

The New Carrot

Remember the saying about the carrot and the stick? Well, sometimes I need a carrot dangling in front of me to keep me moving - I need a short-term goal. I registered for my next carrot. October 1 will be a half-marathon (13.1 miles) trail race. I received permission from one of the race directors, Rod Miller, that if my training goes well, I can switch to the full marathon. Oh boy!

The Barkcamp Race is at Barkcamp State Park in Ohio, and it's the only trail race of that distance I've found with a walkers' division. I did the race for the first time in 2015. It was my first trail race. I love hiking, so I thought it would be fun. I was right.



Even though it was a race, it really wasn't about speed for me. It had rained several inches that week, so the trails were MUDDY. At that point, I had hiking boots or road running shoes from which to choose. I chose the running shoes since it had been awhile since I'd had my hiking boots on for that many miles. My running shoes did not have that great of traction, so I was slip sliding around on the trails for a few hours. (But since I had a great experience, I bought trail running shoes with aggressive tread a couple weeks later. Yahoo!)

I met a few really neat people during the 2015 race. I talked to two or three people who had lost a lot of weight. They were out there with the biggest smiles on their faces – very cool to meet them. About half-way through the race, I caught up with a man on a hill. Somehow we started talking and talked and walked the rest of the race together. It turned out we went to the same college, had the same job through college, and knew several of the same people. Small world!

The other cool thing about the 2015 race was the finish line. I had told my mom when I thought I would finish. She and her sister stood in the rain at the finish line and waited for me. That was the first time she'd been able to go to one of my races, so that was pretty cool!

This year my primary goal is to complete the half-marathon faster than I did last year. I think that's easily doable with better traction on my shoes and if I don't chit-chat as much. My secondary goal is to be ready to complete the full marathon. Let the long Saturday walks commence!

I do have a conundrum, though. I invited my big brother to do the race, too. He lives in a much flatter part of the country and isn't used to trails. He also has a half-marathon the weekend before in his own state, so his legs will not be fresh. I might be able to beat him! (I tried not to say that with too

much glee. Do I sound too excited about that possibility? It *is* my big brother!) If I'm able to go faster than he, should I? Should I leave him and race my own race or stay back with him? (And there is always the possibility I have a bad day and this will be irrelevant... but let's not think about that!)

The carrot in front of me is looking quite appetizing! I'm excited to aim for my new goals. Do you set goals for yourself when walking? What are your carrots?