

## **Marathon to Marathon Iowa by David Holmen**

### **June 2012**

On June 9, 2012, I ran the Marathon to Marathon. This race starts in Storm Lake, IA and finishes in Marathon, IA. I might not have thought to do this race, but it was featured in the March/April 2012 issue of Marathon & Beyond. I was a little nervous about doing another race just two weeks before the Western States 100, but it was a chance to try for a Boston qualifier in Iowa.

This race is a four hour drive from where I work, so I worked a half day on Friday and then drove to Storm Lake. It was the fifth time in seven weeks that I was able to do a race without flying, which will really help with my travel budget.

I stayed at the Super 8 in Storm Lake. This was a nice location – about four blocks from the high school where the race starts. After picking up my race packet, I had dinner with two other runners at Honey Kissed Pizza. The owner of this restaurant collects vintage albums. The walls are all decorated with album covers.

The forecast for race day was a high in the upper 80s. Fortunately, the race started at 6 AM, so we didn't have to run during the hottest part of the day. It was 68 degrees when I woke up, and it probably reached the upper 70s by the time I finished. While I've run in hotter temperatures, I struggled a bit with the humidity and the direct sunlight. It was a bright sunny day, and there's very little shade on the course.

Storm Lake and Marathon are both small towns in rural Iowa. Most of the course was on long straight stretches of country roads with farms on either side. What the race lacked in scenery, it made up for with friendliness. Both towns support the race well, and we often passed clusters of local residents who came out to cheer for us. The volunteers were also great.

In the first half of the race, the aid stations were space 2½ miles apart. That's a bit sparse for a hot day. When I realized this, I started drinking both water and Gatorade at each aid station. In the second half, the aid stations were more frequent.

The most entertaining part of the course started at mile 11. There were dozens of small white signs on the side of the road with zombie jokes. After running past these signs for a mile and a half, we reached an aid station that was staffed by volunteers made up as zombies.

My goal was to finish under 3:30. I ran the first half in 1:42, but had to work harder and harder to stay on pace in the second half. My spirits were lifted when we reached the town of Marathon, and I saw a huge wooden sign that said Marathon to Marathon. It looked like a permanent sign, but it had the date of this year's race. I ran strong the rest of the way and finished in 3:27:17. That gave me a BQ in Iowa, and it was also good enough to place third in my age group.

Next to the finish, they had tables and chairs under canopies, so we could relax in the shade. Post-race snacks included plenty of cold beverages and frozen treats. Across the street, in the community center, they had showers.

We each received a ticket in our race packet for either breakfast or lunch in the Marathon community center. They didn't start serving lunch until 11:00, but when I went over to the community center to use the bathroom, I discovered they were still serving breakfast. Breakfast included made-to-order omelets, hash browns and pancakes, all made by the volunteers in Marathon. It's one of the best post-race meals I've had.

Since the race is point-to-point, and most runners were staying in Storm Lake, they had busses to bring us back to Storm Lake high school after the race. For people staying in Marathon, there were also busses to the start.

This was the seventh consecutive weekend that I ran a marathon or ultra. I used these races as long training runs for Western States. They weren't supposed to be all-out efforts, but most of them were. Hopefully, two weeks will be enough time to rest up for Western States.