

Tales of NYC from a first time marathoner

Well, what an experience. The NYC Marathon was everything I thought it would be and much, much more. The bus was a fantastic idea, and took so many worries out of the equation (thanks to Bev). My first surprise on race day were the vast number of friendly people that I immediately bonded with. The day was more than can be asked for. From all the sage advice, I made it a point to find a slow but comfortable pace. As the race progressed, I was feeling so relaxed and jovial, meeting fellow runners and having a great time...more chatting went on during the run than we sometimes do during club runs. I was thinking at the half-way point that I my training had paid off and that I had tons of reserves for the second half. My goal of 4:15 looked within reach.

But right before mile 13, that's when (as Wes puts it) my wheels fell off. My left quad started spasms, sending shooting pain through the muscles. Never having had that happen before, I tried to slow down and run it off. But at mile 15, going up the Queensboro Bridge, my right quad started spasms. I stopped and tried to stretch them out, but my hamstrings would spasm when I bent my leg to stretch my quads. I was terrified by what my body was doing, having never experienced anything like this before. I resumed running, but found the worst was yet to come. As I descended the bridge, the decline caused the muscle spasms to multiply, pushing me past my pain threshold. As the next mile unfolded, I was bewildered, then pissed, then I felt sorry for myself.

By Mile 18, I made a decision to adjust my goal, shoot to break 5:00, and give me something to continue to shoot for. I could run the inclines and the flats, but I had to walk the declines. The pain coming off the bridge into the Bronx was so excruciating that I was talking myself into catching a cab to the bus (but who stops in the Bronx...what a hole). So I kept pushing, even through painful 13-14 minute miles. The crowds were so encouraging and the cheering so contagious, but even good intentions have a limit, and I wanted to strangle a couple of people who encouraged me to pick up the pace. Don't these people understand the hell I was putting myself through?

After about the 24.5 mile mark, I felt an even stronger surge of spasms, and I was afraid I would not finish, so close to the finish line. So I just put my head down, embraced the pain and became determined to finish the race running. I started passing people for the first time in 10 miles. I fought through and crossed the line running, hands in the air and the most sincere smile that I could muster. But once I crossed the line, I broke down emotionally, both from relief, and maybe even more potently, from finally nailing a goal that seemed impossible a year ago. I finished in 4:45. This was the hardest thing I have ever done. And because of how I endured, this was maybe my proudest moment.

I can't wait to run my next one!

Take care,
Mike

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