

## **12th Annual Holiday Lake 50K**

*A Year of Growth*

*February 10, 2007*

*By Race Director: David Horton*

The trend around the country is for more and more ultras to have limits on the number of entrants. We have never had a limit on our two spring ultras, HL 50K and Promise Land 50K. From now on we will. The limit for the 2007 Promise Land 50K (April 28) is 300 runners. The limit for the HL 50K in 2008 will be 250 to 300 runners.

This is a good and bad trend in ultra-running. The sport is more popular than ever. However, due to constraints, most trail runs cannot have the huge field that road races have. More and more runners are going to be denied entry into races they desire to run. I was denied entry into this year's Hardrock despite being a 5 time finisher with two of those finishes being wins. Who should be allowed, deserve to run? I don't know.

Last year, we had 195 starters. This year we had 249 starters with many being 1st time ultra-runners. We have four local ultras, HL 50K, Promise Land 50K, MMTR 50 Miler, and Hellgate 100K. The elevation gain for each is 2,000 feet, 7,400 feet, 9,200 feet, and 13,000 feet; an increase for each succeeding ultra, meaning that each one gets a little tougher than the previous one.

Holiday Lake is a good ultra for beginners, but more difficult for faster, more experienced ultra-runners because you have to run more, faster, thus more pain. The Holiday Lake 4-H Educational Center is a GREAT place for an ultra. Everything you need for an ultras: a start, finish, pre and post race meal, parking, showers, and lodging. The start and finish of each loop is a beautiful single track trail next to the lake.

Until last year, we have always marked the course with white streamers. With snow all day long last year, it was a mistake to mark the course with white streamers...in white snow. This year (and in the future) we marked the course with orange streamers and orange paint arrows.

This year there was no snow but VERY cold temperatures, in the low teens. Many runners' backs, hair, and caps were covered with ice making for some weird looking runners. With two stream crossings in each loop, runners had to run through streams that were covered with ice or were full of large ice chunks. Water bottles and camelbacks froze up on many of the runners. Fluids left out too long at the aid stations became slushies.

Pete Breckinridge (Norfolk, VA) had won his ultra debut at the JFK 50 Miler in November of 2006 in a very fast time of 6:04. HL 50K was his second ultra and a chance to show others if JFK was a fluke. Bradley Mongold (Falling Waters, WV) is a very fast ultra-runner who seemed to run like he had something to prove. Byron Powell (Arlington, VA) a fast ultra-runner, was making his debut in a Lynchburg area ultra. Matt Richards was an all American in cross country and track at Lynchburg College who was entered in HL for his first ultra.

Mongold jumped to the front by checking into aid station 1 (3.5 miles) four minutes ahead of everyone. Steven Baker (a noted Hokie ultra-runner from Blacksburg, VA) and Breckinridge were 4 and 5 minutes behind at this point. By aid station 2 (6.3 miles) Breckinridge had narrowed the lead to 1.5 minutes with Powell just over 3 minutes back and Baker and other Hokies with him 4 minutes out of the lead. Breckinridge caught Mongold before aid station 4 (12.1 miles) with both of them checking in at the same time and everyone else 5 minutes or more back.

At the turnaround, Breckinridge had forged a 1 minute lead. His lead increased to 2 minutes at the next aid station, then 3 minutes. Breckinridge was strong from there on in to win his second ultra in his second attempt at an ultra in a time of 3:50:24, exceeded only by Clark Zealand 3:47, and course record holder Andy Herr in a time of 3:40:30. Herr's time looks very, very impressive. Mongold never gave up, taking

second place in a time of 3:55:07, a time that would have won the last 4 HL 50K races. Baker took third, in a time of 4:18:21. Powell took fourth in 4:20:03.

The ladies race figured to be a two person race between Bethany Patterson (Richmond, VA) and Sarah (Space Cadet) Johnston (Danville, VA). Bethany and Space are training partners and Montrail Ultra-running teammates as well. Both wanted badly to win the Mountain Hardwear Phantom Down jacket that the winner was to receive. Space had beaten Bethany at Hellgate but Bethany had beaten Space at the MMTR 50 Miler. Space took a slight lead by aid station 1, but they both checked in to aid station 2 at the same time. By aid station 3, Bethany had taken a 2 minute lead over Space. By the turnaround, Bethany had increased her lead to 4 minutes. At the succeeding aid stations, Bethany's lead grew to 6 minutes, 11 minutes, 13 minutes, 15 minutes, and then 12 minutes at the finish. Bethany won the victory (and jacket) with a time of 4:35:51 a personal record for her, and the fourth fastest time ever at Holiday Lake. Space took second in 4:47:51. In the 2006 HL 50K, Space completed her first ultra in 6:39 for 121st place. Her place in 2007 was 101 positions higher and was over one hour and 51 minutes faster.

There were large groups of runners from Liberty University and Virginia Tech running HL. Michael Stratton has convinced (suckered) many Hokies to try ultra-running. I require my advanced running class to complete an ultra. Several students this year and previous years' students of Liberty University were running HL this year. There were also 10 runners under the age of 20 running the race this year.

The winning Master's runner was Rick Kwiatkowski (Earlsville, VA) running his first ultra. Rick finished 7th overall, as well, in 4:25:15. The winning Master's lady was Lenore Studt (Columbia, MD). Lenore finished in 5:05:25 and was the 3rd female overall. The winning Grand Master's were Jeff Minahan (Lynchburg, VA) and Sally Brooking (Marietta, GA). Their times were 4:54:33 and 5:06:28 respectively. Dave Grider (Greensboro, NC) won the Super Master's title in 6:21:39.

The Best Blood award went to Mike Day (Cary, NC). Mike had a nice gash on the top of his head that was caused by running into a tree. Hey Mike, who is stronger, you or the tree? Mike also had the privilege of running the race with his 14 year old son, Sam. Sam dropped dad and left him 1.5 minutes behind in the last stages of the race. The Fastest Fat Boy award went to Russell Hayward (Hudson, NC).

Mountain Hardwear was our major apparel sponsor this year. Sub 7.5 hour finishers received a Wicked T-Performance shirt. Nathan provided hand held bottles to most 1st time ultra-runners. Breckinridge and Patterson both received a beautiful Mountain Hardwear Phantom Down jacket. Second through tenth place males and second through fifth place females and age group winners also received a certificate for a free pair of Montrail running shoes.

One of the highlights for me occurred just before the start of the race. Jeanne Craig (Goode, VA) was running the race. She sang a beautiful rendition of the national anthem.

For other stories from the runners competing in this years' Holiday Lake 50K, please check out our website [www.extremeultrarunning.com](http://www.extremeultrarunning.com) and click on the Holiday Lake link.