

Lyon Half marathon took place on Sunday 4 October 2015



Short race = Short update... Although participating to the Run in Lyon and ending on the podium deserves a little more than this J

Run In Lyon Half marathon took place on Sunday 4 October 2015. First half-marathon of the year (I know..late start for the season...), final rehearsal before New York marathon in November...

New PB on the route 1:30:03 (as usual, easy to have a PB as this is the first time I run this route J). Completed the race with a 3rd place among women (finish line), 5th in my age category. Finishing 449 of 10,136 runners feels quite nice J

Objective set simply to run with a good feeling (and if it gets close to sub90 then that would also be nice to have!). No plan on getting a faster race, mainly because it is the first half-marathon race this year since my left foot let me run almost properly and it is as well as body&form check prior to NY in 4 weeks. Training-race it is! Got a cool start, a little slower middle and a great finish. Smiles and thanks to my wonderful pacesetter for this!

Let's rewind a bit... Arrived on Friday, got my luggage lost in the connection and as a result, no running gear for training on Saturday (nor extra clothes either...). Good to have had my race gear in my hand luggage as usual! Saturday got me checking the race route (had picked up my luggage that finally arrived), up to half way with the car and the final stretch from km10 to the end by foot. Great feeling, light legs, and despite a nice headwind, it was all fine to run with light(er) gear on the top J Ended under the rain, but it felt fine as rehearsal (ok, it was a bit long and a bit fast, but "had to run when the leg want to run, right'?).

Race day: "early up" is an understatement... Pain au chocolat, banana & Gatorade at 4:30am before getting back to sleep J Then regular drinking and jump into race gear before leaving at 6:15am. Quiet drive to the city and even there it was still crazy quiet (who on Earth is up at this time on a Sunday?....Ooooooh, yaaaa, I am...and a few thousands crazy runners would soon join me...). Dark and a bit cold, took a short while to find the Renault Trucks tent, where I was to drop my bag (and that would be the meeting point as well as running in those colours for the day J). Meeting smiling helpers, a great breakfast table dressed for us and then it was just to wait... Meeting with Olivier A who kindly agreed to run as my pacesetter for today J Having my time splits on my hand ready, he has his on his armband. Cold indeed when taking off the jacket and trousers, but "you gotta do, what you gotta do", rrrright? Shorts, singlet and armsleeves are the chosen gear for the day. And sunglasses J Easy warmup with Olivier towards the start, numerous runners have already arrived. Running along the water, from the start then above the bridge and right on the footbridge to come back to the start again. Not really used to warmup , that is good to do it properly for once J Quite cold still, but start is soon to come. Meeting Rachid who was biking along during summer world master championships. A few strides back and forth. Time to get to the corral. No chick in sight...apart from the elite lady for the marathon. And THEN one gal shows up. A fast one (you can see it...). Focus, no longer hearing the noise all around...

And it is the start! Off we go, no pushing, Olivier set himself already close to me and it is just to follow. Above the first bridge and lots are already cutting on the pavement... and down along the river. 9.6km to go J Pace is fine and comfortable. Receiving my quick check through a "right on time", "spot on", "as planned"... from my kind pacemaker during the first kms. Well, this is based on a faster end time than what I plan, but all good. Feeling fine, breathing is all good. The cold is no longer felt. Don't like the ups and downs when we are reaching the bridges. But Olivier is adapting to this and I feel good. Getting passed by many during km1&2 but then it settles a bit after that. The start was jointly done for half-marathon and marathon. No chick ahead of me as far as I see (apart from the fast one who just disappeared at the start shot). Km5 I got a "run along, I get you water" from Olivier and happily follow his lines. Brilliant to skip the potential struggle of picking up a bottle. Few water gulps and continued. Feels really luxury to have someone holding the pace for me. Cool J Especially as he made it look like so easy (and yes for me it is fine but not as *easy* as for him J). Km6 was as well good for a "10sec drift from the plan, still good". Perfect. No need really to check my watch! Hearing cheering to my pacer, apparently very well-known here. J Even better! Reaching km 6-7, a runner passes me and asks Olivier if he can hang along as we are having the pace he wants for his marathon. Sure! The only little thing is that it cuts my concentration and my pace dropped. Just bothered? Don't know. Quiet when passing Ile Barbe at km8 (soooo good to have those recognisable spots from yesterday route-check! The only thing is that this recog was done in a car...meaning all the slopes were quite fine to take...and it is a different challenge to take them on by foot...). Reaching km9 and the stupid slope towards km10. WHY IS IT THERE?!?!? Hearing two guys talking easily on my side. Shut up! I want to shout at them. It just cut my focus hearing you have it so easy running up AND talking, when I am actually considering walking...but Olivier probably feels it and throw encouragements up to the hill (which *IS* a tough cookie one). Strangely I do not even catch up the lost time uphill in the downhill. I go easy down... Hmm... not too well. But we are still having sub90-pace. (Too) easy pace reaching km10, where I ask Olivier to catch some water (and probably don't even say "please" ...sorry...). One boost gel down (I am trying this new one, not really needing it though). 10K is passed in 42:01. Hmm... really? Faster than planned, but would have expected anyway to be a few seconds ahead.

