



May Aston <maygreg2000@gmail.com>

2009 Sarasota Marathon

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> Short Version: I ran my 12th marathon in 4:48:15. It was hot and humid. I survived and will run again. Lovely wife May "crewed" for me and draped my neck with my medal at the finish.

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> Long Version: As expected, Sarasota was warm and humid. Unexpectedly, my 12th marathon kicked my butt. I had run this as my 6th in 2007. As my 12th, I knew what to expect - the 6am start, the course, the bridge, and the need to hydrate.

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> The positive spin is that I started and completed my 38th race since 11/2003 (12 marathons, 15 halves and various other distances), and broke 5:00 hours for the 11th time. And I've recovered from the struggling 5:38 of Albuquerque in August. But I had expected a better time than 4:48:15, #277 of 425. I had hoped to improve upon my previous 4:30, but lost that pace by 15 or 16. As the temperature rose from 62 at the start to something over 70, while the humidity stayed quite high, I drank an estimated 120-140 oz.

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> The training prep had gone relatively well, with the Charlotte Thunder Road half in December leading to 18- and 24-mile runs in January, before some serious tapering. I was rested, relaxed and ready. I even slept pretty well before my 3:00 am wakeup. The alarm was set for 3:30 in case. With a 4:45 departure, and a start in the dark, it was a short night.

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> As I recalled from 2007, I would be dripping after just 3 miles. I carried 2x 20 oz bottles of G2, finishing one in 3 miles and the second at 7. The well-stocked water and Gatorade-providing volunteers happily refilled my bottle and I regularly poured water over my head in an attempt to keep my body temperature down.

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> Surprisingly, I passed May at a volunteers' table around mile 6, much earlier than I had expected. That was a little disappointing since she was my "crew" and I was hoping to get my Gu and G2 refills a bit later. Fortunately, she phoned me at mile 10 to tell me she would be meeting me at mile 11. I was ready to sit down and change socks, re-apply vaseline and discard some bandaids that were clumping on my toes. A couple toes were looking pretty bad, but I don't think they got much worse after the change. During my 2 minute break, my 71 y.o. nemesis Chuck passed me and called out my name. We run together on Anna Marie Island when I'm in Florida, and had run several miles together in 2007 before he left me behind. (I beat him by 15 minutes in Virginia Beach 3/08, but didn't know it until afterwards.)

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> I returned to my sub-10 minute pace and set about the task of catching Chuck, closing the 30 second gap over the next mile. We ran together most of miles 12 to 15, but by 16, I was falling off the pace. The sun came out and it was time to engage my Thumps (sunglasses with MP3). The last 10 miles would be mostly on my own.

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> The race had been very crowded at the start, with 2000 half marathoners and only 425 marathoners, winding through narrow residential streets. But after the half-ers peeled off (and a fellow yelled out "my people" regarding our smaller group), running was mostly single file and stretched out.

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> My conservative, steady 10:15 pace over the first 15 miles seemed quite speedy in comparison to the final 10 which I clicked off in 11's and 12's. I don't think I ran more than 2 minutes at a time (with 30-60 second walks in between) during that last, very long stretch. Rather than bemoan my lack of endurance, I tried very hard to be thankful that I had gone out slowly - how much would I have struggled in the second half if I had been more optimistic at the start? I reminded myself of a mantra I had read recently: focus on the mile you're running. (Don't think about the ones past, or any of those remaining.) I also thought of "Some days you're the windshield, today I was a bug." When I saw a sign that said "Use the Force" I shouted "Do or Do Not - There is No Try" per Yoda. At about mile 24, I broke into a slow motion run as a residential home blared the theme from Chariots of Fire.

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> My sister Debby was near the finish line, and May was waiting to drape my neck with the finisher's medal. I was very excited and pleased to finish with no significant pains beyond the expected soreness. After returning to Debby's home, I sat at the pool edge to cool my legs, which brought some good relief. It took a long nap before I was ready to eat.

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> Not my slowest, but a long way from the speed (ha!) I prefer. On a good day, I still have 4:15-4:30 (and in my dreams, a sub-4) in me, but not when the temperature exceeds 60. My three fastest have had temps of 25-50 degrees tops.

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> Already thinking about an April or May race, before trying again to get into NYC. Once this Marathon bug got in my system, it appears to have grabbed hold. Stay tuned for the next installment. I'll keep writing as long as you keep reading.

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> I have many pictures, including those taken with my cell phone (hey, I wasn't running too fast).

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