



Hamburg marathon took place
on Sunday 23 April 2017.
3:12:21

Long race = long update... Second marathon of the year which turned into a Sunday long run but also being my 20th marathon...deserves a bit longer than usual ☹

Hamburg marathon took place on Sunday 23 April 2017. Second marathon of the year, not feeling fully strong in the mind despite good prep, rain and hailstones right from start, stop before halfway, wind all the way and then objective changed into "long-run in Hamburg will do fine". What to say? A marathon is a marathon :-)

3:12:21, far from the expectations for the race (no kidding!), but if looking at the weeks prior to the race and the weather forecast on race day... That can explain a bit. But not justifies it all... Training was good enough to set a sub3 in the plan, but mental preparations were not fully to the top in the weeks before the race. But still... You can always set the autopilot and go for it, right? The body felt fine from start, the head felt strong, it took 1km and the first hailstones rain to froze the body and really kill the spirit of racing. Stop at km17 made me revised fully the objective, set the music in my ears and continue to run to the end...at a usual distance pace. Acceleration at the end for not finishing within 3:15... A bit of stupid pride in this, but but but... There will be more races.

Completed the race 86th among all women, 16th in my age category, and 1121 out of 15,000 marathon runners... An OK "real long run" for starting the year...

Rewinding a bit? Weeks since Tokyo went smoothly, but the final weeks included stupid crazy winds, cold temperature and a bit lot of other stuff filling the head with not always positive thoughts. Tapering went fine. Started carboloading one day earlier. Trip to Hamburg went smoothly. Counted with cold and wind for Sunday. Felt fit enough to go through it all. But the wind?...

Short version? Good training, even though the head said otherwise, the results were there to set that the objectives was not crazy. OK-start, dreadful freezy 2km, too slow-already by km5, stop at km17 (!), easy pace until km30 and then acceleration for the final 12K. It always surprises me how the mind can find strength to push the body, despite all happening around... I do smile when reaching the red carpet at the end :-)

Back a few weeks before the race, full with plenty of things to think about, terrible weather to train outside, a bit shaky confidence in the possible outcomes of the training... decided to change the tapering and carboloading. More rest (was needed) and started the carboloading one day before. Full speed to the carbs! Always feeling much better in those days after less/lack of carbs during a few days. Body felt however fine if it was not for a pain pressure point close to the right side hip bone. Flew to Hamburg on Friday, got my BIB, visited Decathlon for running socks and swimming outfit and that was it. Rest. Saturday started with light drizzle during the run km39 to the end of the race. Noted the wind would be probably on this side of the race, ie tailwind to be expected between km10 and 31 or so. Rested at home. Counted at least 37 showers from the skies during this Saturday...and sunshine in-between :-) In bed pretty early (for being a pre-race evening), party with loud noise in the apartment on the same floor and a very kind host who went and asked for lowering the volume due to their guest who would run a marathon the following day...

Race day! Finally! Awaken slightly before the alarm at 5:00am. Breakfast in a quiet apartment and then back to bed. Not really sleeping any longer. Hearing heavy rain for a few minutes outside and thinking "better now than later" ... Getting myself ready, gear on and no doubt that singlet and hotpants was the proper outfit. Added arm and calve sleeves as well as gloves. Mostly for the wind. A bit chilly to get to the start, dropped my bag, did probably 7 stress-stops at the loo and nervous "kind-of" warmup. And that was it. In my corral. B. Extra clothes on this time. The corral is filling itself slowly. The one before as well. 8:50am and the start of the wheelchairs race is given. Cool! Then we wait. An orange string is stopping us from getting closer to the A-group a few meters ahead. Heeeeeeeee.....what? there are only 2 minutes to go. Drop this string. Explanations in German are satisfying none of the B-corral runners. 20seconds to start...what is this string still doing there?!?!? Countdown in German. Tired mind already, cannot figure out how to count "down" ...would rather have them counting "up" ...Eins, Zwei, Drei... :-P

09:00am aaaaaand.....BAAAM! Confetti rain!

Walking/jogging the few meters to the red carpet. Where is the start mat? Pressing my "start" button on my watch, a bit unsure I passed the start-map. Taking it easy. Hearing the crowd. Running is going well. And soon on the asphalt. Turning right and heading to km1. Feeling the flow is fine. Enough space for all. Quick check at the watch to ensure it has started. 4:07. All fine... and it started...first little drizzle.. and before we even turn right again, small hailstones start falling from the skies...and then slightly bigger. Can hear the roar of all runners. Mix of laughs and complain. As a wise man told me: "Don't bother about things you cannot control". And weather is one of those things... for 2km we are thrown at with those small ice cubes. So many that before we know it the asphalt is actually becoming pretty slippery. Looking down and indeed, it looks like kind-of melted snow. Freezing thighs. Still considering that the outfit is suiting the day. Lifting my sunglasses to see better, but down again soon after as it was not really nice to get small hailstones in the eyes... Feeling that I am running strangely. Slight feeling in the right side top of the thigh. Ignoring it. Passing km5 already too slow for a sub3. But I continue. Thinking of the race description I read earlier this week: "think about you push a ball up a little long slope for 6-7km and then let it roll for the next 34km...then push it a bit more and then you are arrived"!.

