

Boston Heat 2012

Steve Brookman

The short story: it started out HOT, got HOTTER, and stayed HOT!

We all knew we were in for a rough one before we left NJ as the forecasters were already predicting record temps: upper 80's to low 90's. As race day got closer the advisories from the BAA became more strident, urging all but the "most fittest" not to run. They instigated a deferral program to entice runners not to run in an attempt to prevent another "Boston Massacre" that occurred in 2004 when the temps *only* reached 86.

Those of us gathered at a pre-race pasta dinner in North Boston discussed options and strategy for dealing with the conditions. We decided against deferring as we were already there and we assured each other that we would treat this as an experience, a run, not a race. Even Doug Masi promised to drink along the way. A first for him.

Unfortunately the only thing the forecasters got wrong was the clouds, there were none, nada, and the wind. The forecast of up to 25 mph tail wind never happened either. We got a feel for what we would be enduring on the .8 mile march from the buses to the start. We worked up a sweat just walking to our corrals under that cloudless sky.

The advice was to run a minute or two above your normal pace and hydrate often, very often. My corral covered the first 5K at a 8:15 pace, which didn't feel that bad considering it was mostly downhill and there was some shade. Temps were barely touching 80 by then. I mentioned, mumbled, to anyone around me that we weren't running the pace we were supposed to be running. The next 5K brought the pace down closer to 9mm and by mile 10 I was feeling the heat. Most of us formed conga lines to catch the slim bits of shade on the right side of the course. I began walking the water stops as I had planned. The girls of Wellesley provided some relief, but at the half way mark I knew there was trouble ahead. I usually feel pretty good at this point but not today and I was over 10 minutes slower (1:55) than last year.

From then on it was one mile at a time, walk the water stations, drink, pour on head, jog on. Well before Newton I knew I'd be walking the hills. While I was still on a BQ pace I could tell that wasn't going to happen and I needed just to survive the heat and finish. The cheering crowds lining the course outdid themselves this year as they rose to the occasion providing water from sprinklers and hoses, ice, sponges, fruit and popsicles.

Approaching Heartbreak (very slowly) I joined up with two lasses that weren't doing well either and since misery enjoys company we trudged onwards. Lost one of them around BU when her vomiting returned. I walked/jogged with the other girl until mile 25 when the woosies really got to me and told her to go on.

It's hard to imagine now not being able to jog it in with thousands of spectators screaming, but avoiding the medical tent was my main concern. I managed a pathetic jog down Boylston to the finish arches that seemed so far away and logged a personal worst of 4:27. But it was done, another check in the box, although with an asterisk this time.

It's most frustrating to endure 18 weeks of high mileage training and it comes down to the freaky weather on race day. But that's the nature of marathoning. One bit of good news is the sciatic/hip issue that had haunted me during training and tune up races never flared up. At least one part of me likes heat!