

Spirit of St. Louis Marathon

St. Louis, Missouri

April 4, 2004

General comments

- The biggest difference between this year's marathon and last year's was the weather. Last year's weather was cold, windy and rainy. This year's was cool and sunny, although a 10 mph north wind kept it from being perfect.
- Based on my training log, I didn't think that my fitness was as good this year as last. I just wasn't running as fast or as consistently. As a result, I didn't think I would beat last year's time of 3:46:37. I was hoping, however, to still break 4:00:00. I was pretty well rested. I did three runs in the week prior to the race—10.7 miles on Sunday, 7.6 on Tuesday and 5.2 on Thursday.

Results

- This marathon was physically and mentally hard. The first six miles were a struggle, as they always seem to be. My right ankle started hurting a bit after the first few miles. By the halfway point, it was impossible to ignore the pain and it hurt the rest of the way. It was the only real pain I had except for some upper back muscle pain from poor running mechanics that I later corrected. It was simply a case of mental toughness that allowed me to endure the ankle pain and keep going nonstop.
- I ran the entire course. Last year, I walked a few hills. By the halfway point, my legs were feeling pretty heavy, and they stayed that way for the remainder of the race. I had told myself that I would walk some of the hills on Delmar, but I just kept going. Then I told myself that I would walk a bit at mile 16, then mile 20, but I never did.
- I finished in 3:48:29, which was a pace of 8:44 per mile. Last year's pace was 8:39 per mile. I finished 412 out of 1,375 finishers. I was 51 out of 140 in my 45-49 age group. My half marathon time was 1:47:30, which was a couple minutes slower than last year.
- As best as I can recall, I reached mile 8 in 1:04:00, or 8:00 per mile. My pace definitely began to slow at that point. I reached mile 19 at about 2:38:00, which was about the last opportunity for me to step up the pace to beat last year's time. I reached mile 23 in 3:17:00, and realized that running 3.2 miles in 29 minutes was not going to be possible due to my legs being nearly "dead" and the hills over the next two miles.
- I was pleased to have finished within 2 minutes of last year's time. This event was tough. I was proud that I didn't walk at all—despite the agony I was in—and finished in less than four hours.
- During the first 26 miles, I wondered if I would ever run another marathon. It was no fun, and it hurt a lot. However, I was able to sprint the last 0.2 miles in front of the cheering crowds, and it suddenly seemed all worthwhile. A marathon is such a great test of physical fitness and mental toughness.

Pre Race Nutrition

- I woke up at 5:00 a.m. and ate some cereal, oatmeal and a banana with my Gatorade. I took a bunch of supplements an hour before the race. I ate another banana and a Clif bar 30 minutes before the start, along with a bottle of water.
- I took two Aleve an hour before the race. I had been having pain in my right hamstring area, but I didn't have any pain during the race thanks to the Aleve. This stuff is a miracle drug.

Race Nutrition

- During the race, I took water and/or PowerAde at every station (about 2 miles apart to mile 10, then 1 mile apart). Thank God I brought a couple gels with me since they didn't have any on the course until mile 20, which is too late to do any good. I ate the gels at about miles 6 and 14. I also took two Endurolytes and 1 Enduro Cap at miles 6 and 17.
- I was a bit overdressed at times during the race and was sweating heavily. I purposefully drank more PowerAde and water to avoid dehydration.

Clothes

- The weather at the start of the race was clear, with 5-10 mph north winds and about 40-42 degrees. By the end of the race, the temperature was close to 50-52 degrees.
- I wore two pairs of socks: an ankle-height pair of well-cushioned cotton socks, and a crew-length pair of normal cotton socks. I also wore running tights, running shorts, a polyester long-sleeve jersey, my running vest, my Ultramax lined windjacket, Ultramax mesh cap and light gloves. Whenever the north wind was at my face or to my sides, I was comfortable in the chilly air. However, when the wind was at my back, I became overheated. I unzipped my vest and jacket at those times, but the added bulk was a hindrance. There were times when I wished I hadn't worn the vest, but minutes later I was thankful I was wearing it due to a change in direction and heading into the wind.

Event

- The event was not organized as well as last year. There was no food nor any gels available until the Clif gel booth at mile 20. They were running low on food at the finish line, so we were limited to a half bagel, one bag of chips and water. The better weather this year brought out more participants, which is why the food supply at the finish line was meager.
- The spectators were super. There were many more along the route than last year due to better weather. I saw one guy at least 5 times during the race cheering on his daughter "Jen". (I don't know how he was able to get around the race course so quickly.)
- Here's what I wrote in last year's race report, and it still holds true: "Running 26.2 miles is a daunting challenge. The distance is almost overwhelming. It seems impossible to run continuously for nearly four hours. The fatigue and discomfort are almost inhumane—even in good weather. The miles and hours of training for a marathon are hard. The actual event is longer and harder than any training run.. Would I do another marathon? Yes and no. No, in that my original reason for doing this marathon has been answered—I now know that I can

complete a marathon. Yes, in that it is a great test of one's physical fitness, endurance, perseverance, desire, discipline and mental toughness."

Physical Effects

- Only my right ankle gave me cause for concern after the race. Fortunately, four or five days later, the pain was gone, so it must have been a muscle problem. I was worried that my Achilles tendons would hurt like they did after last year's event, but they never did.

Marathon Training

- I ran over 300 miles in the last four months in preparing for this marathon. It was slightly more than I ran for the 2003 race. My longest training run was 20 miles. I did a couple 16-mile runs. They were all at a pace of over 9:00/mile and included walking some hills.

Important New Lessons Learned

- I learned that if you keep telling yourself to keep running—no matter how much your legs hurt and how much you'd like to walk—you still can continue to do so. After a certain point, performance is determined not by physical fitness nor training, but by mental toughness and pain tolerance.

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