

GO! St. Louis Marathon

St. Louis, Missouri

April 6, 2008

This was my sixth year of running the newly-renamed GO! St. Louis Marathon. I wasn't expecting much out of it, though. My training wasn't what I had hoped in terms of volume, owing to another winter with lots of bad weather. My longest training run was about 14 miles, and I only did that distance once. (Last year, I did three 15-mile runs.) My maximum heart rate has continued to drop, and I've picked up a couple pounds over the winter, so I've been getting slower as well. My left Achilles had been acting up lately, as did my upper hamstrings. As a result of all this, I was anticipating a bunch of walking, with a finish time of up to a very slow 5 hours. (My Ironman marathon times, which typically include a bunch of walking, vary from around 5:00-5:20.) This could be even slower than last year's extremely painful finish in 4:28.

The race started at 7:00 a.m. As usual, the first few miles were spent trying to work my way through the slower runners and avoid a collision. I brought a bottle of Gatorade with me to sip from so that I could avoid the congestion around the early aid stations. When the Gatorade ran out, I added water and drank from the bottle between aid stations. That works well in keeping me hydrated, especially since the water stations are too few and sometimes too far apart.

The skies were clear throughout the race. The temperature at 7:00 a.m. was around 45 degrees, and by noon it had reached the upper 50s. There was a slight, 5-10 mph breeze from the south throughout the morning. This was just a bit cooler than in previous years. However, in those years, I found I was overdressed, and had to take off clothes as the race went on. This year, I wore one less layer and still found it too warm. I wore running pants, which was fine. I wore a light, short sleeve jersey and my red windbreaker on top, and a hat (but no gloves). I took off the hat around mile 4. At mile 9, I took off the jacket and tied it around my waist. (The jacket kept wanting to untie itself and fall off, and that was a pain in the butt to constantly retie.) I would have been better off wearing a sleeveless jacket. I could have gotten by without a jacket altogether, but I don't know how I'd carry my gels and supplements.

At mile 9, I took off my jacket, but ran into a problem with the zipper to the pocket that contained my gels and supplements. I was able to barely get my fingers in there to grab gels, but I gave up trying to grab my supplements. Fortunately, I was able to get by without them.

My splits were as follows:

<u>Mile</u>	<u>Split</u>	<u>Cumulative</u>	
1	8:40	8:40	Lots of traffic to contend with
2	8:16	16:56	
3	8:35	25:31	
4	8:36	34:07	
5 & 6	17:49 (8:54 avg.)	51:56	
7	9:07	1:01:04	

Mile	Split	Cumulative
8 & 9	18:18 (9:09 avg)	1:19:21
10 & 11	19:57 (9:59 avg)	1:39:18 My legs were getting heavy here
12	9:50	1:49:09
13	10:23	1:59:32 I reached the halfway point around 2:01:00
14	9:52	2:09:23
15	11:21	2:20:45 I was walking some of the hills on Forsyth
16	12:10	2:32:55 Still on Forsyth
17	10:35	2:43:30
18	11:55	2:55:25 Includes the tough hill on Delmar
19	10:33	3:05:58 This is about when I started paying attention to my per-mile pace in order to guess my finish time
20	10:50	3:16:48 It was at this point that I started setting a goal of finishing faster than last year's 4:28
21	10:43	3:27:31 I knew I needed to stay under 12:00/mile
22	11:11	3:38:42
23	11:13	3:49:56 I was trying to minimize my walking as much as possible, but still took very short walking breaks to give my legs a much needed rest
24	11:23	4:01:19 I was now feeling good about my ability to finish under 4:28, but I didn't have much of a cushion. I had to keep pushing myself.
25	11:53	4:13:12 This included the tough hill on Market Street. It was all mostly downhill from here.
26.2	10:16 pace	4:25:32 As I was running downhill, I felt surprisingly good under the circumstances. I attribute much of it to adrenaline and the cheering crowds.

My finish time of 4:25:32 put me 76th out of 126 in the male 50-54 age group. (I was 65th out of 118 last year.) I wish I placed higher. I've always been more of a middle-of-the-pack (and occasionally better) runner than that. But, I was pleased with how everything turned out, considering how low my expectations were going into this.

If I do this race again next year, I want to do it lighter (I weighed 200 this year) and with more training volume behind me. I doubt that I will ever be able to do a sub 4:00 marathon, but I think a 4:10-4:15 would be possible under better circumstances. Prior to the race, I just wanted to get this over with. I'd like to not do this race anymore (I really didn't enjoy it), but I'm worried that it would be an admission that I'm getting too old and lazy. I simply want it to be easier than it is.

I noticed that I was not nearly as debilitated after this marathon as in previous ones. I was able to go down steps after the race surprisingly easier than in previous years. I had a minor amount of soreness on Monday, and very little on Tuesday. By Wednesday, I could only feel the soreness if I walked very quickly or tried to jog. (I took a walk each day from Sunday through Wednesday, but those didn't really affect my recovery.) My best guess is that I didn't—and couldn't—push my legs as hard during this marathon as in previous ones.

All in all, it was a very good day.