

Georgia Marathon by D. Holmen

March 2012

On March 18, 2012, I ran the Georgia Marathon, in Atlanta, GA. This was my second marathon since my hamstring blew up at the Lost Dutchman Marathon. Although I had two more weeks to recover since New Orleans, I still needed to wear a compression wrap.

One of the reasons I chose this race was because it was a quarterly reunion for the 50 States Marathon Club. Ironically, I missed most of the reunion meeting because it started at the same time that Darkside Running Club founder Scott Ludwig was speaking at the expo. I went to hear Scott first, and then joined the reunion meeting an hour late. Although I missed most of the meeting, I still got to see many fellow 50 Staters, and I had dinner with a few of them.

The Georgia Marathon is a loop course that starts and finishes in downtown Atlanta at Centennial Olympic Park. Most downtown hotels are within walking distance of the start and finish. I stayed at the Embassy Suites, which was particularly well-located. The hotel was less than a block from the expo, two blocks from the starting line, and about 100 feet from the 50 States Marathon Club tent in the finisher area.

It's neither necessary nor practical to rent a car when you're staying in downtown Atlanta. I originally planned to take MARTA, since there's a station at the airport. Because of my injury, I instead opted to take an airport shuttle, so I wouldn't have to walk too far with luggage.

I enjoyed the layout of the course. After leaving downtown Atlanta, we ran through a variety of neighborhoods and past several city parks. We also ran past the Martin Luther King National Historic site and around the Carter Center. In the middle miles, we went through Decatur, GA. The people of Decatur were supportive, and showed a lot of pride in their city. After making our way back to Atlanta, we did a short out-and-back segment in Piedmont Park before beginning the journey back to downtown.

This is a difficult race. The course is hilly throughout, but the last four miles were particularly challenging because they were mostly uphill. It was also hot. The temperature was in the mid-60s at the start, climbed into the 70s by the time I finished, and reached 80 by the time the last runner finished.

I wanted to be a little conservative, so I started at a pace that felt like 9 minute miles, and then eased up a little. I was pleasantly surprised to discover that I was actually running roughly 8:30 per mile. As my leg got sweaty, my compression wrap loosened and rode down, so I had to stop every couple of miles to adjust it. At 16 miles, I adjusted it tighter. It was sufficiently tight that the compression was a little uncomfortable, and I was forced to slow down a bit. On the plus side, it didn't slip any more after that.

On the out-and-back segment, I saw I was just ahead of the 3:45 pace group. I worked hard to stay ahead of them on the last few hills, and I finished in 3:44:37.

The 50 States Marathon Club had a tent in the finish area. After finishing and getting my medal and post-race food, I made my way over to the tent to wait for other 50 Staters to finish. I saw several familiar faces.

When I entered this race, I was hoping to run a Boston qualifying time, since I've never had a BQ in Georgia. My injury forced me to abandon that goal, but between the heat and the hills, I think it would have been difficult even if I was healthy.

