

Boston Marathon 2007

Holly McDonald

After running my first marathon last fall in Philadelphia, I realized that marathons are not really fun (despite having great running partners). That whole sense of accomplishment thing is so over rated! Months of training followed by nearly four hours of left, right, left, right is not my idea of a pina colada! I wasn't sure if I would run another until Kim talked me into doing Boston.

The week prior to the race turned me into a weather.com junkie. My hope was that if I checked it enough, the report would change. It didn't. So, off to Wal-Mart I went for all things plastic-dish gloves, ponchos, garbage bags etc.

Our family drove up on Saturday and had enough time to walk the Freedom Trail. On Sunday, a DUCK tour provided us shelter from the rain while Sven, our driver, gave us an interesting tour and allowed each kid to drive. Sven dubbed me "Runner Girl".

Our relaxing pre-race dinner was attended by the Robinson and Haris families. The kids outnumbered the adults 10-6, but they were incredibly well behaved! Then it was back to the hotel for swimming and last minute race preparations.

Our hotel staff provided an early breakfast and shuttle to the subway. At 6:30, we were on our way, until... our subway train broke down. After sitting above the Charles River for a bit, our subway car was pushed into Boston Common. We saw Wes and waited in the dry station until there were no more lines to get on the Hopkinton-bound school buses. We boarded and managed to get to our proper corals about two minutes before the start. And - it was not raining! I was psyched!

The gun sounded, and off we went. The first two miles of the course were littered with black garbage bags, and discarded ponchos, mine included. I took off my jacket and tied it around my waist. People lined the street cheering us on. I had my name

pinned to my shirt, and it really struck me that these total strangers would come out in this nasty weather to cheer me on. The crowds were incredible. I was smiling.

By mile seven, my knee told me to take the Advil I had packed. It started to rain, and the jacket went back on. When we reached the half-marathon mark, I was thinking how nice it would be to cross the finish line now, when my Canadian running partner, Lanka, enthusiastically said “we can do this again!” I really was enjoying this experience so we continued. We could hear the high pitched roar of the Wellesley girls long before we saw them. I must have high-fived hundreds of hands. They were amazing and I kept smiling. (Note to the guys: This is a very good reason to run Boston.)

I began looking for my family during mile 17; it was a great distraction and really helped my psyche when I saw them. I ran over and hugged each one, but Tori kept pushing me away saying “Go, go, you’re losing time!” Frank tells me that the apple doesn’t fall far from the tree. It was so funny.

Miles 16-21 consist of four hills, the last of which is the infamous “Heartbreak Hill”. None would have been too difficult, that is, if they had occurred in the first ten miles of the race. I never saw the Citgo sign that signified the top of “Heartbreak” but felt my stride lengthen and was well aware that I was done with hills. My smile returned.

The last five miles were hard because I was tired, but I just kept chugging along to get to the finish. The crowds continued to cheer for me by name. I saw Frank and the girls again at the end. This time I did not stop, I wanted to be done. I kept telling myself that this is not as painful as childbirth and I did that three times. (Note to the guys: this may not be an effective technique for you.) Finally, the finish! I remembered to raise my arms to try to get a good finish photo, but my number may have been partially covered, so I may never see it. Afterward, I saw Colin, got my

stuff, met my family and saw Kim. She had run a PR in spite of the nasty conditions! Awesome!

So, I've formed a new opinion. Although marathons hurt, they can be an amazing experience, and maybe even a little bit fun.