Right turn and up to the bridge. Olivier looks back regularly and I just hang along. It has been grey and a bit foggy above the water on this first part. Even had foggy sunglasses.... But on the other side of the bridge it turns to be a bit better. Cannot see the sun, but at least there is no wind! Water bottle received at the end of Paul Bouse bridge aaaaaand now I am in known territory. I ran here the day before. No surprise ahead J Passing a chick a bit before km12, but I suspect she was not part of the race... From this point on, cheerings are a bit more frequent from people on the side. Hearing "Look there's a woman there", "Come on, 2nd place", "Allez *la* fille".. and more warming smiles are received. Km14 turns Olivier towards me "screw the time now, aim for the podium". And that was the change of plan! Having a slow(er) km there towards km15 which I cannot explain really (ok there were both drinking *and* little slope towards the tunnel...). Olivier has checked and confirmed there is no gal to be seen behind me. OK then, just have to complete this final third of the race. to look at the women coming on the other side.

Another boost gel (which -btw- does not boost *anything* at all...) and a little water and then we reach the loooooong tunnel of Croix Rouse. 1.7km, with funky pictures on the wall and trance music or alike... Feeling a bit unfocused. Body check is ending fine, but focus under this tunnel is dropping...and that is this moment around km17 that *SHE* chose to pass us. Easy and light steps, a female runner coming from nowhere is just now before me. No sprint pace, no slow pace either. Just my pace apparently (although she is right before me...). Olivier is keeping me focused. Although negative thoughts (!) are passing by in my mind, just wanting the gal to be stopped or that someone is telling her to wait for me, make her fall, whatever... no no and more no! Go away stupid thoughts! Before the end of the tunnel the encouragements are starting to get louder. Out of the tunnel, Olivier turned with a "come on, she is only 30m ahead. Don't drop the pace. You are stronger than her". Over the bridge (and more cheering on the sides as being the 3rd woman arriving) and right turn. Cheering are continuing, my pacer actually KNOWS how I take the uphill (i.e. I don't like them...) and seriously shouts "keep your knees up, balance your arms, up to the bridge, come on". Hear my name on the left (always nice having mum & dad around for cheeringJ but this time I want the cheering *AND* hearing the instructions from Olivier. The brain has trouble separating both...). On the bridge! Finally! And cheering on the right from a very proud dad J. Focus focus focus. Long straight line on the bridge, right and then left and right again. "She is still 40-60m ahead. The second place is yours. Podium in Lyon. Coome on!" (Wow. *THAT* is what I call pushing hard to get me to accelerate on this final eeehhh...whhhhaaaaat? Do we really have to go around the square at km19? I thought we would just turn left and right... But the plus is that I see that gal turning. And yes, not much ahead of me.). Finally in Rue de la République. "No slowing down now. Less than 2 km to go. This is a place in top 3 here". Cannot really accelerate much, but at least I think I am not slowing down. Passing 20K-mark. "1km to go. You can still take her". Wow, it is really loud there! Olivier even turns towards me (I like the ease he has while running & turning, when I am actually fighting for keeping this *#%!!& pace a bit longer). Place Bellecour finally. Many people on both sides (compared to the empty place from this morning!). "TWO MORE TURNS! Keep up the pace. 500m to go. Less than that". Even receiving cheering from a couple of guys who pass me in the final long side. One turn down, one to go. Wow... this little side of the square feels like 500m as well... Aaaaaand final turn. Cannot see the chick ahead, nor the time. Don't bother. Taking the right line "LEFT LEFT" shouts Olivier (yaaa...after so much running, it is better to take the correct finish lane, right?!). A bit more. And.This.Is.Done! Stopped the watch 1:30:09, official time 6 seconds faster. Goal of the day achieved! I am happy! And not tired.. Got stopped for a quick joint-interview with the 2nd female runner at finish line (30sec before me...), quick interview for whatever-paper-it-is (cool!), and a guy guides us to prepare for the podium ceremony.

Picked up my stuff in RT tent, welcomed with smiles and cheering J, one pain au chocolat and juice and direction the podium. So cool J (and cold...). Have lost Olivier after the arrival/interviews but could thank anyway for the great help. Official net time: 1:30:03 – finish time. More than satisfactory training-race. In good shape for a marathon race in 4 weeks. Just have to keep up the focus, the training and all that is around J

Lyon: 2 races in 2 months and 2 "top-three" happy-endings... Feeling most welcome to run in this city!

>> Loads of thanks for the cheering during the training, the race and after race... (the smiles received are just priceless!). Thanks for the Renault Trucks team for getting all set to ensure this help at start and finish as well as to my great colleagues for smiles and congratulations. Now, back to business-as-usual, i.e. running in the morning, at lunch, or evening, under the sun (not that often lately), in the wind (too much recently) and probably the rain (well, what can be done about it...). Good Sunday long run in the Capitale des Gaules!

>> A very special thanks to Olivier A, having taking me from start to end with a bunch of great supporting words, just like being in my head during this run and knowing when to push, to help, to cheer, to pull or to keep quiet. Counting on sharing such an experience again, and even faster (I'll be prepared!).

Have a great week!

//Kind regards from a very windy place on Earth (aka Gothenburg!)

Karima

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