

I went into Sugarloaf with the goal of running below 4 hours. My training performance and mindset going into the race exceeded what I thought I was capable of. My overall mantra for the race was pace discipline. This has been the hardest part of running long distances for me to grasp. On the final 3 long runs leading up, something started to click. I had figured out that if I can prepare myself for the late miles, I could finish how I traditionally start, fast. When the gun sounded at Cathedral Pines, I made the mistake of starting my watch on the gun and not when I crossed the timing stripes. Rookie mistake. So I always came up very short of the mile markers. That got longer as the race progressed. My race plan for the marathon was to start 10-15 seconds above my goal pace for the race. I would settle in and relax and think about how I was conserving for the final 10k. I hit mile 1 at 9:17. Perfect. I knew after mile 5, I'd start to see some rolling hills. Mile 8 was the start of the climb I had dreaded. Anyway, miles 1-3, I went out a little faster on mile 3 than I had planned, but I felt great. I was well hydrated, maybe a little over. Mile 7 saw a steep little hill that caught me by surprise. I knew the long climb was coming so I chose to be moderate. My body, on the other hand, had other plans. I muscled up and over the hill with a little labored breathing but I was doing good. By the time I got to the long climb, I realized it was not a big deal. I even questioned if it was over and mentally prepared for the final climb to be around the next bend, but we dropped down to the entrance of Sugarloaf. I had anticipated a high 9:00 pace for a couple of miles but I only had a single mile at 9:55 and that was from my second pee break and a water bottle refill. After mile 10, I decided I was ready to drop my pace to the 8:50's until the half marathon point. I had confidence in my fitness that my body would be fine. I had zero achiness and discomfort in my legs. I also had a tremendous amount of confidence because I knew that I had a long gradual down into Kingfield. I was conservative on the sharp drop at mile 10-11. I could feel those days in the gym doing kettle squats paying off. When I hit mile 16, I mentally told myself that I had single digits left to finish. Another huge boost of confidence because everything felt awesome. I was pacing in the 8:40-:50's. I tried to talk myself into slowing down, but I found refuge at 8:50. I was able to settle in on that pace. Mile 20.....the switch flipped. I was alone on the course. I had no one near me. I talked to myself out loud..."Your goal is close, you have a decision. You can stay right where you are or you can get curious." Mile 20 8:49....I took it one mile at a time from there...Each mile giving me more and more confidence that I had reserves in the tank. I had yet to feel tired. I was not even at the door of the pain cave. I had a little tightness in my calves, but I was feeling very good. Confidence was through the roof. I growled to myself "Lets fucking do this. Im getting my goal, but by how much." Mile 21...8:44. I maintained some level of conservation for the first halves of each mile, then I'd press on the gas the last .4 Mile 22...8:39. When I had 4 miles left, I was as low as I wanted to go. Now, I just wanted to sustain for the last couple of miles. I started to get a rush of emotion, but stopped myself. "Not yet Jeff, Not Yet." Mile 23...8:41...I had a 5K left, another wave of emotion hit, thinking about how

much has happened in the last 5 months. I did not want this to end. Mile 24...8:35, another boost of confidence washed over me, my average pace was below 9:00, I was 8:57 average at this point. The run into Kingfield was awesome. I could feel the end Mile 25...8:36...talking to myself, "holy shit dude, this is happening. Remember this feeling, remember your plan and how you got here. You are going to crush you goal." The last half mile I was in the mid 7's.Mile 26...8:32...when I saw the finish, all of the emotions started to pour out of me, I threw one arm in the air. I heard my friends yell "Run Hippie Run" I crossed the finish and saw 3 hours 55 minutes 38 seconds. I had crushed my goal of sub 4 hours and my personal best by almost 30 minutes. Within 30 minutes of finishing I said, "I cant wait til my next marathon."

UNREAL.....

### Lessons Learned

Pace discipline mile 1-2,3 10 seconds above goal pace. Not 15. I had to gain some ground a couple of times and worried I was burning too much energy. If I had been a tad less conservative, I set myself up for less pressure to negative split with such a wide margin.

Managing the controllables

Utilizing facilities at the start

MINDFULNESS!!! Pre race exercise was essential and will be continuing to use daily.

Mental and physical toughness (Do Hard Things type toughness) :)

Processing grief this week helped me put things in perspective. It took the pressure off of me and getting my goal. I took refuge in the fact that I was at the start line, well trained, fully healthy, sober, and happy. The goal was still there but i let go of it. If I execute my plan, smile and have fun, its going to be a great day. This was the was the greatest racing experience Ive ever had. I felt physically and mentally outstanding for the entire race. I had gas left in the tank so I am interested to see where that sort of confidence is going to take me.