

Mississippi Blues Marathon by David Holmen January 8, 2011

Also see Diana's report January 2010

On January 8, 2011, I ran the Mississippi Blues Marathon in Jackson, MS. As the name suggests, this race has a musical theme. When I arrived at the expo to pick up my race number, there was a blues band performing there. My race packet included a harmonica and CD of Mississippi blues music. It also included a novelty pair of sunglasses with Elvis sideburns.

This race is popular among members of the 50 States Marathon Club. Many of the runners I met were also doing a marathon in Mobile, AL the next day. I felt like a slacker because I was only doing one marathon this weekend.

The temperature at the start was in the mid-thirties. That's too chilly to wear short sleeves, but I was worried that if I wore a long sleeved shirt, I would get too hot in the late miles as it warmed up into the mid-forties. My solution was to buy a pair of arm warmers at the expo. I started the race wearing a short sleeved shirt with arm warmers, knowing that I could take off the arm warmers if I started to get too warm. (I didn't get too warm.)

The course was a loop that started and finished in downtown Jackson. I stayed at a downtown hotel, so I only needed to walk four blocks to get to the start.

After running all-out a week earlier, I didn't know how my legs would respond this week. I started with the 3:20 pace group, but it felt like I could go faster, so I sped up a bit and set a goal of 3:15. The last four miles were difficult, but I finished in 3:13:39. I was wearing the "Elvis" sunglasses. Late in the race, spectators were telling me I was the first place Elvis. (There were other runners in the race that were actually dressed like Elvis.)

At the finish line, there were more live blues bands. A different band was performing every hour, but when I finished, they were between sets, so they were playing some Elvis recordings. Every runner also got a wrist band for free admission to a shuttle that went between the downtown hotels, and six clubs with different blues performers. This traveling concert was called the Blues Crawl. It didn't start until 9 PM, so I didn't partake. After getting up early the previous two mornings, I needed to catch up on sleep.