

All of my pre-race preparation went according to plan. The race started at 9 AM and I live close by, so being able to sleep a little later and have ample time to eat breakfast and fuel properly was nice. This race was my main "A" race. This was the race that inspired me to contact Chris and beginning working with him as my coach. The race is half marathon distance with approximately 2,000 feet of elevation gain. That coupled with the rocky, rooty, and rough terrain make for one heck of a race. I arrived quite a bit early, picked up my bib, and chatted with some other runners who I recognized from other races and such. It's great meeting new people with a similar mindset and interests. With 30 minutes to the start I ate a banana, used the restroom, and completed a mobility routine to get ready. My daughters and wife came see me off at the start which was pretty wonderful. My goals were as follows: Safe- Trust in my fitness. Target- Break race into 4 pieces (Focus, tenacity, gratitude, and curiosity) Lofty- finish under 3 hours. All three goals were met! I have run the course during training since I live close by, so I knew where to turn, I know how the course changed, and I knew where the most challenging sections were. This was very helpful mentally. My plan was to focus on my pace, my stride, and to really be present in the moment from the start to the first aid station. While I went out strong, it did not feel too fast and I felt really good through this section. After the first aid station the focus switched to tenacity. With the climb up North Mountain in this section, it was a good thing to work on. I was moving well and kept a good power hiking pace up the steep sections. I was starting to feel a bit tired in my legs, so I made sure to fuel with gels and tailwind. This helped a lot. From the top of North Mountain to the second aid station was a section I knew I could pick up the pace a bit. This is when fall number one happened! I was cruising on a pretty easy section of trail when my foot caught a root or something. I did a superman into a barrel roll and popped right back up, no harm done. As I approached aid station number 2, my family was alongside the road to cheer me on, and my youngest daughter ran with me for a hundred yards or so, this was really uplifting and gave me a little boost. This was a great way to move into the third section of the race where I would practice gratitude. I thought about my family, my dog, my life in general, and the fact that I was able to be out there on this beautiful day doing something I loved. It was a great way to keep my mind off of the fact that I was definitely getting fatigued and a little beat up. Devil's Staircase was tough, but I kept a good hiking pace up it. I knew coming down the other side was another opportunity to pick it up a bit. Then, fall number 2. This time I tripped on a root and landed on my chest and shoulder and did a bit of a face plant. Not graceful. Two hikers checked on me, I popped up, brushed myself off and immediately continued running. However, the wind was a little knocked out of me and my shoulder was banged up a bit. But I was okay. I now knew that all the big climbs were over and it was time to

just zone in and keep moving. As I was approaching aid station number 3 I took my 3rd fall, and this one hurt. I rolled my left ankle and then smacked my knee on a rock. I did a quick mobility check, and just started running again, but I was definitely a bit hobbled. Aid station number 3 came up and I turned onto the final section of trail. My attention was now on being curious. How would I do on this section feeling banged up? What did I have left in the tank? What could I learn from this final push? This section of trail was covered in leaf litter, full of twists and turns, ups and downs, and slightly tricky to follow. I am glad I have run the route before because it gave me confidence as I was very wiped out at this point. My ankle was not happy with the roughness of this section, so it did slow me down a bit, but I just gave what I had to the effort. I knew it wasn't bad, but it was tender and made me a bit cautious. I came out of the trail to the finish on the road. I dug deep and gave all I had for the last quarter mile. I finished at 2:49:20. I was very happy with this time. I won't lie, if I did not take some hard falls and roll my ankle, I am pretty sure I could have been under 2:45, but that is all speculation and I am very happy with my effort and result. My family was there at the finish, the day was beautiful, and I was able to do something I loved and had worked hard to achieve. My ankle is doing fine, just a little tender, and I definitely feel a bit banged up, but I love it! There is something rewarding about pushing yourself to limits you otherwise would never know you could reach. I learned a lot and I can't wait to take these lessons and see where they take me.

Lessons Learned: Steady nutrition/fueling make a big difference. Sticking to the plan pays off. Having things to focus on for each section is a great mental trick. Race specific training is key, and being able to run a course prior to a race is an advantage.