

New York marathon took place on Sunday 1 November 2015



Long race = long update... Participating to another World Marathon Major deserves an update of its own kind. Especially as being the 15th marathon run so far...

New York marathon took place on Sunday 1 November 2015. Second marathon of the running season, 3 years of wait for running it (after the last-minute cancellation of 2012-edition), mix of bridges, concrete, wind and sunshine, without forgetting great crowd and a top100 to the finish...

3:06:10, definitely on the "satisfactory" side. Body felt fine, cruising mode from km15 and one of the strongest finish ever. Good Sunday workout! J

Completed the race 86th among all women, 11th in my age category, 4th place of Swedish women and 1194 out of 50,235 runners... Another decent marathon this year...

Extending the race calendar to this particular race was special. Indeed 2012 was cancelled and having had "everything else is a warmup" as slogan then, it felt that the "warmup" never ended really...until this Sunday! The objective was once again to ensure having a well-functioning body throughout the race, aiming for a sub90 for the first half and see what was left for the second half. And for sure, the closer to 3 hrs the better :-P But no pressure, especially on this route.

Short version first: final week of extra pressure, nothing really well-set for preparation, a good trip to the US, a strong 10K, followed by a strategy change by km15 until mile 24 and a crazy "passing-them-all" final 2.2 miles. 6th fastest time for a marathon so far, so decent enough indeed and happy to find all those hidden strengths when the race really started...at mile 24...

Tapering done over two weeks felt like working fine. Well, better than in August and that could be due to the wonderful weather we had in Sweden (feel the irony here...). But at least it was no heat wave nor frozen cold. Singlet & shorts weather until the end. Carb depletion for 2 weeks (new test), carboloading during the final days before the race (so enjoying it every.single.time... carbs rules!) and a test of the final stretch of the route in Central Park the day before the race. All felt well set and ready. Could have skipped the extra workload during the days before the trip, but done is done. Focus started as soon as the laptop was switched off J New York was welcoming all runners with a nice spring feeling and autumn colours. The objectives were set back & forth during the last week prior to the race. Up until the day before, it was still a wondering game, played on how to handle the route of this World Marathon Major.

Up at 2am, right when the clock was changing in New York (after it has changed at home the weekend before...it was a very welcome extra hour sleep there!). Ready by 5am, meeting with Christer in the subway and heading to Staten Island ferry. Not too many people out there, but the ferry hall was just full. 6:15am was our ferry start. The excitement was growing the closer the ferry got to Staten Island. Then we got on the bus, where we met Staffan another Swede. Chat on the bus is more for passing the time and not starting to stress. The extra layers of clothes (supposed to help against the cold reigning generally during the several hours of wait before start) felt a bit too much. It was real nice in the air.

