



Britt Van Dine, SMRC member and friend, is submitting the largest portion of this race journal. Britt supported most of the SMRC members while riding his road bike up and down the course. Since he had communication with those that he saw on the course, he can relay to us a more encompassing perspective of the race.

Austin Marathoners and Half Marathoners had a talk with Mother Nature, and she cooperated. Race-day temperatures were ideal, with temps in the mid to upper 40s at the start of the race. You know that Mother Nature stepped in, because the day before and after the marathon, a cold front had blown in with 15 mph+ gusts of wind.

As for me, I was showing signs of illness the day before and the morning of the marathon. I had a light cough with some phlegm buildup and a slight loss of energy. But I was not going to let that slow me down. I have been training for 5 months for this race. I prepared well for this race by carbo-loading and hydrating the week of the marathon. I also continued to hydrate and take in electrolytes and Clif Shots along the course. I had a good night's sleep before the race. I was familiar with the course. I had a strategy. I tapered for this event. Most importantly is the fact that I had gained knowledge from my last marathon (also my first marathon) and applied this knowledge with the effect of experiencing wisdom. Knowledge applied = Wisdom

Now let us see what Britt has to relay...

Britt's Perspective

I should start by sharing that Randall and I drove up to Austin the day before the race to look at the new course first hand. After completing the drive, I just had one thing to say – this is not an easy course. There are peaks and dips along the route, with aggressive grades that might have the tendency to demoralize the participants of this event. (After the race, I heard several runners say exactly the same thing.)

On race day, I was on the course about 45 minutes after the race began. My first objective was to reach Randall and monitor his progress. I found him just after the halfway point, cruising along at a low 2:50s pace. He looked comfortable and strong, working with two other runners at the time. After a little chase and chat, I took his glasses, gloves and hat, and dropped back to intercept the next few runners from the SMRC who were in the race. Unfortunately, this was not as easy as it sounds.

I knew that Woody Stallings is a 3:25 marathoner, and he would have been the next runner I could cheer on in the race. So, moving backward on the course and watching the faces as I did, I got to the 3:30 pace group and still didn't see Woody. This was probably due to the fact that he was running in disguise, wearing one of those home-grown chin and neck warmers that was sure to come in handy on this particular day running into the cool northwesterly winds. (Sorry, Woody. I was never able to pick you out of the crowd.)

I continued to ride against the flow to pick up Elizabeth Wills, who consistently finishes marathons around the 4:00 point. At this point in the race, the flow of runners was continuous and, at times, heavy. This made the task of picking out a friendly face even more challenging. After I reached the 4:00 pace group, I was still unable to find Elizabeth. I loitered around for a few more minutes and decided I had better get back to Randall, as he was about to begin his homestretch to the finish line.

Here is a quick note about giving support to runners on a loop course. Try to park on the inside of the loop. This offers you the best mobility when it comes to moving around the course. This year's race was very accessible by bicycle with many bike lanes throughout the city. I had a great time doing this (this was the second time I've ridden support for this race.)

I got back to Randall just as he was reaching 23 miles. His form was solid, but the race was taking its toll on him. He said he had walked for about a minute back at 22 miles. He would walk again at the 23-mile station and a couple more times before he finished. Each time he did, I would say "If you can walk, you can walk fast!" This sounded logical and spurred him to move just noticeably quicker. I then would say, "If you can walk fast, then you can jog!" The result was Randall would gradually move back into a run. We stayed together until I was forced off the course in the final quarter mile. Randall trained like a champ this year for the race, and his goal of a sub-3:00 marathon (2:57:39) was achieved. Way to go, Randall!!

After reveling in his glory, I returned to the course to offer support to those who were still out there. Going backwards again, I got to the 4:00 group and still didn't see Elizabeth. Then shortly, a familiar figure was approaching at the 23.5-mile point. It was Elizabeth, and she was also in good form. I rode along with her, relaying Randall's time and gathered her thoughts on the course. She was cruising along at about a 4:10 pace and was quite content to not be pushing too hard with the conditions of this race. I admire your strength and optimism, Elizabeth!

