

## **Light at the end of the tunnel 2011**

Why would you want to run this trail marathon? Hello! It is in July, in the mountains/hills of Washington state. The temperatures range from 50-70, most of the time. It is a scenic, nontechnical trail race that goes thru an old railroad tunnel and across numerous trestle bridges as it meanders downhill 2000 feet elevation through forest to the finish. Need any other reasons? Ok. Some of the racers had a black bear meander across the trail in front of them. Seriously, this is an awesome marathon that is a potential PR if you train correctly. The start is at an elevation of 3000 feet in Snoqualmie Pass just 30 miles east of Seattle. The trail is a former narrow gauge lumber rail that has been converted to a biking and hiking/walking/running trail in a state park. It ends 2000 feet lower in North Bend, Wa. Surface is small gravel and dirt. I ran it in performance trainers and would again.

We met at the finish at 5:15 and were bussed to the start, 7am. It was about 50. We had two drop bags. One to leave at start for clothes and one to leave at end of tunnel for flashlight and anything else. The tunnel is 2.3 miles long and pitch black. Was kinda strange running through it but I was behind a group of 5-6 so their lights helped. My goal was to go sub-3:15 and had planned on doing first three around 7:30 to warm up. Ended up at about 7:25 and came out of tunnel feeling good. I ran the next 8 miles with a girl named Michele. Her PR was 3:08 and she wanted to better that. After the tunnel I decided to hang with her as long as I could. After Don Winkley's accomplishment I decided to put it all on the table from the start. We caught a 40 y/o with a pacer at 10 miles trying to BQ. Was feeling good so passed them. Michele dropped off somewhere after that. These were my strongest miles as I did 11-13 in 6:58, 6:56 and 6:59. Then I settled into those mid race miles where you just grind it out. I turned off current pace on the garmin early on as the paces were too scary. From the half to the finish I kept it on average pace and it stayed at 7:10. Many miles of running by yourself. I did see the guys second pacer at the half waiting for him. This guy was serious with two half marathon pacers. I caught two guys at about 18 and another one at 22. There was no one at the water tables every 2-3 miles. It was self serve. I carried a bottle. there were Gu's at 10,13, 16 and 21. I took all and felt they helped. I saw a race marshal at 24 and asked if anyone was behind me and there were two guys. I knew who that was. Then I saw the first pacer waiting ahead and then all kinds of yelling behind me all the way to the finish. That lit a fire under my butt! Ended the race in 3:10:02. The guy behind came in 4 seconds later.

The last hour was warmer than normal. Over 70 and 80 at finish but humidity was low. Training here really helped and I think the temp probably cost 1-2 minutes. I did once weekly downhill workouts on a treadmill set at 1.5% decline. I would run 6-9 miles at around 7:00 min pace. I really feel that is important to prepare your quads and knees for this race. The first 20 miles are 70 ft/mi drop, 1.5%. The last miles are 80 ft/mi drop. Seriously thinking about a return next year for a try at sub- 3:00 if I can get in near that shape. Would love some company!

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