

Myrtle Beach Marathon Race Report by Daren Marceau

I am a goal-driven person. Training takes on a sense of importance for me when there is a goal. I originally signed-up for The Myrtle Beach marathon to set a goal for my winter training. I've run several marathons, but I've never really trained for one, and I've never raced one. My original goal was to race a marathon, and to set a new PR. Along the way I added the goal of qualifying for Boston. DQ'ing was a pretty high goal: it meant cutting 16 minutes off my PR. Not impossible, but still a bit lofty.

In the back of my head I did hold the thought that in the last eight months I've run three marathons, and two of them were at the end of Ironman triathlons so there might just be some cumulative fatigue in these running legs. But, what the heck - let's go train for Myrtle Beach and see what happens. I doubled my typical weekly mileage (very gradual build with zero injuries) from typical Ironman training, and added some serious speed work. My cycling and swimming took a back seat to running, and the simplicity of a one-sport-season was enjoyable.

Race morning at Myrtle Beach was uneventful, and the race conditions were perfect with some clouds, and nice temperatures. There was some wind, and it maybe cost a total of two minutes or so, but it was nothing that made my race or broke it. My plan was to watch the Garmin 305 and to make sure that my pace was about 7:45 and that no mile was slower than 8:00 including port-a-jon breaks and shuffling through water stations. The Garmin might be off a bit on instantaneous pace, but the mile splits can easily be verified with the USAT&F green marks on the pavement at the mile points and the timer on the Garmin. This worked great, and at the half I was on a nice 1:42 split.

Everything was right on track until somewhere between mile 22 and 23, and the engine just could not rev up any more. No digestive, fueling, or hydration issues cropped-up. The typical muscular soreness was present in both legs, and the absence of joint soreness was a nice surprise. But my pace was dropping terribly, and I was 2:30 per mile off my goal pace. Perceived exertion was skyrocketing, and muscular coordination for simple things like holding my head and shoulders upright was fading fast. How I could go from cruising through 22 miles to this downward-spiraling state had my head spinning with questions and no answers. I knew that DQ'ing was not to be had, and my morale was plummeting. By mile 25 I was running-walking-running-walking and just keeping from stumbling over my own feet was an accomplishment. I kind of remember some people calling my name, and Margo hollering at me in that "I love you so I'll yell like a drill sergeant" way she has.

In the end, I took ten minutes off my PR - and that was my original goal. Boston was not to be had this year, and I missed it by 5 minutes. My friends were at the finish line, and took excellent care of me in my post-race haze and stumbling about. After all, in the end, we're in this for fun and friendship and there is no better way to finish a race than to have friends at the finish line.

Well, it looks like there will be a new challenge for next year - after all, now all I need to do is to take five minutes off my PR to qualify for Boston, and that sounds pretty easy compared to the ten minutes I took off this year. The question now looms as to how to keep the wheels from falling off the wagon in the last three miles. Well, I've got a whole year to worry about that. Right now, I'm actually kind of glad that I'm not going to Boston; after all, the weather is getting nicer, and it's time to put some miles on the road bike. And we wouldn't want running to interfere with cycling!

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