

Eau Claire WI Marathon by David Holmen
May 1, 2011

On May 1, 2011, I ran the Eau Claire Marathon in Eau Claire, WI. This race was convenient for me because Eau Claire is less than 100 miles from where I live. This gave me a chance to do a race without spending too much or taking any time off work.

I stayed at the Holiday Inn – Campus Area. Besides being close to the start and finish, they had a discounted rate for the race, provided grab-and-go breakfasts, and extended their normal checkout time to noon. For runners who checked out before noon, they had five rooms set aside, so runners could return to the hotel after the race and shower.

The race was a loop course, starting and finishing at Carson Park. The roads into the park were blocked off during the race, but there was a parking lot nearby with shuttle busses running back and forth. They also had a bag check tent at the start.

The weather was unusually cold. It was 34 degrees at the start and didn't really warm up. Worse, there were steady winds of 30 MPH throughout the race. I made a last minute decision to start the race with a trash bag over my running clothes. I ended up wearing it for the entire race, and I was still cold.

Just after the 14 mile mark, we started a long stretch that was directly into the wind. From this point on, my hands were painfully cold, and I couldn't move my fingers. I skipped every aid station between 14 and 20 miles. After that I started drinking water by stopping and holding a cup between the palms of both hands.

Despite the strong winds, I was able to maintain a decent pace. My goal was 3:15 and I finished in 3:10:27.

This is a small marathon, but they also have a half marathon and a marathon relay, so there were over 1000 participants altogether. I was very impressed with the volunteers. They were enthusiastic despite having to stand outside in cold winds. Every turn on the course had a course marshal, and whenever we crossed traffic, police were there to stop the cars.

This is a race I would recommend. I think the cold weather was atypical. I would also recommend staying at the Holiday Inn.