

Hartford Marathon October 10, 2009

Andrew Paton

Hi fellow runners,

Today was a day for feeling the power all your prayers. Another finish. Another medal to hang with the other 50 odd marathons (and never look at again - strange isn't it?)

Some marathons are ego building and some are ... shall we say "character refining." I shall be a bit closer to pure gold when you see me tomorrow.

Usual huge crowd at the start. After the gun it took our group (the one aiming for a 3 hr 45 min finish) 2 minutes to cross the starting line. So first order of business was to shepherd our group (about 20 runners) up to what we call gun time.

That took all of 7 miles to regain the 2 lost minutes. After that it was plain sailing. Mile after mile right on time.....

and then came that moment that every marathoner dreads. It only happens now and then to me. Its that mile during which your legs have suddenly run out of gas. Ah, that's when the refining starts.

First thing you do is grit your teeth and push harder. Today - no use, I got to mile 21 and the seconds began to slip away. So on to plan "B" - take in some energy gels and extra water and shorten the steps. By mile 22 the seconds were no longer leaking away - there was an ice berg sized hole in the bag!

This is when the character refining gets into top gear. Everything shuts down and your mind goes into that foot shuffling mode known to marathoners. I whipped off the pace shirt and announced to some very startled companions that they were on their own from then on. Half of them sped away - the others started doing some trudging of their own.

At last the begining of mile 25 came in view and I poured on the energy - arms pumping, groaning and gasping and in my mind I was flying again. In reality however mile 25 was slower than mile 24!!! So by the end of that mile I was resolved to assume the death march attitude. For me that means stare about 5 feet ahead and just keep getting one foot in front of another.

My friend, Dr. Sam Vassal of the Bronx Bethany Church of the Nazarene was waiting about a mile from the end to cheer us home (there were other Nazarenes in the race and one of them Rev. Brian Kiddo was running to raise money for a good cause at Bronx Bethany. Into my mental fog I heard them calling my name. Wow! what a joy. I had to go back and greet all those sunny faces. They gave me a mental boost and I soldiered on to finish about 25 minutes past my projected time.

It must have been in those last 6 miles that your prayers prevailed. Thanks guys!

Andrew J Paton