

2008 Turkey And Tatars Report: This Spuds For You!
By Thomas "T.O." Okazaki

After volunteering at the Southlake Cross Country meet on a Saturday morning, I drove about 300 miles in the rain, late that afternoon, to do a very muddy and nasty trail run up in Tulsa, OK on Turkey Mountain called the Turkey n Tatars 50K, the very next morning. This was a last minute decision to go, due to the weather reports on Hurricane Ike.

The lock on the driver's side door was busted and wouldn't close. So I took a bungee cord and looped it through the passenger and driver side windows and hooked her shut thru the seat belt latch. This meant I had no seat belt, but at least the door was secured. Just prayed I didn't get into a wreck or it would be sayounara T.O.!

Got lost on the way, and ended up on part of the original Route 66, instead. So I got my kicks on Route 66.:) The rain was coming down so hard at around 10 p.m., my little car was hydroplaning on the freeway going up a hill, just outside of Tulsa! Yahoo, ride em Cowboy!

I slept in my car again at my favorite spot in a Cinemark Theatre parking lot on 71st street. Great Balls O Fire!!! Looked like the bad weather at Pikes Peak had followed me all the way to Tulsa this time!! I plugged up a broken window with a plastic bag and sealed off the driver side with another. Felt like I was in a damaged sailboat, lost at sea, in a storm that was taking on water. I fell into a deep sleep. The rain was still coming down really hard until about 3 a.m. and then it stopped!

Arrived early for packet pickup starting at 5 a.m. and got a better parking spot than last year.

It was good seeing the NTTR gang at the start that included, Stan and Beverly Roady, Linda Boggs, Laurie Underwood and Dianna Sulser.

A lot of 50K runners dropped down to the 25K, that morning because of the mud and slippery conditions or didn't show up at all. Because this course was already hilly and rocky, I don't really blame them for doing so. It was going to be a real grind, but I came back to take care of some unfinished business from last year, when I got lost on the trails here.

This time, I thought they were marked well, and had paper plate signs that warned runners they were going the wrong way. They staggered the starts of the 50K/25K/10K this year and that really helped cut down the crowds at the beginning of the 50K at 6:30 a.m. Instead of blowing up a tatur with a firecracker, this time, they launched the poor fellow out of a rigged up bazooka. This is something only the Race Dic Tatur, Brian Hoover with his zany sense of humor, would dream of doing!

It was still dark for the first 30 minutes of the 50K. The course was rugged and slippery, with sections of it reminding me a lot of Bandera, except there were no cactus, just thorny vines that tear up your skin. I met a lot of runners who were using this race to train for the Mother Lode 100 miler coming up in several months.

All the aid stations were again, well stocked with baked potatoes, cookies, chips, brownies, (Yummy!!) and had ice in their gatoraid and water containers. It got warm again later in the day, so the ice was a really blessing to have. Missed seeing the

famous, old smashed up, abandoned Tatur ambulance on the way out, but finally saw it on the way back. That's right, all the muddy and treacherous areas you traverse on the way out, you get to go back over again on the way back on the 50K. I love trail running! :)

At least they put out a rope to use on the really bad, slippery section of mud, near the river between the 2nd and 3rd aid station, which included a long switch back that seem to take for ever.

Turkey Mountain Park is on the west bank of the Arkansas River. You can see Tulsa on the other side of the river from some parts of the trails.

I still marvel how the course planner marked off a 50K course in such a compact area. Large forests cover the mountain and they provide much welcomed shade as the afternoon sun start to warm up the temperatures. There are also a number of small ponds nested in the hills that provide a scenic break along the trails.

The toughest part of the day was coming back up a series of steep hills, before the last aid station at about mile 28. It's in a very open area and tired runners were taking the brunt of the heat from the blazing afternoon sun.

I finished up about 7:44, not fast, but I got my finish and a great hill workout. All the down hills really toasted my quads pretty good, so I was really glad to cross that finish line by then. :)

I was handed a dandy looking finisher's medal to go along with the fabulous, colorful, and wonderfully designed, race tech shirt they had already passed out at packet pick up. Outstanding!

They had a great a post race, barbecue, complete with hamburgers, hot dogs, chips, beer (Yes!!), sodas, chips and some wonderful homemade chilly.

The pavilion also had a convenient water hose so muddy runners could hose off and cleanup for the long drive home.

This is a very challenging course, that I would highly recommend to anyone wanting to test themselves and get in some great training miles for tougher events ahead in the fall racing season.