

Northern Central Trail Marathon 2010

Andrew Paton

Dear fellow hill runners

Yesterday I completed marathon number sixty something (lost count somehow) It was in cold conditions down in Baltimore, Maryland. The Great Trail Marathon is just that - almost 26 miles of running on a trail through the forest. The course starts at a school, winds down some steep hills, picks up the trail at a huge steel bridge and then climbs for about 11 miles to a turn around point. The part requiring the most determination is to get back up those hills to the school.

Colin and I were well on track for a BQ and running easily together between miles 11 and 20. Most of the race went well, but at mile 21 I developed some stomach problems and was walking by mile 23. The hoped for time of 3 hours and 45 minutes soon slipped away and I finished 10 minutes later than expected. There was a 20 mph head wind in our faces at the start of the trail and - would you believe it - the wind was in our faces at the end as well. Colin achieved his BQ time.

It was grueling enough to make me seriously consider quitting marathoning for good. Today I'm paying the price for the last half hour of pushing beyond the limits. I'm hobbling around here like a very old man. Wait a minute - come to think of it I do this at the end of almost every marathon! I have qualified for the elitist Boston Marathon and might make that my last. Why not go out with a bang?!

If, on the other hand - like Samson - my strength returns and I do a 3H45min at Boston - I know I'll be tempted to put in one more year of marathoning.

So at the end of the race it was a dash back to the hotel for a quick shower (during which I managed to slip and hurt an arm) and then on the road for 3 hours so as to be back here in time to attend a 50th wedding anniversary celebration. Good time. Great meal. Excellent couple, but by 9pm I was falling asleep at the table. I drive us everywhere, but last night Carol was a valuable chauffeur.

Andrew