Approaching our village – the Green one – I noted the bridge above our head. “This one? Really? But it ain’t THAT much of inclination of it!”. Suddenly it felt even better. The main challenge was to get over the bridge (which is far from my strongest side...) but seeing it was making me feel calmer. We met Tricky another Swedish friend (what are the odds... to find someone among 50,000 runners...on a Sunday morning...). Sat on the pillows I took from home and waited until the corrals gates opened. Now the blood was starting to get warmer. Did not want to wait until late to get to my corral (Christer and Tricky were in corral “B” and I was in “A”). Direction the corrals, final hugs, goodbye, good luck and huge smiles (never underestimate the power of smiling....) and in the corral...and nothing happens. Final two stops to the loo. The corral filled itself, mostly by male runners. Happy to see a few chicks there (although they look crazily fast in their outfit...). Off with the two soft pants and the two jackets and it was time to get to the start. Easy jog (!) for a 100m or so (?) and then stop. The Green wave I belonged to was starting on the lower part of the bridge. The Blue and Orange waves start on the upper part of the bridge. Getting closer to the start line. One or two meters before me! Meeting an older man who will run his 36th (!) NY marathon. Respect! Smiles and cheering all-over the place. Want to warmup but don’t want to loose my spot close to the start line. So I just look at the runners running back and forth under the bridge....Yap... another marathon with non-existent warmup. But wait...there is some good 24 miles for warming up :-P A bit of talking from the mayor of NY, let’s make some noise...and the start is given. Pounding feet on the hard pavement and we are on this scary-bridge-which-is-actually-not-scary-at-all. Cannot feel the inclination that all are fearing and the first mile is passed slightly faster than planned but still fine. Letting all runners passing me. This is the motto: “LET.THEM.GO”. I know by now that I will meet a lot of them after the halfway mark... Easy running after the bridge, just have to follow the crowd. By mile 3 the Green wave is getting to the same path as the Blue and Orange wave and from now on we are running side by side. Cannot see any one I know (daaaaaa!). I just run. Decide to wait for the high-fives until I have gotten a good margin. 90min by the halfway is on! The gloves are thrown away before km3, the neckwarmer follows pretty soon and the arm sleeves (which btw are NOT that easy to take away while running at this pace...) are also part of the gift to the crowd J Reaching km5 and I am right on time. Actually with a 40seconds margin. Feeling good and by km6 I have started to get closer to the side of the road for high-five to the kids (and the tall people as well J). I cannot remember all the name of the streets. Too many for this race. So “my” NY marathon-map is summarized like “Scary-first-bridge-to-vanquish”, “flat-and-fast-to-15K”, “Queensboro bridge-the-terrible”, “1st Avenue-and-its-downhill”, “final-little-bridge-to-the-Bronx”, “5th Avenue-and-its-fake-uphill” and “Central-Park-finally”. All this in 42,2km. Or 26.2 miles. Yes. This is the tricky part. I have prepared my race in miles but I am always training in km. This ain’t funny. The first 10K are strong and 40sec under expected time. Letting the 3:00-pacer and its buddies passing me. Odd...this group generally passes me after half-way or around 30km... Matters not! I ain’t joining them. Or maybe I do. No I don’t... Well, ok. Focus now. Km15 is reached and a little ache in the left knee makes me alert. Change of strategy – not a chance I push for 1:30 (ok, it does not feel that I have pushed at all so far, but still). I caught a girl just passing me then and she has a very nice stride and decide to follow her... Same as for the WMAC this summer. Find someone to follow for 5-6km, then another one aso... until the end. We run side by side and this is actually pretty fun.

We don't speak. She gave me water at a station as she probably noticed I could not stop. Very much thank you to you! Time is no longer on the objectives. Just get this cruising pace until the end, keep the smile on my face and all will be nice and fun. Having my Swedish gear with my name on it is definitely a winner-outfit! Lots of "Go Sweden, Go" or being cheered by my name. Makes me feel sooooo special J And yes, I do the high-five, I do the wave to get the crowd to scream even more, I just enjoy so very much... pace has dropped to 4:17min/km and I am still waving and smiling.... What's wrong with me?!?!? Reaching the halfway mark and sub90 has no longer been on the possible times. But surprisingly passing in 1:31:28. Pretty decent...especially when considering that the half-marathon mark is on the way up the slope towards....what? a bridge? Here? Who put it there? It was NOT on my NY marathon map... Some runners have started to walk up the bridge. My brain probably feels VERY jealous and would so very much like to rest the legs, but the legs are in charge and up-the-bridge it is!

