



**Rotterdam marathon  
Sunday 13 April 2014**

Fast race = fast update...

Rotterdam marathon took place on Sunday 13 April 2014. Second marathon of the running season, flat and fast course, sunshine and wind and a fast-ending-with-a-bit-of-struggling...

New PB: 2:57:25, 1 minutes 44 seconds faster than Dubai in January 2014... Completed the race with a 22<sup>nd</sup> place among women, 4<sup>th</sup> in age category (!) and 2<sup>nd</sup> place of Swedish women :) Got a new PB on 5K, 15K, 30K and 35K (despite the tricky second half...)

Let's continue this nice running season, shall we? :)

Since the start of the year, 4 races have been completed and the objectives to be revised a bit. For this particular race, the aims were 1) sub2:58, 2) trying for a steady pace and 3) for sure enjoying the run.

Always a short version first: stomach trouble the day before and morning of the race, crazy fast first half and fast-enough-for-PB-but-tough-anyway second half... Not that well disposed, but the odds were not directly optimistic...

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Rewinding to the day before, good final run under the Dutch sun, but real bad end with an afternoon pain and not really well for finishing carbo-loading. Definitely putting the race at stake. Not much sleep (as usual) and the morning started not as bad, but close. So by 7:00am, the objectives of the day were changed to: complete the race and see what is left... Pretty satisfied for the races run so far and even though Rotterdam was an important race on my calendar, there are other races.

And here I am, not too well, standing on the front line of group C, smiling and freezing with headwind coming at us. 10:30am and the canon shot indicates the start of the race. Quite slow first km (felt like I was alone for 2-400m...), mixing with the other groups after a while and reaching the bridge. Pace indicated on my watch was 4:11min/km... Unsure how it was like this and did not stop to think this through. Bridge was over before knowing it and started to hang before a couple running apparently together. Average pace of 4:01/4:00min/km was reached soon after km2 and it was stable through the first 10K...passing this mark in 40min... Not really understanding what was happening, before I WAS feeling really bad the day before and in the morning. But nothing that apparently cannot be cured by having a BIB attached on a singlet and 10,000+ other crazy runners ready to share the struggle of 42.2km together...(and there were additional 10,000+ running a 10K the same day...). So yes, if I was struggling at a point of time, at least I was not alone :) Passing 15K riiiiight above the hour (calculated afterwards that this meant having a 15km/h pace...). Body felt fine, mind was clear and the legs were running the party. Around the 20K mark it felt like the crowd was there just for me (and this must be the shared feeling by any runner had on Sunday...that the crowd was cheering and shouting our names...). You just feel like you are winning the race...waving, grasping the encouragements from all parts... At this moment, the headwind felt now and then until km20 was long forgotten. Just enjoying the run. And reaching half way in...1:25:49... 51seconds slower than the latest race in Copenhagen...which WAS a half marathon... OK, I had dropped the couple I had been following so far and got another back to follow. A red singlet guy from Germany named Kent (I think...).

Then started the second half... I felt like the first part had gone a bit too fast (3minutes faster than in Dubai...) but there were strengths left in this body that was feeling so bad the day before...really? The pace was dropping a little by km24 as we got a strong headwind towards the bridge. My very kind pacesetter "Kent" placed himself right before me, which meant he took all the wind and I got to hold his pace and stay very close (like 1meter-close!) to benefit of this wind-shield. Unsure that he did that on purpose, but I did thank him eventually after the finish line! Thought right before the 2<sup>nd</sup> passage on the bridge that the job was done now. Nothing to prove and just had to take it easy for the second part. By the top of the bridge the pace had increased (!) to 3:47... NOW I could see the benefits of those long runs and other trainings done at home in the wind and other bad weather conditions... Lessons DO pay off...I think (?). From km27 onwards, it felt a bit stiff but I had trained on this road the day before, so it felt nice. Met Kipchoge, the 1<sup>st</sup> elite men, on his way to the finish line (he just passed km40 when I was on the other side of the road towards km30...). A bit tough 200m after this, but then started the circle around Kralingse Plas. In the "woods. Felt calm and nice. Almost forgot we were running a race there...until the stomach started to cramp. But the mind reminded kindly that I was only 12km from the finish line, so just had to bite it a little bit longer and that the longest part of the race was already done... and yes, whoever said a marathon starts at km30...does tell the truth! :) Got to follow a light female runner but after a couple of km, her pace felt too comfortable and I dropped her for trying to reach another back I recognized. Galvin from my start corral. He had been aiming for 2:45, but being there at the same time as me, meant he would not make this time. But I could run by his side and we would hold each other towards the end of the race...

Sounded great plan. More wind towards km37 :( and it was km39 already. Sun is back after having run under the trees cover. Being passed by a little Swedish gal, which smiles at me and encourage me. Thanks! Passing the 40km-mark, last energy tablets, last water zip and off I went. Just slightly more than 2km to go. And I knew this way as well...Same as yesterday's final training run :) Good for the mind!. Did not see km41-mark. Just hearing the cheering of the great crowd of Rotterdam. Passing the 1,000m and soon turning towards the final stretch. 500M is written on the pavement and people are crazy-cheering on both side of the alley. Keeping the head up and the eyes trying to see...the arch of the Finish Line... 200m...100m... and that.was.it! Missed the 2:56:xx by little... my watch indicated 2:57:27 (official time: 2:57:25).

Congratulating Galvin and "Kent" (who I had lost after km27...), got a rose like other women runners, energy drink, banana and time for massage and medal engraving.

Rest of the day was dedicated to rest, food and walk...not yet trying to understand what had happened to this race which was aiming for a "finish-is-good-enough"...

Really satisfied by this result. Fast back home the day after the race and back to work right away :) A week of well-deserved rest (from running) and then will see what is hidden for the week after... Second marathon of the year, second sub-3... lots of lessons learned during the race (which I will have to clear out when the head has rested completely)... Great Sunday for running! Perfect running weather (even though would have been grateful to skip the wind...). More fun ahead :)

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>>Thanks a lot for all supporting and encouraging words during the training and the race. It does help when it gets tough(er) during the race... Running season ahead sounds like lots of fun!

Have a great week!

//Kind regards from a nice and sunny place on Earth (aka Gothenburg!)

Karima

>justrunningaround<