

GO! St. Louis Marathon

St. Louis, Missouri

April 10, 2011

Sometimes, you just get lucky.

Due to a lack of training and an untimely injury, I've never gone into a long race with as much doubt about my ability to finish as I had for this race. I resigned myself to just doing my best under the circumstances, and be happy if I finished in the six-hour time limit. More than anything, I wanted this event to simply be over so I could put it all behind me.

This was my ninth consecutive GO! St. Louis Marathon, and every year it seems like I end up training less and less for it. It's getting to the point where I think I'm hitting the bare minimum necessary to finish. This year would be a real test of that limit.

Training

My training in the months leading up to this race was clearly the least I've ever done preparing for a marathon in terms of run volume, run frequency and longest training run. I typically ran only two or three times a week, averaging perhaps seven miles or so for each run. That's not enough for a marathon. My longest training run was only about twelve miles, which I did twice, and that, too, isn't enough. Ideally, I should be running about 25 miles per week, and do a few 15- to 18-mile runs in the weeks and months before the marathon.

Part of my training shortfall was due to weather. This past winter, we had some of the worst winter weather I've ever experienced. The absolute worst was in early February when a blizzard dumped eleven inches of snow on us in a single day. It took three days for the county to send a snowplow down our street. A few days after that, we received still more snow. Bitterly cold air moved in as well, and an official low temperature of 17° below zero was measured one morning at a local airport. It was dangerously cold. Because of this bad spell of weather, I did no training at all in the first two weeks of February. For most of that time, I couldn't even drive to the YMCA to run on the indoor track.

I weighed 208 pounds for this race, the most I've ever weighed. I had gained about five pounds since last year's race, and most of it over the winter (thanks again in part to lousy winter weather). I was hoping to lose weight for this season, but obviously have been unsuccessful so far. It still remains a goal, since 208 pounds is way too heavy for doing endurance events.

Injury

I thought that I'd be able to make up for some of the lack of training during winter once better weather arrived in March. Milder weather did come along, and I was able to run more. However, on March 18th, about 3-1/2 weeks before the marathon, I went out to do a long run, and felt a little twinge in my right hamstring after about five miles. A mile later, it suddenly "pulled", and I could no longer run. I started walking home. I found that I could jog a bit on the downhills, but it hurt bad. All I could think of while heading home was how I was screwed for the marathon.

After a few days of resting the hamstring, I felt a need to go out and see just what condition it was in. I ran five miles, going very easily. It was encouraging because, while it didn't feel "right", it didn't hurt. I ran six miles a few days later, although the last mile I had to go easy because the hamstring starting hurting. My next run a few days later was a complete setback. It hurt a lot, and I had to stop after three miles. Now, with just 2-1/2 weeks before the marathon, I thought I was in deep doo-doo. It was too far out from the marathon to suspend all training (with a resulting loss of what running fitness I had), but too soon before the marathon to reasonably expect the hamstring to heal completely.

Over the course of those last 2-1/2 weeks, I ran three times, including a couple of six-milers. I always slowed down once my hamstring tightened up, which was usually after a few miles. I had no idea how I was going to be able to run 26.2 miles when I could barely manage five. Only one thing was certain: it was not going to be fully healed for the marathon.

Race Strategy

Going into the marathon, I figured that I'd take it easy and see how things were going at mile 9, where I could choose to abandon the marathon and follow the half-marathoners as they turned around and headed back toward the finish line. My worst fear was continuing on the marathon course and having my hamstring act up near the far end of the course, forcing me to walk nine miles or more to the finish while trying to meet the six-hour time limit to become an official finisher.

Saturday, April 9th

On the day before the marathon, I pretty much followed what I did last year--go to Chaifetz Arena and get registered in the morning, then come home and lie down and rest all afternoon. We went to Applebee's for dinner, just like last year. In years past, I've usually eaten pasta the night before the marathon, but I'm starting to think that a smaller meal with more protein might be better.

In the days leading up to the marathon, the weather forecast for race day became a concern. It was expected to be very warm, humid and windy. We've had a wide range of weather for this marathon in the last nine years, including some warm days, but this

was expected to be the warmest ever. The afternoon high was going to be in the mid to upper 80s. What makes unusually warm and humid weather so tough this time of year is that we haven't had any chance to acclimate to it. I knew that staying hydrated and using my electrolyte supplements were going to be especially important.