Well, this little ball is me and nobody is actually pushing me :-(Turning left and expecting this downhill... which never seem to appear!!! Of course it is very light down as it took time to go up, so it will probably (!) take time to get down. Passing km10 a bit over 43minutes. That's it. Here comes the first thought about not finishing the race. Well, no. Not really. Or maybe. Reaching the side of the water. Sun shining. Running on wet asphalt. Getting passed by the 3hrs-group... Not surprised. But not happy about it. It takes normally (?) at least half the race or more before they pass me. Today ain't my day. Have taken from my bottle at km5 and 10. Not feeling I needed it, but the small messages to myself on them do help. Tunnel of km15. The 3hr-group is still 20-30m ahead of me. Out of the tunnel, nice weather outside. Did it really rain earlier? Touching my singlet and shorts: both are dry on the front and soaking wet in the back. Yes. It rained! Stomach cramps started. No I won't stop. I wait until half-way. But seeing a little blue box at the corner of the street after km17 or so and I jump in it. I start counting the seconds...and stop. OK, cramps are gone. Feeling pretty empty. Do not want to get out of this little blue box. Feeling safe. In a twisted way. Knock at the door. OK, I get out. Two minutes or more have passed. Feeling a bit disoriented. Turning right and starting to run. Average pace is down to 4:26 with this stop. Decision is pretty quickly taken. Mp3 on. Setting to May 2012-mix and do my run. The whole race purpose is changed. Getting to the end in a decent time. That's all. I cannot make back for the time lost. But I can limit the disastrous time I am probably aiming for. Bottle at km20 is having my first gel on it. Hmmmm...nice with salted caramel taste. And getting to the half way. 1:35. Worse first half since...2013?... Probably. But I feel ok. Quick calculation...with the account that I will probably slow down in the second half, I arrive to an expected finish time of 3:15. Terrible. But at this moment it is sunny...

Continue my little Sunday run. The wind has been present from the start and I cannot understand how this works. We are running around the lake, so if we have it headwind now, this would mean tailwind after turning left and running down after km31. Focusing on this marvellous news that my mind is delivering and enjoy. Seeing this bike, with a guy saying stuff in German. He has red balloons in heart-shape except one which has a "30" written on it. OMG! Is it the 3:30-group in front of me, my brain thinks? Or is it the max.speed allowed for us here? Maybe I can sit in the little car behind his bike and ask him to drop me at the next km5-mark? Yeaahhhh...I am probably tired, but feel quite alert actually.

Passing him while running, my brain congratulates itself for the great decision of NOT jumping and sitting in this little car behind the bike. It appears to get faster when running. Even though I feel like running slower than a snail. Have been passed by two swedes (well, more, but the guys from IS Göta-Helsingborg looked way more fit than me. And they cheered. That was nice). Here comes the gal from IF Linnea. Ooooooh... I had checked her name and I should be quite a bit before. But she is nice and cheer for me and my Swedish outfit. Same for the Swedish guy. I keep them in sight, but it ain't easy. Have no clue about their expected finish time. Sport drink bottle at km25 and then new hailstones rain. And it stopped. Reaching km30 and taking my bottle and second gel. Hmmmmm.... Nice with salted caramel taste... Did I say it already?!?! Have taken small jellies every km or saw between km 21 and 32. Except when taking sport drink or gel. Quite ok. And here I am having company of a guy who has exactly the pace I want. Hmmm... ok. Not THE pace I want which is way faster, but the pace I changed and want for the end. Feeling even that we accelerate slightly. A bit of smiling to each other. That is nice. Steady-slow @4:36-tempo... Yap. Distance-pace. But today it is a bit (...) longer than my morning run :-)

And we turn left at km31. Headwind bothering all of us, but I KNOW that it will be kind for us after this turn....and....and....nope! nothing. Headwind again! Or side/headwind.... WHAT IS HAPPENING HERE EXACTLY?!?! The long stretch down the lake is nice...if it was not for the wind. I can see the IF Linnea chick and the Swedish guy a bit ahead of her. I want to pass her. Slight acceleration. Nothing really. But my running-buddy cannot follow. He stops suddenly on the side of the road. Still 20m behind the gal. Nooooo! I wanted him to help me passing her. And to help me passing the Swedish guy after that. And would probably have found others to pass after that :-(A bit sad, but not stopping. And keeping my pace. Reaching the Swedish gal and cheering a bit. And hope. She looks a bit tired. I feel on the contrary better and way better than during the first half of the race. Is that so that I now need 21km warmup before feeling fine for a marathon?!?! Km35 and my last bottle. Message this time: "LAST ONE". A bit tricky to take the gel off the bottle. And when I eventually succeed in opening it and getting gel in my mouth, the taste of cherry is...disgusting like crazy!!! Why on earth haven't I tried this taste before during training? Thought that with a different taste it would be waking me up. And indeed it does. I have swallowed a little of the gel. Drank a bit of water. And press all the leftover of the gel in the mouth.

