



May 23, 2009
Raccoon Mountain
CHATTANOOGA, TENNESSEE

The Scenic City Trail Marathon was promoted as fast trail race...“The trails at Raccoon are fast and forgiving, making for a great leisurely race for new trail runners or a full-on speed fest for those in the hunt for the first state record for a trail race.”

This may be true, but if you expected this to be a 26 mile jaunt on a Rail-Trail or a gravel road, you were in for a big surprise. The trails at Raccoon Mountain are real single track trails. The climbs are not long, but by the time you start your second lap of the course you will know that you are in for a battle.

Race day offered sun and pleasant temperatures. Any of you that have done other races in the series know that we have been racing in rain more often than not, so the sunshine was a nice treat. Between the ½ Marathon and the Marathon, over 250 runners had the pleasure of running on the fantastic trails on top of Raccoon Mountain.

The entire field started together, which made the race even more interesting because marathoners were forced to monitor their own pace and avoid getting suckered into an unrealistic pace set by the half-marathoners. The great turnout made the first lap very fun and exciting with lots of company along the way. Once we made the split to head towards the 2nd loop, the familiar loneliness and single-mindedness of the distance trail runner took effect. The venue atop Raccoon Mountain is a perfect setting to enjoy the outdoors and push you to the limits.

There were many highlights of the day from the course - weather, aid stations, swag bag - but it really came down to the hamburgers at the end of the race. Shortly after completing the race, my wife Brenda said she was not sure if her stomach was ready for food. She accepted a burger anyway, knowing that she needed the nourishment. I think it took her about 30 seconds to down the whole thing after the tentative first bite. This seemed to also ease the aches associated with the major digger she took while negotiating one of the steep downhill about 4 miles from the finish. Crossing the finish line covered in sweat, mud and blood, it certainly made for a good photo op. Another reminder that this was not a stroll in the park!

From someone that travels a lot to races like this, one of the great things is that this is a true mountain run that is located within 15 minutes of a major city. Chattanooga has nice hotels, food, tourist activity, etc. so you get a great trail race and are not stuck in the middle of nowhere. This is a must do race, so add it to your calendar for 2010.

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