As I normally do the night before a race, I took a Tylenol Sinus Nighttime tablet about an hour before bedtime. This has always helped me sleep pretty well the night before a race without making me too drowsy on race morning. It helped this time, although I woke up a number of times during the night. It wasn't a deep sleep, but I felt rested when it was time to get up.

Sunday, April 10th -- Race Day

Wake-Up

I woke up at 4:45 a.m. and ate some cereal, a banana, an energy bar and Gatorade for breakfast. I also took my usual cocktail of nutritional supplements. I always take two Aleve tablets before a long race, and my questionable hamstring made this even more important. I swear by the stuff. It works.

Off to the Race

I left for the race at around 5:30 a.m. Because of last year's traffic and parking nightmare, I left a bit earlier than usual just in case. I took a different route (exiting at Grand, then turning right on Olive) and parked on the street in front of Harry's Restaurant. That worked out very well. I avoided tons of traffic, and the walk to and from the start/finish area isn't too long. (It seems a lot longer after the race, if you know what I mean.)

Starting Line

Unlike prior years, when runners seeded themselves in the various pace groups, the race organizers pre-assigned everyone to one of five groups, based on the runners' estimated finish time. I was hoping that this would eliminate the nightmare this race has become in the last few years, when thousands of slower runners--and walkers--would get up front, and I'd have to run around them. Last year, I was passing these slower people for nine miles, although it wasn't as much an issue once we reached wider streets after six miles.

It didn't work as well as I had hoped. In fact, I really didn't notice any difference from last year. For the first six miles--until we reached the nice, wide Olive Street, I was having to dodge slower runners. I guess the congestion is unavoidable when there are 13,000 or so runners at the starting line.

The Race

I started off at an easy pace. The mass of humanity that I was trying to navigate through made it nearly impossible to go any faster than that, but I didn't want to overdo it too early and start suffering hamstring problems, so it worked out fine.

The weather was nice at the start--72 degrees, with 13 mph winds from the south. The breeze helped keep me comfortable.

At mile three, which I reached around 7:45 a.m., the sun was now high enough in the sky to start making a difference. Even though the temperature had not risen much by then, it was feeling noticeably warmer. I was sweating heavily, and made sure I drank enough fluids and took my electrolyte tablets.

The heat would become the story of the day. It just kept getting warmer throughout the race, and become far too warm for a marathon. I noticed a number of runners being treated by paramedics along the course, beginning at around the midway point. (I don't ever recall hearing so many emergency vehicle sirens during a race, especially toward the end.) After the 18-mile mark, I started seeing lots of runners stepping off the course to stretch out their cramping legs. The heat was taking a huge toll on everyone. A few homeowners and businesses along the course even brought out water hoses for runners to cool themselves. The sun made things much, much worse. There was precious little shade on the course, and the heat radiating off the asphalt streets made it feel like we were running in a furnace. At a few locations along the course, I noticed quite a few runners jumping onto sidewalks to run in a narrow sliver of shade offered by an office building just to get out of the sun.

Time	Temperature	Wind
7:00 a.m. (start)	72	South 13 mph
8:00 a.m.	73	South 10 mph
9:00 a.m.	77	South 18 mph; gusts to 25
10:00 a.m.	79	Southwest 20 mph; gusts to 28
11:00 a.m.	83	Southwest 29 mph; gusts to 38
12:00 p.m.	86	Southwest 21 mph; gusts to 32

The wind wasn't too much of a factor since it was generally coming from the south, while the course ran mostly east-west. Actually, other than when the wind blew between the buildings downtown, I didn't notice the wind all that much.

MARATHON COURSE CLOSED

It wasn't until I watched the local television news at the end of the day that I learned the race organizers had closed the marathon course near mile 9 to anyone who had not reached that point shortly after 9:00 a.m., due to the excessive heat and humidity. At 9:00 a.m., I was only a mile or two beyond the cutoff point. Here's the official explanation from the race organizers:

2011 Weather Update: Unfortunately at approximately 9:05 am the wet-bulb index, which is a combination of temperature and humidity was at 73 and decision was made to divert participants in the marathon and marathon relay to the half marathon course. The decision was made after consultation with race officials, medical personnel and an official from the Saint Louis Fire Department. The decision was not made based on pace times, fitness levels or the marathon experience of some participants, but was made for the general safety of close to 17,000 participants. Participants that had reached approximately mile 9, near the half marathon turn were allowed to proceed on the marathon course and finish the race, while other participants were diverted to the half marathon.

