Casper Marathon by David Holmen
June 2011

On June 5, 2011, I ran the Casper Marathon in Casper, WY. Wyoming was the only state in which I had never run a marathon in less than four hours.

To get to Casper, I flew to Rapid City, SD, rented a car, and drove the rest of the way. This was actually faster than it would have been to fly to Casper, because I couldn't get good connections.

I stayed at the Casper Ramada Plaza Riverside, which was the host hotel. This made things very convenient. Packet pickup, the pre-race dinner and the finish line were all at the Ramada. This was also where you could catch a bus to the start.

The race started at the Casper Events Center. Ordinarily, I'm not fond of races where you catch a bus to the start, but the Events Center was available for us to go inside before the race, and they had real bathrooms.

At packet pickup, they had some race merchandise for sale. I bought a stool with zippered compartments with the Casper Marathon logo. I brought it to the start so I could sit down while I was waiting for the start. Then I used it as my bag check bag.

Because of flooding that was getting worse by the day, parts of the course had to be changed. I'm not sure, but I think this made the course more difficult than it would be normally. At times we were diverted onto single-track trail.

The temperature at the start was in the upper 40s, but the temperature climbs quickly in the morning hours, so the race starts at 6:30. I'm glad it didn't start any later, because the afternoon high was in the 90s. As it was, I'm pretty sure it was in the 70s long before I finished.

For the third straight weekend, I started too fast, and paid a price for it in the second half of the race. For the first half of the race I was on pace for 3:15, but in the late miles I had to work hard to keep my time under 3:30. I finished in 3:28:14. This put me in 14th place overall, but surprisingly, I was third in my age group. More important, though, I finished under four hours. I believe I was the 16th person to finish 50sub4 (marathon times under four hours in all 50 states).

This race has one of the best finish line setups I've seen. Everything is in the parking lot of the host hotel, alongside the river. They had an excellent assortment of post race food and beverages, including pizza. The pizza was delivered at 11:00. That's about when middle-of-the-pack runners are finishing. They also had a canopy with folding chairs next to the food tent so you could sit in the shade and eat. The bags we dropped off in the morning were about 30 feet away, so I retrieved my stool/bag and was able to easily move around and sit with different groups of runners. Results were posted promptly near the finish line, and after we had time to refuel and chat for awhile, they held the award ceremony.

I saw a lot of familiar faces at this race. All weekend I was bumping into friends that I didn't even know were doing this race. I also met several new friends who spanned the range from first time marathoner to world record holder.

Several other runners drove at least part of the way to Casper, but most of them flew into the Denver airport. When I drove back to the Rapid City airport, I didn't expect to see any other runners there. As it turns out, many of the passengers on my flight back to Minneapolis were runners who were on their way home from the Deadwood/Mickelson Trail Marathon. It's a small world.