

Workout De Jour

New Year's Day 5km

Certain dates on the annual running calendar beg for a race to be run. New Year's Day is one of those days. Opening the year with a race sets the tone for the year, so they say, building for the Memorial Day race, the July 4 race, the Labor Day weekend race, the Thanksgiving Turkey Trot, and then back to the New Year's Eve/Day race. For me, truthfully, registering for the opening day of the year race simply gets me out the damned door.

Why can't the new start in May or October? Those are pleasant months with warm air, plants still beaming colors and health, people smiling and pleasant, not yet bundled from the cold while wearing a perpetual frown. Forget that this is my birthday month, a fact for which I blame my parents. I hate January for so many reasons. I don't understand people who do the annual arctic plunge for fun. But I digress.

For me, this year begins year 47 of running. Built into the fabric of that experience is running each New Year's Day, absent a better offer. Because both my wife and our cat will remain sleeping well into the morning, and that the Tournament of Roses Parade doesn't begin for another few hours, I can only drink so much of yesterday's remaining coffee before I grow itchy. So, I scratch the itch almost every other first day of the year with a short race.

This time, I returned to a prior crime scene in a nearby college town. 500 runners registered, almost all of those seemed to be in my age group. (eye roll) Okay, so a few more than usual were in my age division, most others being home from college or prep runners out on winter break. No matter as we all had to conquer the big, bad, long, ridiculously-steep uphill in the middle of the second mile. That the gentle decline came in the second part of the middle mile of the race didn't quite make up the time lost in using crampons, climbing ropes, and pick axes in summitting the uphill portion.

July 4 was my most recent 5km. Because of that time span, I didn't find my 5km-race groove until the last mile. Passed a bunch of folks. One passed me. Strong breathing from racing is a good thing. Time to move into the depth of winter cold.