I finally decided to link up with Laura Mason and, hopefully, Teresa Medina. This would prove to be my biggest challenge, as they would be just approaching the 18-mile station right about now. The difficulty was that the 18-mile station was the farthest station from the finish line. By the time I reached Laura, she was alone at the 19-mile point. She said Teresa had fallen back and, we later found out from Teresa's daughter, had pulled out of the race just short of the half-way point due to a foot pain suffered during a training run the weekend before. Our hearts go out to you, Teresa.

It was also at this point where Laura had caught up to Lisa Medina, who was in high spirits as she moved ever closer to her goal of completing the race. Lisa had her own personal motivator and cheer team captain (her husband, Joe) running at her side. Coincidentally, this was my first

opportunity to meet both Lisa and Joe (it was nice to meet you both.) As it turned out, Elma Minor had also staked out this position to cheer on Laura and Lisa. Elma ran along at Laura's side for a half mile, and then departed to get to the finish line in time to see Laura come across.

I stayed with Laura as she continued in her usual fashion of run/walking and chipping away at the closing miles. Laura continued to be ever enthusiastic about her progress, while also ranting about the poor layout of this year's course. I rode along, providing her with commentary on what to expect from the course as we moved ever closer to the finish. I separated from her at the 24-mile marker, just as she was about to attack the big hill on the UT campus. I ditched my bike, put on my running shoes and returned to the course in time to pick her up again approaching the "1000-meters remaining" point (a final gut-check hill climb for the runners.) We got to the top together, and I pulled off the course to allow her to finish in a final dash to the "tape" on her own. It was not a PR for Laura, but it wasn't too far off (5:43:49). Laura, your tenacity and perseverance never cease to amaze me!

Also participating in the combination event were Charlene Martinez (who completed the Half in about 2:26) and Camille Banda (who crossed the finish line just after Randall finished.) I met Camille after the race when Phillip Adams (who was also on the sidelines as support) introduced her as his fiancée. We all learned that he popped the question on the night before the race at the Capitol. Congratulations to the both of you!!

I would be very remiss if I failed to mention Mark Brendalen's part in the event. Mark parked near the 18-mile station and ran for a mile with Randall, offering cheers of encouragement along the way. Mark took Randall's long-sleeved T-shirt and wished him luck for the remaining miles. Mark, I hope you realize how much your support means to your friends!

This was a great opportunity for Mark, Elma, Phillip, Joe and me to offer what felt like not very many words of encouragement in an attempt to lift and motivate our friends and loved ones and help them reach that finish line. For those of you who dream of completing a marathon, come out and offer cheers of support and encouragement. It could have an influence in your own motivation. As for me, this may be just the kick in the rear I needed to get my training back on track.

In summary: five hours in the saddle, no wrecks or collisions, and one flat tire -- \$5.89. The joy of seeing and helping to motivate my friends to achieve a personal goal -- priceless.

And now, back to Randall...

Distance Challenge

Laura and I completed the Distance Challenge. We have already been invited to the D.C. party held at RunTex on Riverside in mid-March. At the party we will receive our running jackets and completion and placement awards.

I am the first male SMRC runner to complete the Distance Challenge Series. (Sorry David A.) The D.C. proved to be a highly successful race series for me in regards to my placing. I was able

to place in my age group in the last 4 D.C. races! Furthermore, I maintained my 2nd place position in my age-group category in the D.C.

What's Next?

Many of you have inquired as to what is next on my running agenda, now that I have completed the Distance Challenge and the Austin Marathon. I have not decided. But I do know of two alternatives that I am juggling in my mind.

The first option is to stop running long distance events now. My observations are that marathons are not an example of moderation for this body. My experience has been that applying moderation in all aspects of life will have the effect of allowing you to experience more of a balanced life. Yet, here is the funny thing. In order to experience and know balance, you must often experience the opposite first. This is often experienced by the young, and is also referred to as "life." So this is a good transition into the second option.

The second option is to continue using the sport of running as my main source of exercise for the body for the next couple of years, and to run the San Antonio, Boston, and N.Y. Marathons before I retire from my long-distance-running career. San Antonio is the city in which I was born, and now we have a professional and well-organized and supported Rock and Roll Marathon that is worth the endeavor.

Have a great running year!

Randall and Britt
SMRC Members and Supporters