

Loch Ness Marathon – October 4, 2009

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Loch Ness! We've heard it about all our lives. Now we were on our way to explore Scotland and see the famous Loch (and Nessie?) We arrived in Edinburgh on a Tuesday morning, Susan and I had snagged a 1st class upgrade but really couldn't enjoy the full reclining seats, 5 course meal, drinks, etc while knowing that John and Holly, our traveling partners, were stuck in steerage. But somehow we managed. We toured Edinburgh for a couple of days then drove to Loch Ness. To see more about our trip visit: <http://brookpeople.com/Scotland.html>

Saturday before the marathon the weather was horrendous, wind gusts to 70 mph, rain squalls, but punctuated with many rainbows! We thought the roof was going to come off. What a fine lot we were. John had missed most of the last month of training due to plantar fasciitis and was fretting over DNF'ing or even starting. Susan had missed two months of base training due to an inflamed tendon and now had her neuroma acting up. I had aggravated my hamstring after the Lehigh Valley Half and had cut back my training the past 3 weeks to some easy jogs. So there we were huddled in our little cottage with the wind howling and rain streaking horizontally contemplating our fate. Holly offered words of encouragement, although I think she probably considers us a bit nuts.

Sunday however couldn't have been more perfect: clear, 10°C (that's 50°F) and a light breeze. The only glitch was the bus ride. There was a snafu with the buses and we ended up sitting on the bus for 1 1/2 hours before they began their 1 hour drive to the start! There were almost pee riots on the ride, forcing the drivers to pull off on the 1 lane road (but with 2 way traffic.) It was interesting seeing these full size tour buses, some double deckers, trying to find room to pull over. It was probably more interesting to cars attempting to come up the road the other way and running into this caravan.

Just prior to the start a bagpipe band marched through the corrals (it's Scotland, what would you expect!) After a late start (50 minutes) we were on our way on what has to be one of the most scenic marathon courses anywhere. I should mention hilly also. There were no flat sections (lots of "*another bloody hill!*" yells) and there was a rather major one just where you really need it, mile 17. I was really enjoying myself, clicking off 8 minute miles, until passing our cottage at the base of that hill. I got in stride with a young Scot and we powered up that hill (thinking, not very well mind you, "Hey, I'm a Hill Runner, go for it") passing everyone, to chants of "well done, mates!" We ate that hill up which was much longer, and steeper than Heartbreak. Then the hill and the course got even as when I got to the top I ran straight into the WALL. Never hit it so hard. So it was yet another old man shuffle from there and a 3:46:47 finish. Yeech, that shuffle is both embarrassing and painful!

Susan finished in fine fashion especially considering that had she missed a lot of training early on and had to deal with foot issues during the run. John ran it cautiously and really enjoyed the first 24.5 miles and survived the rest. After the cramps subsided and I came back to life and quit mumbling "never again" I joined the others in agreeing that this was a great marathon.

While we never saw Nessie, we did see some spectacular scenery while driving around this beautiful country. Scotland is wonderful place to visit, people are friendly, speak a variant of English, and the food really is good as are the ales. We can fill you in on details on a club run soon.



