

This was my 48th marathon, and I think I can safely say I never had a better marathon experience. I could have written a glowing race report before the marathon even started on Patriot's Day Monday on April 21st 2008. Most of that can be attributed to all the great people that I spent time with during the weekend – including quite a few members of the club and numerous friends from various running forums. An added bonus was having the U.S. women's Olympic Trials run in conjunction with the 112th running of the Boston Marathon. Suffice to say that spending time with good friends on the course along with associated elite runners such as Ryan Hall, Frank Shorter, Bernard Lagat, Jen Rhines, Sonia O'Sullivan, etc was an extraordinary experience. I have some cherished photos taken with Ryan and Frank, but unfortunately no taped record of the conversations. Let's just say that Ryan and I talked about the men's Olympic Trials last November, his recent London race, and of course, race strategy. He even taught us all Deena's mantra – "Believe" – which we chanted alongside him as she took the lead. What an awesome way to spend a morning. We all agreed that it would be hard to find nicer, patient, and more-down-to-earth people.

Impressions of the race/course itself:

Despite the thrill of the Olympic Trials on Sunday where we did far too much walking and screaming, we were in town to run our own race the next day. There is really nothing to compare to the Boston Marathon in terms of excitement and aura for those of us who will never be Olympians. The city is consumed by the Boston Marathon and the electricity in the air is indescribable. For many of us, the crowds and the logistics – and the renowned course itself – do not make for our fastest marathon performances, but we wouldn't miss it for the world.

Even with the 2-wave start, I found it more crowded on the course than it was back in 2004 and 2005. I didn't really have elbow room until I hit the final 0.4 miles on Boylston. Others seemed to have had a similar experience, and that was true whether you were in the latter half of wave 1 or in wave 2.

The spectators along the way seemed louder than ever.

All week the meteorologists never wavered in their forecast of low 50F temperatures, OVERCAST, and a 10 MPH headwind. That was looking true when the elite women started at 9:30. But by 10:00 AM, ELSO (Evil Life-Sucking Orb) made an unwelcome appearance, and the temperatures climbed rapidly. Everyone scrambled and tried to decide whether or not to change their planned attire or not. Was the sun breaking through just a brief temporary thing, or would it turn into another warm Boston? Unfortunately, it was the latter, and it was much warmer than anyone expected. That night I watched a weather report that said it was 68F in Natick that day, and I guess it was in the mid-60's and sunny for most of the course. Not as bad as the Boston BBQ of 2004 to be sure, but not the ideal marathon weather that had been promised. I could tell the winds were there; however, they weren't a factor for me personally.

I didn't hear the girls from Wellesley until we almost got to them, but once we did, it was the loudest and longest line of female pulchritude of my 3 Bostons. One thing about warm sunny

weather, it brings out the best in their attire (or lack of it). Once we had run the gauntlet, I said to all of the guys around me – “let’s go back and do that again”.

I don’t care what anyone says – this is a very difficult marathon course. I was in great shape; I did not hit the wall; my legs did not feel sore; and yet the inevitable slowdown in the Newton Hills happened as expected and took their toll on my overall pace. I’m sorry – this is the most brutal section of any marathon I’ve competed in, and I’ve run my share of them.

Expectations/Goals:

Boston is the one and perhaps only marathon where I don’t have an overriding time goal. Normally; I am focused during my training and throughout the race on achieving a Boston Qualifying time. However; once again in Hopkinton, I was extremely calm and enjoying myself before the start. “Hey; I’m already there”!

Nevertheless; I don’t enter any marathon without trying to prepare myself to the best of my ability. Last Fall when I BQ’d, I followed an 18-week Bob Glover program similar to what I had done way back when I first started marathoning, and I ran arguably my finest marathon ever. It was clear that “if it ain’t broke, don’t fix it”, so I laid out an identical program and followed it to the letter. My actual weekly mileage never wavered from the plan by more than 1 or 2 miles, and I did every single key workout during the 18 weeks. I set a new record for treadmill miles this winter.

As the marathon approached and I was pressed to cough up an estimate of what time I would run, I responded that I felt like I was in 3:42-3:43 shape for a normal, reasonably flat marathon course. But IMHO, the Boston Marathon course has a degree of difficulty or handicap of 10 minutes due to terrain and unpredictable weather, and so I consistently stated that I would likely finish between 3:50-4:00 hours, with a realistic goal of 3:52. After 26 years of running, 54,600 miles, 250 races, and 48 marathons, I know my body and I know what I am capable of.

Any experienced runner of Boston knows that the rolling course with its uphill and downhill makes it almost impossible to run even mile splits, and you are usually better off trying to stick to an even-effort strategy. That’s what I aimed to do, and knowing that the Newton Hills would probably slow me down even more than many, I set out with the idea of running 26:00 for each 5K split, or at least until I got to 25K. I would not panic if any of the early miles were faster than 8:30’s, but if I found myself running sub 26:00 for a 5K section, then I would back off.

Given the congestion of the first mile where I ran 8:49, that strategy worked out quite well. I achieved my planned 5K splits fairly well, taking into account a gel and bio break in the first half. I also stopped and talked to my wife at mile 17.

5K splits and Cumulative:

5K-----26:29-----26:29

10K---26:02-----52:31

15K---26:32-----1:19:03

20K---26:54-----1:45:57

25K---27:21-----2:13:18

30K---28:29-----2:41:47

35K---29:23-----3:11:10

40K---29:05-----3:40:15

42.2---12:39-----3:52:54

I have all my mile splits, and there are no surprises in there.

Here they are for posterity:

Miles 1-5: 8:49, 8:18, 8:26, 8:11, 8:27

Miles 6-10: 8:24, 8:23, 8:25, 8:52, 8:28

Miles 11-15: 8:46, 8:30, 8:37, 8:47, 9:04

Miles 16-20: 8:31, 9:24, 9:20, 8:57, 9:28

Miles 21-25: 9:55, 9:14, 9:26, 9:08, 9:36

Last 1.2 miles: 11:13.36

Despite what might appear to the novice that I went out too fast, I dispute that. I really felt under control the entire way, and I simply can't handle the Newton Hills as well as some people. However; I'm hardly alone in that regard! I fought hard from about mile 22 onwards to break 3:53, weaving in and out of the crowds on the course which hadn't relented, and had plenty in the tank to give it a good kick on Boylston. I did not feel sick at all as I crossed the line, but rather was quite ecstatic that I had run the best race I could for my ability, had achieved my realistic goals, and yes – I BQ'd at BOSTON! It's true that I've run 25 marathons faster than 3:52 in my career, but I haven't run many much better. In fact, on an age-graded basis, only my 3:44 (3:06:18 age-graded) BQ last Fall is superior.

Overall and in summary, it was a fantastic weekend. I trained well; I trained smart; I raced smart; I think I ran close to the best of my ability on a tough course in less than perfect conditions. I had so much fun with so many people during the weekend.

Statistics:

Time – 3:52:54

Pace – 8:53

AG Time – 3:11:48

PLP – 65.1%

Overall – 12735/21963

Gender – 8729/13028

M50-59 – 1623/2799