

## Avenue of the Giants Marathon 2007-Steve Brookman



**Who couldn't handle 26.2 miles of this?**

The [Avenue of the Giants](#) is arguably one of most scenic venues for any road race, anywhere. The course consists of two out and back legs entirely under the canopy of 300'+ tall majestic redwoods. We had not only a beautiful, mostly flat, course but also the weather gods smiling on us. Just before our arrival in Northern California torrential rains, with the highs not getting out the 40's, caused a mudslide that closed part of the Avenue and highway 101.

The temperature at the start was 52, cool, dry with slight north breeze. Susan, John, our long time Florida friend, and I lined up with 380 other marathoners and 1200 half marathoners for the 9am start. Susan and I kept pretty much to our race plans for the 1st half. I talked it up with a 56 y/o novice from a Portland running club attempting his 1<sup>st</sup> race. We discussed the joys of running, and camaraderie of the running community all the while I was monitoring the pace and trying to keep it slow. John scooted ahead, more than 3 decades have past since he last attempted a full marathon and possible he was not fully aware that he wasn't in the same body that did 2:30's back then.

The aid stations were well spaced at approximately every 2 miles along the course, well staffed and supplied with water, sport drinks, and orange slices later on. The 1<sup>st</sup> half is run on Bull Creek Road whose somewhat pot-holed surface gently rises 200' to the first turnaround, making for a nice, and easy to go too fast, half marathon. With a conscious effort to throttle back I managed to hit the half mark at 1:49, just 3 minutes ahead of my dream pace. Susan passed the half mark 5 minutes ahead of her goal pace, and since neither of us has yet to master a negative split on a full marathon we were both cautiously optimistic that maybe the planets were in line for this one.

Familiar reality began to slowly present itself as the miles grew longer. I noticed the pace arrows on my watch began flashing more frequently and tightly gripping the laminated dream pace strip did little to stop them. Approaching mile 19 our buddy John had already made the 2<sup>nd</sup> turn around and was over a mile ahead of me...Boston bound for sure. I low-fived him and hoped I wouldn't keep fading and miss my time to join him. By now I was only a few seconds ahead of pace.

I was hoping to get my second wind at that turn around and maybe get out of the molasses that was sucking at my legs. Susan and I crossed near my 20 mile mark. (How does she manage to smile and look so good this far into the race?) By now I was falling behind pace and with some headwind but no second wind in sight. (*Could still happen but not likely. I wonder how all the HRH'ers did in the Poconos.*)

After mile 23 with the temps getting in the mid 70's, the 15 knot headwind starts feeling good, but I'm forced to realize that my first attempt, dream or not, at a BQ would not be. So the feet keep on moving, legs really not paying much attention to me now anyway and I look forward to finishing with at PR (3:49:51) on a beautiful day on a beautiful course.

Susan had to walk through some cramps in the later miles and while not quite making her goal managed to get yet another PR while crossing the finish line with what now is her signature finishing smile.

While lying in the grass doing my now signature recovery moans, I found out that John had finished less than a minute ahead. He had developed some stomach issues and didn't have a great finish. I got to hand it to him though. The first words out of him, once he felt like talking were: "Let's reserve a room in Boston, do another one of these and get it done!"