

2016 Green Jewel 50K Race Report: John Garlepp and Coke helped a lot.

First some background info on drinking Coke during an ultra. In the 1960's when I was running in the New Jersey/New York area, I was friends with marathon and ultramarathon runner John Garlepp. (John's races: <http://more.arrs.net/runner/-644>.) John often told me about the long runs he was doing. I was very interested but thought I would never run an ultra. Little did I know I would start running the longer distances in 2005. About 5 years ago I contacted John to tell him I had finally taken the plunge. One of the interesting things he told me was in the 1960's ultra runners were drinking defizzed Coke during their long runs. We didn't have gels etc in those days. In one of my next ultras I had my bottle filled with defizzed Coke for the last part of the run. It energized me. From then on, I have fueled with Coke for the last 5 to 10 miles of ultras.

On Saturday March 5, Tim Dunn and I ran the 2016 edition of the Green Jewel 50K in Cleveland Metroparks. It was Tim's first ultra. The course is on a paved trail that goes through the beautiful park system from Rocky River to Brecksville OH. The race directors Joe Jurczyk, Vince Rucci, Jim Christ, Kelly Dickerson, their assistants and aid station staffs were very friendly and helpful. My wife Mary Jane and Tim's wife Carrie met us at the 5 aid stations. They were a great crew. The course elevation increases slightly and somewhat consistently for the first 23 miles, and then increases more quickly until mile 27. The last 3 miles are downhill. I originally planned to run at about 10:00/mi for the first half of the run. This is somewhat slower than I would have run with no elevation gain. Even though I was wearing tights, shorts, two shirts, knit hat, gloves and a jacket, I was cold at the beginning of the run. The temperature was in the 20's, and a steady breeze was in our faces. The wind chill was 19 degrees. Tim was wearing shorts. So to keep warm, Tim and I ran at about 9:45/mi with some miles near 9:30. I knew this pace was fine for Tim from his recent marathon time. I told Tim I was a little concerned that I would later pay for running the faster pace.

We reached mile 19 averaging 9:45/mi. After that, the terrain and weather started to noticeably tire me. By the time we got to mile 25 I had to walk. I told Tim he should keep running but he didn't want to leave me. I told him I would be fine and mentioned that his uncovered legs might tighten if he didn't run. He decided to keep up his pace. Now here is where the defizzed Coke came into play. At the last aid station, I had picked up 20 ounces of Coke. I started walking and running averaging about 14:00/mi. As I went along I sipped from the bottle. After drinking about 14 ounces I reached mile 27 and felt energized because of the Coke and because I knew the last 4 miles were level and then downhill. I began running with no walking and felt better and better as I went. After each mile I drank about 2 more ounces. My mile splits for the last four miles were 11:22, 10:57, 10:05, and 9:36. Thank you John Garlepp! My final overall time was 5:29 and Tim's 5:19. We were very happy!

If you want to try defizzed Coke on a training run just prepare it by pouring the Coke back and forth between two pots until the fizz is gone. Try 10 ounces the first time to see if you like it.

Race results: <https://www.westernreserveracing.com/race-results/2016GJSO.htm>