

My prep for the race had been a little patchy given I felt I lost some momentum after Boston. In particular I missed the faster tempo runs and those are always important for me to gain confidence in my ability to hold pace so I was a little concerned about that.

Given I had a few other friends running the race the prep the night before was disrupted by accommodating other people's needs and arrangements. Probably the nice thing to do but I found this very disruptive to my own pre race routine and made me slightly irritated rather than getting relaxed and focused into the race vibe.

One positive decision was going off on my own to drive the race course - that gave me a good feel on what to expect and where I could take advantage of the gradient and where I needed to be cautious. It appeared as if there were a number of flatter sections with possibly a little uphill so I knew I would have to be fast in other places to compensate for that.

Race morning I was again accommodating the needs of friends with an extra early drop off at the marathon start before getting myself to the half start very early. This gave me a few minutes to get myself focused and onto a relatively early bus to the start line - that turned out to be a very good decision as we passed the lines of cars still trying to get into the parking lot and onto the buses. Many were arriving up at the start only minutes before guntime.

The evening before and morning of race day I had been feeling pretty unwell with some GI issues - I had been able to eat but was not feeling great. This lingered into race morning and although I ate breakfast it was not sitting well and I felt very queasy on the bus ride to the start.

The start area was very crowded and so I opted for a quick run along the road to shake out some nerves and find some quieter porta potties. My stomach was not enjoying even the gentle jog.

When I got back to the start it was only minutes until guntime so I lined up and we were off.

The first two miles were flat and I ran as fast as I was comfortable going 7:10- 7:15 pace - my stomach settled a little. After mile 2, the downhill sections started so I thought what the hell, I may as well push a little and increased pace to sub 7 - which still felt OK. I took a gel at about 30 mins and had carried nuun in my water bottles so was slipping that regularly.

My pre race reccy made me think things flattened out about after 7 miles but the road still seemed to be down albeit a little less steep so I keep pushing along.

Somewhere in the 8-10 range I started running alongside another guy and we exchanged places a few times - that was good for spurring me on and helping me to push on and forget about the discomfort.

Things did flatten out after 11 but I knew by then I was on for a decent time and so pushed hard on the flatter sections through 12 and 13 to get me over the line for a PR.

Lessons learned

If it's a big (A) race then that might be the time to be a little selfish with your arrangements and routine - no time to be sociable or overly considerate if the race is important.

I was surprised by how I pushed through my ill feeling in the morning- there was way more in the tank that I expected.

The course elevation profile was more favorable than I had imagined - knowing that I might have pushed harder in the spots where I was sitting back waiting for the flat or hill which didn't come.

Get the gels in early.

Find a distraction when it begins to feel tough - the mid race interaction really helped me over a couple of tough miles