep me on course and warn me of the rough spots on the trail. She kept me focused and we actually reclaimed 9 of the lost 64 minutes.

Jim joined Annette and me for the final “victory” lap 14. We can now see the light at the end of the tunnel. This is the final lap. Stay focused, don’t fall down and get hurt, don’t have a heart attack and...run all possible!! We lost 6 minutes this lap but it didn’t matter. We did all 14 laps of this beast....WE WIN!!! It took 19h:41m:21.20s average pace 18:53.

My hat is off to Marie Lewis for putting on such a fabulous event. She had everything in order. The volunteers were super. Marie was there just about every lap to cheer me on. Doug and Jimmy, on Frosty Mountain kept telling me I was doing great which helped a bunch, even though I knew I was struggling. Thanks, guys.

Many thanks to everyone who helped me in the endeavor.

An after note: April 1 is my shirt run and Annette is looking at the April 8 shirt run. MTC is on my “bucket list”, too.