

Passing the Torch – Mohawk-Hudson River 2010

Admittedly; I went into this one with a distinct lack of motivation and a desire to get it over with. Perhaps it was because I had already secured my 2011 BQ at Boston 2010 and perhaps it was because I'm just tired of marathoning and marathon training right now. Nevertheless; I did register months ago for my 5th Mohawk-Hudson River Marathon with the objective of securing a 2012 BQ and hopefully improve on my corral for 2011.

My unspoken goals – if I had any time goals – were:

C – sub 4:00 BQ

B – realistically should have been able to run sub 3:50 on this course

A – sub 3:45 (that's probably my limit at age 61)

One thing happened that made me look forward to this weekend was that my 27-year-old niece would also be running. It was extra special for me because we lost my sister (her Mom) this summer after a long bout with cancer. I'm sure that thoughts of her Mom went through her mind many times while she was training and racing on this day. My niece had been a star soccer player at college, but I always felt that running was her true calling. She is a natural.

About two weeks before the race, I picked up the nastiest case of poison ivy you've ever seen. After 12 days on steroids, it cleared up, but then I had a nagging back problem. It also behaved itself by marathon weekend, so I felt physically fit. Or as much as one can be at 61.

The weather? A non-issue. Almost perfect conditions, with only the slightest headwind the last 9 miles. It was not a factor in my race.

I decided that I'd start out at a pace that would be needed for my A and B goals, and let the chips fall where they may. I was conscious of trying to go no faster than 8:30/mile, making allowances for some of the early downhill sections.

Miles 1-5 went more or less to plan (8:11, 8:36, 8:23, 8:20, & 8:26). Ok; I cheated a bit, but I felt comfortable. Bio breaks on miles 6, 9, and 15 (some day you'll be old too!) caused those miles to be >9:00, but I was still hanging on until after crossing the train tracks at 17 ³/₄ and for the next mile. But that ugly part of the course on the highway took its toll, and miles 19 onwards were a struggle. I quickly realized that I would not be breaking 3:50 (although I think I knew that by halfway despite the splits) and that unless I fought hard, even the minimum goal of 3:59:59 was in jeopardy. So I fought hard, and like so many times before, questioned why we subject ourselves to this misery. It wasn't one of those marathons where I finished with any giddy-up. In fact; for at least the last half of the race, my feet and toes were killing me. I wore my trusty Asics Speedstars, but either I tied them too tight or they have simply lost sufficient cushioning needed for marathons. With the benefit of 20:20 hindsight, I should have worn my Brooks Defyance. Live and learn.

At about mile 24 ¹/₂, I heard a voice coming up behind me. It's my niece and she's saying "it's in the genes". She looked so strong and fresh, and I urged her to go ahead before she harbored any thoughts of running in with the old man. But as luck would have it, an official photographer appeared on the course, and we posed for a family photo before she went on to run a 22-minute PR in her 2nd marathon. I was so proud. However, being as competitive as I am, it also reinforced the feeling I'd been having for miles and miles that after 54 marathons, I was getting too old for this game, and it's time (almost ;-)) to step aside for the next generation. Young legs beat old experience every time.

Despite how I feel even a few days later (sore, tired, and old), I will register for Boston 2011, as I'm not naïve enough to think that time won't heal wounds. Not sure what I will do differently to prepare, but the Boston experience is too delicious to pass up since I'm Qualified. And darn it; this race was good for Boston 2012 as well! That's 7 BQ races for me, but no elation this time.

Other than my niece, almost everybody else I know had a tough time – either clocking times much slower than expected or that they were capable of, or others that didn't finish. And there was no apparent reason for all of us to perform poorly on this day. The course is good and the weather was fine; there just doesn't seem to be a logical explanation. Or viable excuse. It happens with marathons, and I'll be damned if I can figure it out. The marathon is a tough mistress and one can never make the mistake of underestimating just how hard marathons are. 26 miles, 385 yards is a long way.

Statistics:

Clock time – 3:59:04

Chip time – 3:59:00

Pace – 9:08

AG Time – 3:11:39

PLP – 65.2%

Overall – 448

Gender – 314

Div - 14