

MY PHILADELPHIA MARATHON STORY

By Karen Robinson

I knew the minute I walked out of the hotel room that I was going to love that day. My mom and I headed out from our hotel room and I have to say the first thing I said to her was “I think the weather is going to cooperate with us”. I hate to be cold and I knew from some friends in the club that I should run in shorts and a short sleeve shirt – I was really dreading taking off my sweats! But by the start it really turned out to be a beautiful morning, perfect running weather!

I met Holly and Frank McDonald in front of the Rocky Statue (quite inspirational), we loaded my mother up with all of our belongings and after a quick trip to the restrooms (the woods), we were off to the start. We all decided to line up with the 7:00 – 7:30 pacers because we knew the start was crowded with the half – marathoners too and we thought we would be better off in this bracket. You could just feel the excitement between us. We set our game plan – I had taken the wristbands for the 3:40 time from the Clif-Bar Pacing team (even though we weren’t planning on running with them) and we were going to try to stick to the mile – splits that they had listed. This turned out to be perfect because it kept us on track the whole course (we were well ahead of where we wanted to be at every mile). I will use those wristbands every time I have a specific finish time in my mind that I would like to hit – it took the guesswork out of everything and it was free to use this service.

The actual race was so much fun! The people on the streets really were into cheering us on and calling out names to all the runners – Holly’s name kept falling off and people were calling her everything from Hole to Hoy – it was a riot! I also found out that Frank is a great singer and can do the YMCA even in full stride (a multi-talented man). We all played upon the crowd and when the people started to quiet down one of us would yell something to make them start up again. At one point I looked up next to me and there was Colin! It’s funny how you can find someone in the midst of 6,000 people if you really want to. We ran with him for a few miles and he had some info on where the other runners from the club were so we knew where to look for them along the course.

The Half came up quick and my mother was there cheer us on and to field the shirts and paraphernalia that we needed to discard. I have to say, I’m going to send this to her as well as all of you and I think she’s just the best mom – she really tries support my brother and I and our running efforts as much as she can. She had a full time job when I was in high school but always managed to rearrange her schedule to be at every race and things really haven’t changed in 20 years. If she can find a way, she will be there and never complains no matter what the weather- so to my mom I have to say Thank You in a big way!

Around mile 16 I felt great and I knew that I should go for the gusto so that’s what I did. Holly and I decided to split and off I went. This was a bit scary because I didn’t know what to expect for the rest of the race and I was second guessing myself (maybe I

shouldn't have taken off so fast) by mile 18 or 19. For just a few minutes I was really starting to feel like "my nuts and bolts were becoming a little loose but my doors weren't falling off yet" as some of you say. That's when I saw my old friend Elodie Ferrante coming the other way (she was on mile 22 or 23). I had no idea she was going to be there but Elodie was my team-mate on Cross Country and Track in High School and on 9/11 Elodie's husband was killed in the WTC attacks. She is a single mom, suddenly supporting two children and really is an inspiration to every wife and mother in the world. When I called her name, she put her hand out and said "That's my girl!". For a split second we were on the same team again and we gave each other the hardest high five I've ever felt and then she was gone. All I kept thinking was that if she can do this with everything that she has to deal with on a day-to-day basis, I can too and I can do it in the time that I want. I have to say that magically or by the grace of God – whatever you believe in- all the pain was gone and I felt great again!

The turn around at the 20 mile mark was great – Loved the college kids with the beer stations! With a 10K left I knew I was almost done. I had a good time cheering on all the other HRH as I was running by – lots of high fiving and YOU CAN DO IT's. I missed a couple of you but I was looking for you anyway!

By the time I hit mile 25 I kept thinking – What happened to that wall I was supposed to hit? I guess I should just thank my lucky stars I didn't hit it because before I knew it I was crossing the finish line in full stride and there was my mom! I ended up running 3:32:22 which was over 10 minutes faster than what I needed to qualify for Boston! I can honestly say it was a really proud moment in my life.

All in all the experience was unforgettable. I learned a lot about myself as a person, and as a runner. It just makes me want to run more miles and marathons again and again and again! Boston here I come!