

TRAIL FACTOR Run Report 12-29-2008

Wild Cherry Nature Trail 9 mile loop

Happy Holidays everyone. I hope you all enjoyed time with family, friends and guilty pleasures. I certainly did.

It has been two weeks since we had our last TRAIL FACTOR run. This was not due to the lack of motivation, but rather, Snow, Snow and more Snow that fell around the Portland area. When it was all said and done, Portland received over 15+ inches of snow, which made running on trail nearly impossible. An informal TRAIL FACTOR run attempt was made on Sunday the 21st, but the forward progress was slow and it took me 1:16 minutes to travel 6 miles. It was a day better suited for snowshoeing.

We were finally starting to see the snow melt in town and the hope was that the trail up in Forest Park would be somewhat clear. Those thoughts were quickly dashed as soon as Ruben and I pulled up to the trail head. Leif Erickson was still covered with snow and it was a mixture of 3-4 inches of packed snow and 2-3 inches of undisturbed crusty/fluffy snow. There was melting snow and water everywhere and enough slush to make a mountain size snow cone.

The plan was to run a 9 mile loop up in Forest Park that included Leif Erickson, Nature Trail, Wildwood, Wild Cherry, and finishing up with Leif Erickson. This loop is a standard run for me, but this day would certainly offer up a run that was anything but standard.

Once we got to the trail head, we met up with Richard. We waited around until about 8:15 for other runners and then headed down Leif Erickson, which was a snowy corridor. Since the footing was so poor, our plan was to run comfortably. I guess comfortable in snowy slushy conditions takes on a different meaning, but we certainly weren't going to head out there and try to break any speed records.

This loop starts off on Leif Erickson and gradually climbs for the first 3.5 miles. We typically start off by running Leif Erickson. It can sometimes be boring running on Leif, so it's kind of nice to get it out of the way. For those of you who have not run Leif Erickson up in Forest Park, the trail or rather jeep road travels 11 miles in one direction. It has ¼ mile markers placed on it, so you always know how far you have traveled.

Richard, Ruben and I traveled along Leif Erickson chatting about the holidays and the crappy footing the trail was offering up. When your foot would strike the ground it would either shoot off laterally or sink into unpacked snow. Sometimes you would get a melted section that had great footing, but would then douse your foot in icy water. It was a surprise with every foot strike. My adductors and abductors were getting a great workout and I knew that I would be paying the price post run. It took us over 10 minutes to run the first mile.

After lumbering along Leif Erickson for 3.5 miles, we then hit our first turn off. We took a left on Nature trail and were headed up toward Wildwood. This was the first single track section of the day and it

climbed a bit more aggressively than Leif Erickson. The grade mixed with the unstable footing, provided a challenging climb.

Once we finished climbing up Nature Trail and turned onto Wildwood, we got our first break of the day. Wildwood was actually clear and wasn't blanketed in snow. Wildwood still climbs at this point, but it was nice to have some stable footing. Since this section is heavily covered by trees, it more than likely didn't receive the same amount of snow that the rest of the less covered trail received.

We finished our climb up Wildwood and crossed Firelane #1. We were then quickly greeted by more snow and unstable footing on Wildwood Trail. We pushed onward and settled into a fair pace. A mile later we were ran into one of our fellow TRAIL FACTOR runners. Chris was running the loop in the opposite direction and we just missed him at the start of the run. We were 48 minutes into the run at this point and we were all looking forward to finishing, so we made the greeting brief and continued on. Chris went on to finish his loop in the direction he was traveling and we continued on in our original direction.

We pushed onward and finally hit our last single track trail of the day. We took a left on Wild Cherry trail. It was a slip and slide dance down this trail. Since it is one of the more heavily traveled trails, it was completely covered in snow and ice. Snow and water was flying everywhere, but we finally made it to the bottom.

At the bottom of Wild Cherry, we took a right onto Leif Erickson and finished the last ¼ mile of running on slushy snow covered jeep road.

We were all happy to be finished and concluded that the trail was much tougher than originally anticipated. It had taken us 1:17 minutes to run 9 miles and we were pretty tired and ready to head home.

Thanks for reading and thanks to all those who made it out to the run. Hope to see everyone on our next Sunday TRAIL FACTOR run.

Shawn Bostad