Quick chat with my running buddy "One half done, one half to go". My wonderful comment gets a poor little smile. But she agrees. And we continue our little Sunday run. Effort-wise it does not feel more than a Sunday long run with intervals in the middle (i.e. not easy or slow, tough enough to make the body feel the run, enjoyable enough to know this pace is getting me closer to the finish line). Don't know where we are now. My map in my mind is only indicating "Queensboro bridge the terrible" and I want to get done with it...and it arrives...OK...stop....too soon...can we rewind a bit?...not ready there...This guy at the water station 14 or so is happily shouting to us "final turns to the bridge. Keep up the good work. You are soooooon finished!" (and yes the thoughts towards those encouraging words are not the kindest...it is ME the one running after all...not him! Soon finished = 42,2-25km =....huuummmmm....a lot. No need to annoy the brain with maths when there is a bridge to conquer...another one... Left turn and we get onto the bridge. It is actually nice...at first. A bit quiet... but soon the wind is coming from the side and will not stop annoying us until the end of the bridge (after the race, I checked and this km took...7 minutes!!! Bad GPS as well probably but still...the pace was alarming slow...good I had stopped checking my pace since a while!). My running buddy is stronger than me on this bridge and she takes a lead of 40-60m. My head is not too tired, my legs are fine...but I just DON'T like bridges! Hold on... 40-60m behind the gal ahead of me was what cost me the second place on the RIL last month. Not a chance I let this go (thanks for being in my head Olivier!). Down the bridge and passing mile 16. The noise from the crowd has been growing since a short while and the new left turn bringing us to 1st Avenue feels like a blessing. We arrive in the Runners' Heaven. The crowd is crazy. They are just shouting so loud. My name. Sweden. Girls go go. Cool to see so many swedes as well in the crowd. They cheer even louder! We run now along the blue line. We have not left it since km15. Even if it meant running a bit in the middle of the road...when all other runners ran on the side... Started to count up the streets... 65th, 66th, 67th... 72nd, 73rd... Hold on a sec... How many streets are they exactly up to the Bronx? And WHERE IS THIS DOWNHILL? All I see I a gigantic avenue in front of me with runners until the horizon...I am sure that when we reach this horizon line, there is a fall. The Earth is probably flat and we will fall over there. I am certain of it. OK, more

Uphill, downhill, passing more guys in pain. Lots are looking like having cramps. I still find the time to smile to the Swedish cheering squad there on the downhill. My running buddy is no longer by my side. The pink girl is. Passing more people. Right turn to the South street of Central Park. When you want it so badly, there is nothing that can stop you, right? Even finding more strength when hearing once more my name and "Heja Sverige". Waving to the crowd. This is so crazily fun! Columbus circle is at reach. Turn right into the park. Cannot really feel my heart beating so hard (or has it stopped?). Cannot feel blood in my vein. This is PURE adrenaline at this moment. The pink girl has cheered before this final turn and shouted "go go go". Mile 26 sign is there. All the nations flags are set on both sides on this final 0.2mile. Of course they put this with a slope to the end. Aaaaand another girl in sight. Not-a-chance she gets through the finish before me. More "go Sweden" is definitely helping. Probably running like a duck with crutches by now or like an elephant in high heels, but who cares? I just won one place on the female finish! (have stopped counting the guys I passed... Have been told it is not polite to count them...out loud...while passing them... J). Confused I see four clocks above the finish line...1:5X... what is this? Where is MY clock? Left side. 3:05:5x...and ticking. Just.push.the.rest.of.whatever.strength.left...and this is done. Finish line is passed. 3:06:10. Feeling.so.good!

Catch up with regular breathing ain't the easiest. Got congratulated by a bunch of guys with large smiles and "wow, you rock" "you're so fast, how can you dooooo that?" Got hugged as well. Finding my running buddy and my pink lady to thank them for the company. They recognize they could not follow after my sprint...Heeeeeeeuuuu what sprint??? And then a nice lady in red comes and take care of me. I could hardly walk to get to the photographs and now I can really NOT walk. A huge cramp is just stopping my left calf. Of course, it is fine I said. I just finished the race. And I show my nice and heavy medal. She urged me to go to the medical tent. Which I agreed to do. Just to check... A nice guy in red is massaging my calf. Few yelling. No relaxing massage here. Getting an ice pack on my left knee. Blood pressure is "crazy low" and the doc tells that I am going nowhere. 30 minutes later (still getting massage for my stupid left calf) and my blood pressure is back to "low". OK, can be dismissed. Happily leaving the tent. Ice pack on the left knee and on the left calf. Walking like a duck. But a happy duck. With ice pack on one leg-duck. J Getting my finisher bag. Drinking whatever I find in it. Eating the apple. Walking and getting my finisher poncho. That was it. 74th street and I am home. It is slowly sinking in... I realized I have just conquered the five boroughs of New York. Indeed, everything else WAS a warmup!

Ice bath after that. Leg rest for a while and celebration with Swedish friends with eating a lot and drinking two large cokes. So well-deserved. I am tired. I am happy. I need some sleep. Great Sunday for running, once more. Could not ask for a better weather. This is just as it should be.

