

2009 & 2010 BQ's at 2008 CDM

Clarence DeMar is the only 7-time winner of the Boston Marathon, and he lived and worked as a printer in the Keene NH area. The Clarence Demar Marathon is typically held the last weekend in September, and “coincidentally”, that is the start of the qualifying period for the Boston Marathon to be held 18-19 months later. That’s where those hoping to double-dip a single BQ good enough for two Boston’s start their Fall marathon searches.

This was the 31st edition of this small, no-frills, but well-organized event. It is a beautiful course, abetted by the spectacular fall colors, but of course in that part of the country, it’s impossible to avoid having some hills. Despite some ominous forecasts and fairly heavy rain on Friday and Saturday, the Sunday race was held under cloudy skies with the occasional drizzle. It was humid and temperatures were in the 60’s.

I had run this race 5 years earlier and had mixed memories. I loved the course and the event, but was devastated to miss a BQ by 3.4 seconds. My time in 2003 was 3:46:03.4, and my time goal in 2008 was to secure a 2010 BQ, as I did already have two qualifying races for 2009. That meant coming in under 4:00 hours. Normally; that shouldn’t have been a concern, but my training was somewhat erratic and buying a new house involving a fair amount of travel had disrupted my normally disciplined training schedule through the summer. Nevertheless; a look back at my running log showed that I had somehow done the long runs, and managed to fit in most of the key workouts. I’d done speedwork, MP runs, and hills. With my base, I should be able to run a respectable race. After doing a “few” of these things, I kind of know my body and my conditioning. And I’m pretty good at estimating how I will perform.

Dennis and I headed up to New Hampshire Friday afternoon. The drive from NJ was uneventful, although it was raining cats and dogs. I had a pleasant surprise when I found out on Saturday that Mike, a friend of mine from Atlanta would be joining Dennis and me. We had a good pasta meal in Keene, washed down with some wine of course, and talked about expectations. I made the point that although I can predict my time almost to the second in shorter races, so much can happen in a marathon that it is virtually unpredictable. “I could run 3:40, or it could take me as long as 4:10”. But when pressed, I acknowledged that I’d probably run 3:50 the next day.

Race day – The first 9-10 miles of the course didn’t disappoint, and the scenery really was spectacular. The colors of the trees had changed just in time for the marathon, and it was hard to concentrate on the roads with all the leaves and streams acting as a distraction. Much of the first 7 miles are a gradual downhill, and it is difficult to hold back. It was like driving a car downhill with one foot on the brake. The second half of the course had totally changed from 5 years earlier. Although residential, it was not as boring as I thought it would be, and certainly had its share of hills. I’d say the new course was somewhat more difficult than the old. The infamous hill just after mile 22 is ridiculously steep, but thankfully is only about 2/10 of a mile in length.

I ran quite steady and hard. I found that I really was pushing a bit too much at first, but again, it was hard to hold back. And this was definitely not a negative-split course. “Do what you can; when you can; while you can”. Spectators were few in number, but were very supportive. Many of the local residents were conscripted to man the water stops and did a yeoman’s job. Although clearly I wasn’t picking up the pace in the second half, I found that I was constantly passing people. And the harder the terrain, the more ground I made up and my overall position in the race improved. I think I must have dropped 8-10 runners on the mile-22 hill alone. And then I passed quite a number in the final 2 miles, as obviously the hills had taken their toll on many of the participants. I don’t recall being passed by anyone in the final 8-10 miles.

Overall I can’t be unhappy with the result and the way I ran. I could tell early on that breaking 4:00 was not going to be a problem, and redirected my energies to running a sub 3:50. When it became

clear in the last few miles that I was on track to do just that, I seriously considered slowing down so that I would cross the line in exactly 3:50:00 as I had forecasted. But I had too much energy, and that's just not my nature.

I adhered to many of the practices that had seemingly worked well for me the last couple of marathons, and they are now part of my routine. That includes carbo-depletion for 3 days before carbo-loading, and knocking back a handful of chocolate-covered coffee beans an hour or so before the start. After much debate, I ended up running in my Asics Speedstars, and they served me well. I see no reason not to don these light racing shoes for future marathons. So; I've now secured a BQ for the next few years, and I can relax at Richmond in 7 weeks. That will make 3 years in a row and 5 times in total doing Boston, and it doesn't get much better than that for this runner.

Splits (missed mile marker 22):

1-----8:03.87-----8:03.87-----downhill; whoa Big Guy!
2-----8:34.97-----16:38.84-----better; brakes on
3-----8:18.00-----24:56.84-----a bit fast again
4-----8:25.37-----33:22.21-----better
5-----8:37.31-----41:59.52-----that's a good goal pace
6-----8:33.85-----50:33.37-----getting into a solid groove
7-----8:32.23-----59:05.60-----ditto

8-----9:11.15-----1:08:16-----Bio break; pace unchanged
9-----8:37.27-----1:16:54-----back on track
10-----8:39.00-----1:25:33-----don't remember this part of the course
11-----9:06.41-----1:34:39-----Bio; gel
12-----9:09.94-----1:43:49-----Big, long hill
13-----8:22.57-----1:52:11-----made up some time
13.1-----1:53:10

14-----8:49.77-----2:01:01-----field is spreading out
15-----8:45.76-----2:09:47-----Ok; so we won't run a 3:40
16-----8:45.87-----2:18:33-----this seems to be my new pace
17-----8:56.54-----2:27:29-----too slow; don't let up
18-----8:53.49-----2:36:23-----modest improvement
19-----8:56.51-----2:45:19-----it's tough during this stretch
20-----8:41.21-----2:54:01-----made a concerted effort to pick it up (through a park)

21-----9:02.09-----3:03:03-----too much traffic here
22-----8:57:xx-----3:11:xx-----missed marker; averaged 22&23
23-----8:57:xx-----3:20:57-----very steep hill; ran well
24-----9:20.74-----3:30:17-----leg cramp; worried that I may have to stop
25-----8:20.50-----3:38:40-----suck it up and bear down – good mile
26-----8:54.62-----3:47:35-----passing a number of people
26.2---1:41.90-----3:49:16-----strong finish

Statistics:

Official time – 3:49:17
Pace – 8:44.7
AG Time – 3:08:49 (2nd best ever)
PLP – 66.2%
Overall – 79/241 (lots of dnf's?)
Gender – 67/184
Div (M50-59) – 23/57; (M55-59) – 4/25