

Fox Cities 9-11 by D.Holmen

On September 18, 2011, I ran the Fox Cities Marathon in Neenah, WI. I added this race to my schedule because it was the annual reunion race for Marathon Maniacs. I couldn't resist doing a reunion race that was only a five hour drive from home. I didn't know when I entered that I would be recovering from a pulled hamstring.

I ran this race in 1999, but there have been some changes to the course since then. The race used to start in Neenah and finish in Appleton. Now it starts in Menasha and finishes in Neenah.

Since I was driving, I didn't need to stay at a hotel that was near the start or finish. All of the hotels with race discounts were within a short drive, and there were also shuttles between several locations, including the start and finish. I decided to stay at the Hampton Inn, so I could get Hilton HHonors points and Delta SkyMiles. As luck would have it, Diane Bolton and Kathy Kass were staying at the same hotel.

After the expo, there was a Maniac reunion meeting. We each received a back bib (provided by the race directors) that said Maniac and had a space to write our Maniac numbers. Greg Goebel was the featured speaker. He told us about his near death experience at the Zoom! Yah! Yah! Indoor Marathon in January. After the meeting, many of us went to a dinner at the Holiday Inn that Greg organized. Both the meeting and the dinner were like a who's who of titanium (10 star) Maniacs.

I was worried about my hamstring. It wasn't bothering me in the days leading up to the race, but I suspected I wasn't fully recovered. I was concerned about aggravating it just five days before the Tahoe Triple.

The weather for the race was ideal. The overnight low was 51 with temperatures climbing into the low 60s. There was a slight risk of rain, but it didn't materialize until most runners had finished, and it only rained lightly for a few minutes. Ordinarily, I would wear shorts for these conditions, but I chose to wear tights to keep my hamstring warm and provide some compression. I was comfortable in the early miles, but I got very warm later in the race.

My plan was to run just fast enough to beat 3:30, but not all out. If my leg bothered me, I would slow down, but it never did.

From miles 1 to 14, I ran with Steven Lee. Eventually, I had to let him go. It's not just that I was worried about increasing my injury risk if I ran too fast – in the second half of the race, I couldn't have kept up with him if I tried. By the last six miles I was unable to maintain 8 minute miles.

It was discouraging to struggle to run a pace that would have been easy a month ago. I'm not sure if it's because I was overdressed, or if I was rusty after three weeks of very light training while my leg was recovering.

The best part of this race was seeing so many other Marathon Maniacs. I saw several familiar faces, and met several Maniacs. Many of them took an early start, so I was gradually catching up to them in the second half of the race. At the finish, each Maniac received two finisher medals. One was the standard finisher medal. The other was a special Marathon Maniac medal for the reunion.