Gatorade, because the brain needs sugar to focus. I have mixed km and miles and by middle of 1st Avenue, my gels are finished and I really suck at drinking from those paper mugs. Water or Gatorade. Does not matter. Not much is coming into my mouth. But the running is good! Music is on at km29 and this one is for me “..Want you to make me feel...Like I’m the only girl in the woooooorld... Like I’m the only one that you’ll ever loooooove....Oooooonly girl in the woorld”... Wooooow so crazy nice. And yes. This requires some singing. And yes, a career in singing-while-running is probably nothing to think of. Keep on running then. Smiiiiiling J Passing a Swedish gal at km30 (we have met first in Copenhagen, then in Stockholm, probably in Berlin as well... we really have to stop meeting this way!!!! J) “No sub3 today” she said. “Nope, but only 12km left. Keep on running” and we pass her. And here it comes. The “final-bridge-to-the-Bronx”. So happy to get there that I even run on the top on my toes for this one. The brain ain’t liking it much. This is a race after all. But the legs very much enjoy this. The Bronx is pretty calm. Lots of turns as well. But I.DON’T.CARE. We will soon be back...Hold on. How do we get back to 5th Avenue if we have past the final bridge already... Oooooooh...there is another “final bridge” in front of me. I feel even happier seeing it. “5th Avenue and you are soon finished” shout a boy after the bridge (“Here, take my running shoes and do this “soon finished” yourself then”...is the first thought coming through my mind...but I answer back with a large smile and more calculation about how long is left to Central Park. Run run and more run. Counting down the streets now. 135th, 134th, 133rd... Hold on there...how many streets were there until the entrance in Central Park? 100 or 20? Aaaaaah....why did I not check this???? I cannot feel the uphill of 5th avenue. I no longer care about skipping running on the concrete. I just want to get into Central Park. My running buddy asks kindly how it goes. “Fine” I hear myself saying “and you?”. “Same here” and we smile at each other. One more water station “you can make it Karima, pass those guys!” Cool with specific cheering from the crowd. Must be making them happy then...and we pass those guys J Water station before the Park and seeing a walking tall guy with Swedish outfit. This is Staffan. Walking. “Come on! 5K to the end!” (ok, this was my try to encourage him. Don’t know if this was very nicely said, but at least I gave a smile when I passed by). 400m before Central Park and we are passed by the 3:05-pace guy...and the two other guys that are hanging with him. “Following them” asks my running friend? “Nope” I hear myself answering. LET.THEM.GO. And we are finally there. Turn right and then left. The nice asphalt of Central Park. I know this final 2.4 stretch. I prepare my two final gels. Another turn and we see mile 24...ok, must be next turn...aaaaaannd...Hummm ok, must be the NEXT turn.... Aaaaaannd Oh come on! It was THERE yesterday when I ran here. WHO MOVE THE 24 mile FLAG?!?!? And here it is. Smile on the face. Yellow gel taken (disgusting lemon taste...at least this wakes me up!). My running buddy stops for water. I don’t. I want to have this done. The race has finally started. Why are they having this “24 miles” flag so close to the end? Put it 2-3 miles before, I would have started running faster then... ok, 39km beep on my watch. Red gel (crazy eucalyptus taste...another chock for the brain). My running friend has caught up. We are less than 2 miles to the end! Aaaaaannd nooooo a girl in pink outfit is passing us on the left side. Not.a.chance! I did not run 24.x miles to loose a place so close to the end. Passing the next gear (surprising...I do have extra gears when digging deep! Where are they during training?!?!?).

>> Lots of thanks for all the supporting and encouraging words during the training and the race. Especially for you who know how sad it was for me when not running. Especially for you who gladly joined me to lunch runs (yes, you were happily joining!). Especially for you who sms or emailed before/during/after (note that I do NOT read sms while running...). Especially for you who just gave a smile on the road, a high-five on the side and good luck for the race... This is a whole package "training and support" which makes races so worthwhile. Addicted to finish lines? Definitely! J
Running season ends quite well...(or is it ever ends?..)

Have a great weekend!

//Kind regards from a very grey and gloomy place on Earth (aka Gothenburg!)

Karima

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