

It was great to make the turn and know that I had run it before, I'd run it in training, I'd run it in my head a thousand times. I'd visualized it since the first time I'd been to Lake Placid in 2002. I knew that all I had to do was go. Knock it out. One mile. It was a gradual downhill, I ran most of it. I got to the entry into the speed skating oval – 200m to go – and I entered the oval to the sounds of “Life Is A Highway” by Tom Cochrane, a fellow Canuck. How appropriate that was! Suddenly, Mark jumps out with my video camera, trying to interview me!! He was running backwards in order to catch the Kodak moment. Then I stopped and walked for a moment to take it all in – before things got crazy. I wanted to enjoy each and every moment. In many ways, you're ready for it to be over – and in many ways, you could bask in it forever. After I walked the first 30m or so, I reminded myself of something else that I had visualized for many months - running hard and strong, finishing this race on my terms. So – I took off running – hard – my stride was strong, powerful, graceful. As I got close to the finish, I stopped and walked, worked the crowd a bit, pumped my arms in the air a few times, and walked across the finish. They announced my name, I got my medal and shwag bag, and I talked to all of the support crew who were waiting for me. I took a big sigh, had a huge smile, and said wow, that was good, that was great.

My finish time: 15:53:06 - I was 1731st overall – 334th of 366 in my age group - and I'd passed another 55 people on the run.

My second loop was 3:15:48 – but I think that my last 10K was on par with my first 10K pace. I think the walking in the middle stages of the loop (probably the better part of a couple of miles) was probably the difference – or at least 10 min or so of it. Overall run time was 6:03:22. It was now 10:53pm – where did the day go???

Onwards to the food tent – and I can tell you that pizza and a cola never tasted quite so good.

Make that two slices of pizza and two colas. In a moment of perfect timing, I ended up sitting with Kurt, Shelley, and Clark, sharing stories and food and talking smack – much the way that we'd started this incredible journey 13 months previous! It's amazing that one year later, I would end up exactly where I'd begun – the wheel hath come full circle, albeit 2000 miles away from Austin. Only this time, I was now part of "the family" J

I wandered out to pick up my special needs bags, and though I was a little stiff and sore, really enjoyed the quiet and solace of the night. I saw the last couple of finishers – and had countless spectators applaud my efforts. Jen and John had picked up all my gear and had packed it into my car for me, so all I had to do was drive home. By 1:30am, I was in bed, asleep – 22 hours after the day had begun in the darkness.

The next morning, I awoke a little stiff, a little sore, but nothing to be concerned about. I'd faced much more discomfort after having done Buffalo Springs! I went to pick up my finisher's certificate and photos, and attended the awards brunch. We all shared our war stories, laughed, smiled, and enjoyed the moment. Mike Reilly asked all the first-timers to stand up – which we did – and the applause was overwhelming. "Welcome to the family" he said. It was a very special moment, one that had me smiling deeply.