

God's Country Marathon 2010

Andrew Paton

We had to leave here at 1am to drive 4 and a half hours to the finish, take the bus back to the start, pick up our race packets and prep for a 7am start. The God's Country Marathon course begins at the Galeton Area High School at 1300 feet above sea level. So it was under grey skies that the 200 or so of us got going. We ran East on Rt 6 and then turned back at about the 2 mile mark. Always good to see and applaud the leaders.

After touring around beautiful Center Town lake in Galeton runners headed West on Scenic Route 6 entering the majestic Susquehannock State Forest. The hill starts almost immediately. Its just a fact of the first 2 thirds of the race. The hill is relentless but this year the sun hid its scorching face. We kept trying for a 9 minutes per mile pace. After some oscillating we settled into it. You just keep pumping those arms against the discouragement of the hill.

I needed a bathroom and they were 5 miles apart. It was a long haul but I made it. A long pit stop (unfortunately followed) By the time I got back on the road Jim Hrubesh my very in shape fellow runner was out of sight. I set off in hot pursuit but soon encountered the 15 to 17 mile section of the race. This is where the hill is at its steepest and running became a forwards stagger.

Just past the 17 mile mark you wind up and over Denton Hill peaking at 2424 feet above sea level. A few rolling hills after the decline, then it is all down-hill from there into Coudersport the county seat of Potter County. The decline is very steep at times and one has to be careful not to over-run. Some plopping down of the shoes takes place.

There was a young lady runner who passed me on the hill with some of those "encouraging the poor old geezer" words. I closed on her and passed her within a mile of the other side of the hill. By mile 21 she had perked up and she and a second on a bicycle zoomed past me. Pride is a sad quality in elderly runners. At mile 25 I dragged myself past them and held my lead right to the finish. Jim of course was done before me but my goal was to break 4 hours at God's Country. Two previous attempts had failed miserably.

At mile 24 I was delighted to see that I had a chance of a sub four. Some deep digging saw me home with about 3 minutes in the bank. The finish line is at the historic Potter County Courthouse. There's a small gym across from the finish and he offers a hot shower ... what luxury!!! The local hotel offers every finisher a free lunch - we took them up on the offer.

The hardest part of the day was..... staying awake for the midday 4 hour drive home. It was touch and go at times.

Andrew