



## UWHARRIE 20 MILER RACE REPORT Raleigh, NC

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February 8, 2003. Uwharrie Mountain Run starting line. I love this race. How can I not? Three years ago, I ran the Uwharrie 40-mile run – my first ultra-endurance run ever – and won. So it will always have a special place in my heart! This year, however, I've decided to attempt the shorter version – the 20 miler. I'm a little sad that I won't be finishing the 40, but then again I'll be finished by lunchtime. I go into this race not expecting a winning plate, but only wanting a finisher's cup. I'm not as fast as I am strong, so I'm expecting to be outpaced on this one. But I'll give it my best.

The starting gun goes off (well, really, the race director says "go" – that's part of the reason I love these ultra races: No fancy stuff!) and we are up the first hill, running. I find myself thinking, "you know, the 40 milers WALK this hill...", as I try to remember how to breathe. The air is chilled and my lungs are complaining. I focus on Mark's heels – he is my pacer for this race, and right now, I'm just trying to keep up.

With the first set of hills behind us, my body begins to remember how to run, begins to find its rhythm, and thankfully begins to feel good again. As another woman passes me, I wonder where I am. As we near mile 8, I realize I'm in 2<sup>nd</sup> place, having just been passed by the now 1<sup>st</sup>-place woman. While I figure she is faster than me (that would explain why she passed me!), I focus on pacing with her. If nothing else, I'll see how long I can hold on.

Nearing mile 15, I feel good, and I can see that the other woman – we've now become somewhat of a running team – is beginning to slow. With a little plodding from Mark, we pass and I am in the lead. It is always a thrill to be first, even for a while, but it is also a stressful position, because all you can think about is who's trying to catch you! The last 3 miles go by quickly, but painfully – we're running hard, driven by the imaginary pursuers in my head! But I cross the line in first place, and add another Uwharrie Mountain Run winner's plate to my shelf. And I'm no longer sad that I didn't do the 40 miler!