

Lehigh Valley Health Network Marathon for Via
Sunday, September 12, 2010

Race Report by Jim Hardin

I ran my first Boston Marathon in the spring. Since that event, I was pretty excited to run another marathon. I was looking for a marathon that was earlier in the season. I spend a lot of my time coaching sports for my kids. (3 hour training runs & the need for rest and caloric consumption normally hinders my ability to coach.) A September marathon would allow me to do most of my training in the summer when the kid's sports schedule is not as demanding. It was important to "get it over with" before Football and Soccer seasons were in full swing. I was also looking for something closer to home. As much as I liked Boston, it was a long weekend event. There was some travel involved and it wasn't conducive to having the entire family there (even though many of my fellow runners did just that). Therefore, I was looking to switch it up and do a local marathon.

I found that some other HRHR's ran parts of the Lehigh Valley Via race. Got mixed reviews, pretty nice & shaded, but not much fan support (most of it is run on the Lehigh River tow path). The last couple of years it was unseasonably HOT. I checked with the race director for expected temperatures. The last two years the race started at 75 & ended at 90. So, I was a bit concerned about the potential temps. It was fairly flat, running mostly on the canal towpath next to the Lehigh River. I was hopeful that they wouldn't get 90 degree temps 3 years in a row.

The training went well. I followed a Steve Spence 12 week training plan shared with me by John W. It consisted of one long run per week, one speed work day and two or three other "fill in" days. I kept a pretty good fitness level since Boston (even though I had my fair share of chicken wings & beer). So the 12 week plan was pretty good. By the time I was tired from the training, it was time to taper. I was able to train with other HRHR's for the marathon, but mostly just for a portion of the long runs. No one else was stupid enough to sign up for such an early marathon. Most decided to run a marathon in Oct/Nov when the temps were more suitable. Erik H ran most of my long runs with me. He did the complete mileage, even though he didn't need the miles for a race (someone better check his sanity). The course was close to home, so I was fortunate to train on the actual race course. Some of my longer training runs started at the finish of the course and I ran toward the start. I did an "out and back" on the trail. So I knew what to expect for the last 9 or 10 miles.

I always like the idea of the taper, but when it happens, I feel guilty for not running. Anyway, the taper went well. I was well rested and properly hydrated. I picked up my race packet early & had everything setup the night before.

I signed up for the NYC Marathon through the lottery for the past 3 years. They have denied me 3 times in a row. As you probably know, if you are denied 3 times in a row, you are guaranteed entry the following year. However, there was a part of me that wanted to actually qualify for NYC. I needed a 3:10. They are not as nice as Boston. If you have a 3:10:01, you don't qualify. So my qualifying time had to be 3:09:59 or better. Strange how 60 seconds makes such a difference over 26.2 miles?

During the taper, I had a lot of time on my hands. Most of the time spent looking up the weather. I don't know why, but I must have checked it 1000 times. I was hoping that it would change. Since I was able to see the 10 day forecast, they were calling for 90% chance of significant rain. The forecast didn't change. So, I probably didn't need sunscreen. The day of the event was rain, calling for more rain - maybe clearing a little in the afternoon. It was still dark when I got to the start line. And of course, it was raining. It was a bit tricky navigating around the puddles. Much of the course was a trail, so the puddles were getting bigger and the mud was getting softer. About the 10 mile mark, my feet were totally soaked. I wondered if it made any sense to navigate around the puddles or just save time by running through them. Then of course I was concerned of what was in the puddle & didn't want to twist an ankle. So I continued to dance around them.

I was able to get through it pretty well. There was not much fan support, except for the relay exchange zones. There was some excitement there. The exchange zones were also nicely placed to match my gu schedule 5.5, 12, 16.8, 22.6. They served water at these zones & it was good to wash down the gu. The toughest thing about the relay runners was their pace. You may run into a walker or a speedster. You just had to concentrate on running your own race.

I kept my splits pretty even. I even managed to bank a little bit of time. However, I was concerned with banking too much time & having nothing at the end. Thanks to Garmin, my splits looked like this: 6:44; 7:03; 7:11; 7:10; 6:56; 7:03; 7:06; 7:08; 7:10; 7:03; 7:01; 7:12; 7:13; 7:14; 7:05; 7:13; 7:18; 7:20; 7:26; 7:52.....wait, what is going on? 7:52??? Every mile my watch would beep and I would look down & it would tell me 7:0whatever & I was happy. What is going on? I thought I was moving fast, but when I looked down at mile 24, I saw 7:52? This is the hard part, I had to dig deep. Everyone knows the feelings that I had. It hurts and you want to stop, but it would hurt more if I stopped. I had to ignore my body and push through the pain. Final splits were 7:21; 7:24; 1:21 (.2). The last ½ mile, I felt dizzy, but kept pushing. In the final few blocks, my wife & kids were supposed to waive to me near the Mexican Restaurant. I had no idea where the Mexican Restaurant was. I was barely aware of where my feet were. I saw the clock, 3:09:06. A NYQ! Where is the massage tent???

This was the first time that I took advantage of the massage tent. I highly recommend it. They gave me a massage & stretched out my hammies & IT bands. Even though I was still hurting, in the prior marathons, I was more sore and it took me longer to recover. So, I am looking forward to taking some time off, maybe running a ½ marathon in the spring and getting ready for NYC 2011.