I managed to run the first eleven miles nonstop, except for a very short hill at mile 10. By that point, my legs were starting to get heavy, and I was slowing down. At miles 14 and 15, I hit the wall. I had to walk the uphill, and then some. From that point on, I knew I'd be doing a fair amount of walking to the finish line. The heat was making things especially tough. The only consolation was that my hamstring wasn't bothering me at all, but there was still a long way to go.

It's usually in the later miles of a marathon when I start thinking about a goal finish time to keep me focused and motivated. (It helps to do so when you don't have too many miles to go since simple arithmetic gets tough when you're suffering so much.) The race clock read 3:30:00 when I was between miles 19 and 20. I figured that, at a pace of 12:00 per mile--a pace which would allow me to walk a little bit during each mile--I could finish in under five hours. That, then, became my goal. Not terribly ambitious, to be sure, but in the heat and with a questionable hamstring, it wouldn't be easy.

I kept a close eye on my watch, hoping to reach the next mile marker within 12 minutes of the previous one. I pushed myself as hard as I could under the circumstances without putting the ultimate goal at risk. I only walked when I absolutely had to--when my legs simply couldn't run, and on particularly hard hills on Forest Park Blvd. and Market Street.

I could feel that I was developing a blister on the bottom of my left foot in the later miles of the race. Fortunately, it wasn't painful and thus didn't bother me.

The Finish

It was at the 25-mile mark that I started feeling confident that I'd meet my goal. I had nearly 20 minutes to go just 1.2 miles, and about half of it was downhill. It also helped that the finish line could be seen for much of the last mile. You can always push yourself harder when you see that there's not much more to go. Also, the adrenaline starts flowing, and that always helps me run down the finish chute feeling strong and pain-free.

I was particularly exuberant as I approached the finish line because I had not only succeeded in meeting my time goal, but I had finished this marathon despite lots of anxiety and adversity in the months leading up to this moment. And, yes, getting to the finish line involved a lot of good luck, perhaps more than I've ever had. It was really worth celebrating, and I let the spectators know it with my usual finish-line antics.

I finished in 4:54:20, about 24 minutes slower than 2010. I placed 36th of 58 in the male 55-59 age group.

Postscripts

Unbelievably, my hamstring never gave me any problem whatsoever during the race. Not in my wildest dreams would I have expected that.

The air temperature was 86 degrees when I finished--the hottest weather in which I've ever finished a marathon by at least 10 degrees.

The weather one day after the race could not have been more different--cool with light rain, with a high in the low to mid 60s.

The only serious post-race recovery issue was a big, painful blister on the bottom of my left foot. It hurt a lot on Monday night after it popped, and took a few days after that to finally become bearable to walk on. (That didn't stop me, though, from running on it two days later when Dean Karnazes held a "Run with Dean" 5K as part of his Run Across America.) The two biggest toes on my left foot were also bruised, and the nails will be coming off in time. Just when I had grown back a full set of toenails and my toes looked somewhat normal--a fairly rare occurrence these last eight years--I'm back to the same old ugly toes.

Thanks for reading!

