

## **Maple Syrup Gel Test – Blues Cruise 50k Trail Race**

### **Race Background:**

I completed the Blues Cruise 50k, a trail-based race around the Blue Marsh Lake in Reading, Pennsylvania. I tracked the race using the Strava app on my phone. Strava tagged the race at 31.8 miles with 3,200 feet of total gain, which is close to what the race organizers described. The course was one full loop around the lake with 95% trail (a good mix between technical roots/rocks and open fields). There were aid stations every 3-4 miles with GU gels, chips/pretzels, and some stations had unique foods such as burgers/hotdogs, bean burritos and even french toast at the final station. The weather started out in the mid 40's prior to the sunrise but rose into the high 50's/low 60's by midday. My final time was 5 hours, 17 minutes, 55 seconds for a pace of 9:59 minutes per mile, which is a new personal best for me.

### **My nutrition:**

Prior to the final hour before the race, I consumed 32oz of my personal smoothie blend (cauliflower, pineapple, mango, strawberry, banana, chia seed, flax seed, maccha powder, spirulina, and beet powder), a whole wheat peanut butter sandwich, and an apple. During the course of the race, I consumed one of the maple syrup gels every 5 miles along with the GU gels provided at each aid station. In total, I consumed 5 of the maple syrup gels and 5 GU gels. While my stomach grumbled a few times during the race (prompting me to consume another gel), I did not feel famished when I crossed the finish line.

### **Maple Syrup Gel Performance:**

First, I commend the creators of the gels for providing the best tasting gel I have ever had the pleasure to use during a race. The taste is identical to french toast, of which I am a huge fan (although being plant based, I don't normally get to enjoy it anymore). Despite consuming gels the entire race, the flavor of the maple syrup gel was still very enjoyable, even at mile 25 where other sugary gels can start to wear down the palate. The consistency was also fabulous; while gels like GU and Stinger can get thick and gelatinous when an athlete's throat is dry, the maple syrup gels were extremely easy to consume throughout the entire race.

I tend to have a very strong stomach, having never been seriously sick during a race. However, I think the maple syrup gels were quite easy on the stomach due to their more natural properties and I had absolutely no stomach issues during the race. The maple syrup gels also provided a very nice boost of energy within a few minutes after consumed. The best way I can describe it is that I felt 'perky' after consuming one during a hill climb, and it generally curbed any hunger I was feeling for a period after consumption. I especially felt this when consuming them at miles 20 and 25, where I started to drag a little bit and needed the extra push. This rise in energy did not lead to a sugar crash either, which was also helpful during this section where energy levels can fluctuate greatly.

Overall, I would highly recommend these gels to anyone who wants a more natural source of energy/calories during a race that is also very easy to consume at any point. I love gels as a primary energy source due to the ease of counting calories and controlling intake, but I can attest that after 12 hours, they can start to get old. Should these gels become retail available, I would certainly attempt longer races using them as the bulk of my calories (closer to 90% of calories rather than 50/50), especially if a few other flavors can be created just to mix it up. Even with just the flavor I was provided, I think I would enjoy them during the tail end of a 12-hour race. In terms of pricing, I would absolutely be willing to pay \$2-\$2.50 per gel, which is the going rate for GU's Roctane gels and Huma's Electrolyte Chia Seed gels depending on quantity purchased. On a more personal note, I especially appreciate that these gels are true vegan gels, since other gels might have gelatin or honey in them.

Thank you for providing a sample of the maple syrup gels for me to use during this race. I really appreciate the opportunity to test out a more natural source of energy/fuel for racing and will absolutely spread the word to other racers to use them once commercialized.

Robert Lister – Rising Ultramarathon/OCR Athlete and Avid Rock Climber