

My First Marathon by Jim Megerson



I ran my first marathon this past Saturday in the [Vasque Free State Trail Runs](#) at Clinton Lake near Lawrence, KS. I hadn't really been training as much as I'd like. In fact I have been referring to my new training regimen as "binge running". That's when you run once or twice a week as far as possible and then wait for the next week to do it again.....

The Tuesday before the race I was contemplating calling "[Bad](#)" [Ben Holmes](#), Race Director Extraordinaire, and have him move my name from the participant list to the volunteer list. I really wanted to run but thought that I wasn't ready. My recent travel schedule and normal life's activities had made it difficult to put in the kind of mileage experts say is needed to prepare for a marathon.

After a while, I thought that a "DNF was better than a DNT"actually it was something I read on the Kansas City Trail Nerds blog from several of my fellow Nerds.....I convinced myself that I could bail at any aid station along the way and at least fulfil my "binge running" style for the week.

I got home from Charlotte, NC Friday morning after being gone nearly all week and took most the afternoon off. I got a call from Bad Ben asking if I would shag the donuts from Krispy Kreme on my way to the race. This was my last opportunity to ask for a reprieve and officially move my status to volunteer.....and I didn't instigate it.....But I couldn't bring myself to even mention it. I just got the details and said I'd be happy to help. Picked up the kids from school, ran a few errands, had a typical Friday evening meal of pizza and a movie.....filled my hydration pack, rummaged up some supplies for the race (that means finding the hammer gels that aren't expired), laid out my running cloths and went to bed about 11:00pm....

Since I found myself still on the participant list and as every good engineer would be compelled to do, I had to set some goals (just couldn't resist):

1. Start

2. Maintain forward motion
3. Avoid collisions.....
4. Drink plenty of water
5. Finish
6. Under five hours
7. Have fun!

The alarm went off at 5:15am, I was up and out the door around 6:00am headed for Krispy Kreme. I ended up at Clinton Lake around 7:15am to deliver the donuts and get ready. Ben gave the usual race proceedings and we were off promptly at 8:00am.

The first 3 miles went pretty quick (about 30min) and I was feeling great and the heart rate was staying below 170 which is about right for me. The first three miles were more reminiscent of a cross country route with a couple of great creek crossings.....and then we rounded the corner back to the start and into the single track.....

Awww..... single track.....this trail is one of the best in the Kansas City area. The trails are mostly tree covered dirt paths with a few rocky areas from time to time. Almost all the hills with the exception of a few are very runnable. The trails follow the contour of the lake shore and roll with the terrain. There are only a few bad spots that collect water after a rain. The trail was relatively dry considering we had received substantial rain just a few days earlier.

I zoomed through the first attended aid station without stopping at mile six. I was averaging around an 11 min pace and still feeling good considering I was about to approach my longest run of the year within a couple more miles. I had plenty of water and knew that Caleb and Stacy would be working the aid station at Lands End at about the ten mile mark. I sucked a hammer gel dry and took a [S!cap](#) which I repeated about every hour throughout the race.

As I got closer to mile ten I was getting more comfortable with the prospect of finishing. I kept a steady pace although a bit slower and checked into "Lands End" at about 9:45am and right at the 10 mile mark according to Garmin. I was still feeling strong and figured that if I had made it that far I could probably make a go of it. Caleb gave me some words of encouragement, filled my hydration pack, I stretched a bit and headed for the turn around.

Three miles later my legs started getting that aching feeling. This was well past my longest run of the year of 9 miles and nearing my longest run ever at 15 miles. I started walking the up hills which seem a little steeper during this section but still nothing like [Psycho](#). I kept moving, sucked down another hammer gel and [S!cap](#) and finally made it to the last attended aid station which I chose to just pass without stopping. My legs weren't probably going to feel better and the further I went the closer to the finish I was getting.

I knew that once I made it back to "Lands End" that I was home free. After I rounded the

bend and I got back my legs and stated getting into a good groove although my pace had slipped to about 12:30. I could hear the bicycle race announcements and wondered if they knew that there were about 200 people running through the woods behind them. It seemed to take forever to get back to "Lands End" aid station. I had all but emptied my hydration pack. I didn't loiter around and paused long enough to get my pack full of water, get a few words of encouragement and head out for the home stretch. That last six miles was the toughest. There were times when I told myself to just keep the legs moving. To my amazement, I passed about four people over the next couple of miles, which never happens. I then started thinking that I could keep going and not let anyone pass me. Good positive thoughts....at least for me.....a couple of the 40 mile runners passed me and I would have thought that would take what little wind was left out of my sails but I must have not given it much consideration because I kept it moving forward. My legs were feeling sore again but I figured I could crawl the last couple miles if I had too.

I could hear people in the distance yelling and cheering so I was pretty sure that the finish was within a quarter of a mile or so. My next thought was "what was I going to do when I exited the single track onto that gravel road?" I knew that was a bugger of a hill to the finish. I decided I was running this one out to the finish, up the hill and kickin it all I had left across the finish.

Official finish of 4:41:58 below my goal of five hours. In fact I accomplished all my goals including the avoidance of collisions....I clocked in at 25th place overall, probably better than any race I'd run so far. Maybe that "binge running" style has something to it. Maybe I was just lucky. Regardless, I had just finished my first marathon and it felt great! In fact it has felt great ever since. It's like the commercial except "I ran a marathon" instead of "I slept in a Holiday Inn Express"

Running with the Kansas City Trail Nerds helped prepare me. The group is very inclusive and encouraging and I'm glad to find myself among them. Many thanks to Ben Holmes for organizing great race venues and the rest of the volunteers. Ben Holmes and the KC Trail Nerds really know how to put on an organized and well run event. Many of the volunteers are other runners and members of their families which adds a special touch and ultimate level of customer care at the aid stations.

Special thanks to my wife and family for entertaining my compulsive behaviors. I can run a trail marathon and looking forward to the next one. Who knows maybe a 50K is in my future too.....