Jim Glickert
Osage Beach, Missouri
May 28, 2011

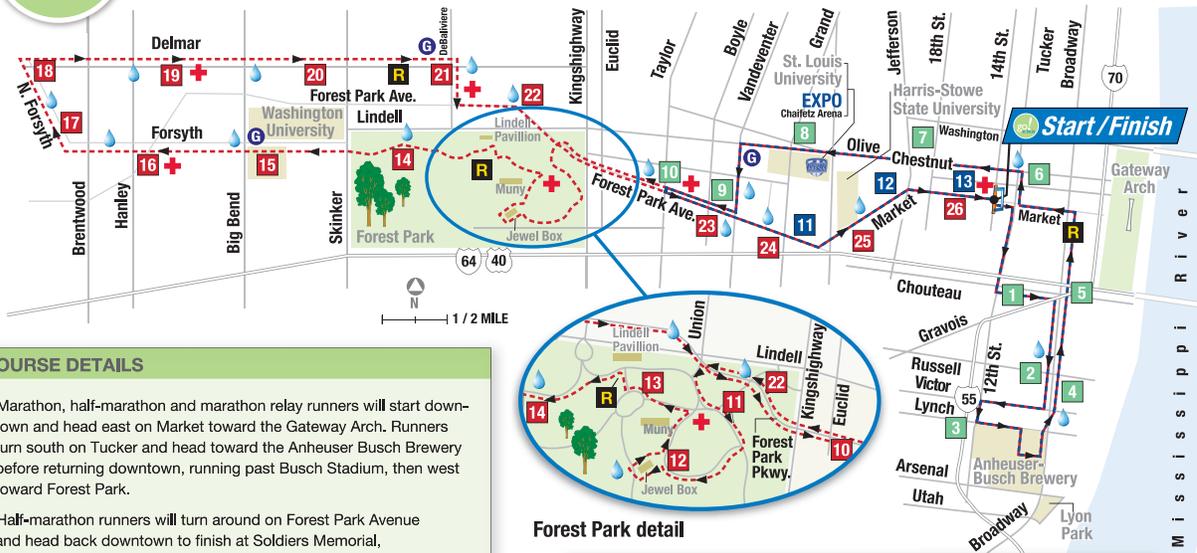
MILE SPLITS

End of mile	Elapsed time from start	Pace for last mile(s)	Comment
1	9:19	9:19	
3	28:41	9:41	
4	38:27	9:46	Ate a gel at mile 4
5	48:00	9:33	Took my electrolyte supplements
6	58:50	10:50	
8	1:18:00	9:35	Gel
9	1:28:17	10:18	
11	1:48:52	10:17	Electrolytes
12	1:59:45	10:54	Gel; walked for first time on a long, gradual hill in Forest Park
13	2:11:25	11:40	Portapotty break
13.1	2:12:xx		Halfway point
14	2:22:37	11:11	Flattest part of course; in Forest Park; the heat is taking its toll on runners
15	2:35:21	12:44	Gel; really struggling; on Forsyth along Washington U.; walking more
16	2:48:17	12:56	Hills in central Clayton
18	3:12:15	11:59	Electrolytes and gel
19	3:24:41	12:26	Started feeling like a sub 5-hour finish was possible; needed to maintain a 12:00 pace
20	3:36:50	12:09	Lots of people cramping on Delmar near Loop
21	3:49:14	12:24	Gel

End of mile	Elapsed time from start	Pace for last mile(s)	Comment
22	4:02:43	13:29	Hot, no shade, and then a tough hill on Forest Park Blvd. Focused hard on finishing under 5 hours.
23	4:14:31	11:48	Mostly downhill, but sun was beating down on the asphalt on Forest Park Blvd.
24	4:26:43	12:12	Struggling to keep my pace
25	4:40:35	13:52	Long, gradual climb on Forest Park Blvd. and Market Street; I knew this was coming, so the slow pace was expected
26	4:51:32	10:57	Mostly downhill, and the adrenaline was running. Feeling confident that I was going to break 5 hours.
26.2	4:54:20		11:14/mile pace for full marathon



2011 Marathon | Half Marathon | Marathon Relay



COURSE DETAILS

- Marathon, half-marathon and marathon relay runners will start downtown and head east on Market toward the Gateway Arch. Runners turn south on Tucker and head toward the Anheuser Busch Brewery before returning downtown, running past Busch Stadium, then west toward Forest Park.
- Half-marathon runners will turn around on Forest Park Avenue and head back downtown to finish at Soldiers Memorial, 1315 Chestnut Street.
- Marathon runners and marathon relay runners will continue west to the city of Clayton and University City, then turn around and head back downtown on the same course as the half-marathoners.*

*Course subject to change

Forest Park detail

KEY	R Relay station	--- Half-marathon route
	1 Mile markers for both races	1 Half-marathon mile markers
	+ Medical	--- Marathon route
	G Gel Stations	1 Marathon mile markers
	+ Gatorade Endurance Formula/ Water Stations	EXPO — Chaifetz Arena #1 S. Compton Ave, St. Louis, MO 63103



MARATHON

4.10.2011

James Glickert
4:54:20

You Placed 1321 of 1913 Total Finishers

36 of 58 in the Male 55 To 59 Division

925 of 1266 Men Finishers

Nancy Lieberman

Nancy Lieberman
GO! St. Louis President

J. Kim Tucci

J. Kim Tucci
Honorary Chairman, GO! St. Louis