Take water and mix the whole thing in the mouth. OMG! This is disgusting! Taste really ugly! Decided that the “placebo” effect would have to do. I spit all on the asphalt. Must look like I am spitting dark blood. Continuing my run. Have never given so many high-five in a race. Not even in Berlin 2014... And THAT was a lot! The 12km countdown is the best ever. There is another countdown starting at “1km done, 41 to go...”, but this one is niiiice! Counting kilometres left multiplied by 5min.tempo. I know I am faster than that, but have no idea how my brain will do the calculation if asking to multiply by 4:36-tempo. Less than an hour. 10km left. Less than 50minutes. I want to get to km39. To feel that I am finally close. I am passing people now. This beautiful and windy path, with those high trees on both sides. I like it. I know km39 is soon there. I am not following the blue line any longer. I am ON it. Not a chance I will run longer than I should :-P Seeing the lake on the left side. It feels like spring. Short hailstones rain again. Does not matter any longer. I would not care less. Km39 is there. I have 15 minutes to finish. IF I was at 5min.tempo. But I won't allow this to happen. Passing guys and turning right. Headwind. Don't care. Turning left. Km40 is there!!! Euuuhhh nope. Not yet. Down the street. I take out my final liquid gel. Cola-taste. I know it taste bad, but it has so much caffeine in it, that I SHOULD be able to press a bit more. Recognizing the final stretch from yesterday. Seeing km41. People are slowing down. I don't. I push even more. No at all full power, but definitely faster. And it goes slightly up. But I know it. And it feels. But I know it. Passing one IF GÖTA guy. Feeling that I am unstoppable. THAT is the feeling I should have had from start! And a faster pace too! Getting passed by a guy with Swedish colours. Cheering from him give me an extra bright smile. I just want to pass people. Pass gals mostly to have a slightly better Turning right. Over the little bridge. Windy. Seeing the final final street. Cannot estimate the distance to the red carpet. But I know it is mine. OK...not completely JUST for me, but my brain doesn't know that at this particular moment. Passing a Danish gal. Yeaaaah! And seeing two other gals ahead of me. Those ones won't be there. I feel like a rocket, but really run like a fast snail in reality. OK...like an average snail, not even a fast one. But this red carpet! OMG! Feels so good! Smiling right and left. Have no music in the ear since I passed km41. Just feeling the cheering all around and that is why the finish lines are so addictive! Done!

3:12:21. Official time. Not even looking at my watch. I am under 3:15 and that is enough to be an ok-long run. Feeling a bit off in the groin right side. But others are in way worse conditions. Getting a smile from two swedes, a thanks for several guys. And that's it. Walking to the Hall, taking a bit of sport drink, chocolate bar and a paper cup filled with small pretzels. I am done. Picking up my bag. Getting a well-deserved massage. Walking home. Shower, warm clothes and feet up against the wall for 45 minutes. The rain is falling again. And stops. As so many times yesterday and today. Feeling tired, surely not happy of the time, surely not satisfied because I feel the body is not completely emptied of strength. I am fine. Rubbish race-time, but decent long-run time. That would do for today...

Packing all my stuff, enjoying waffles with my hosts and heading to the airport. Very nice race landscape (had way enough time to look at it...). Could have gone better for a 20th, but there will be a 21st and 22nd... Warmup has just begun, seems like :-)

>> A load of thanks for the support and encouragements during training and prior/during/after the race. Words are sometimes providing great strengths (ok, can't see it on the results maybe or it shows in a way, but my eyes are blinded by the clouds in my brain...whatever...). Preparation is all in a marathon race, but the event of the day does play a huge role. Making it or breaking it. Special thanks to my coach for saying the words I might not want to hear sometimes. Special thanks to you and your last minutes sms. Made me smile. And smiling is the key in a race :-) Not really disappointed after all. Running the full distance and in a decent time... There will be more races. Warm-up has just begun! Recovery week (including being back in Hamburg 2 days after the race for 2 days conference) before new adventures... hopefully with better weather conditions!

Have a great week!

//Kind regards from an actually sunny-but-coldy place on Earth (aka Hamburg!)

Karima

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