

New Jersey Marathon by D.Holmen

May 2012

On May 6, 2012, I ran the New Jersey Marathon in Long Branch, NJ. This race gave me a chance to visit with my New Jersey friends. It was also a chance to run a Boston qualifier in New Jersey.

I ran this race in 2004, but the course was different then. The old course started at Sandy Hook and ran out and back along the Atlantic coast. The new course starts at Monmouth race track and winds around Long Branch for about 10 miles before doing a long out-and-back along the coast.

The expo was held in the clubhouse of the race track. The clubhouse was also open to runners before the start of the race. I thought this was a nice venue, but it had one drawback. Traffic getting to and from the expo was a nightmare.

After picking up my race packet, I had dinner with other Marathon Maniacs (including a few from New Jersey). Because I was stuck in traffic so long, I was very late getting to dinner. I didn't get to visit as much I would have liked.

Knowing traffic would probably be just as bad for the start of the race, and realizing the half marathon started an hour before the marathon, I decided to get up early and leave my hotel two hours before the race. I'm glad I did, because the four mile drive took 45 minutes. I didn't mind arriving early, though. I was able to sit down and relax inside the clubhouse until it was time to check my gear bag. The clubhouse also had real bathrooms with a much shorter wait than the port-o-potty lines outside.

Other than the traffic, everything about this race was excellent. The weather was perfect. Temperatures were in the mid-50s with overcast skies for the first three hours. Even after the sun came out, a cool breeze off the coast kept us from getting hot.

My favorite part of the course was a section where we ran along the boardwalk in Asbury Park, with views of waves crashing on the beach. The crowds in this area gave us a lot of encouragement. I also liked the finish area, which was also next to a beach. During the out-and-back section, I saw several of my friends.

I started the race with the 3:25 pace group, but started to run ahead of them after a mile. Unlike my last race, where I faded in the late miles, I ran strong all the way, finishing in 3:20:36. I got my Boston qualifier with almost 10 minutes to spare.

After going through the finish chute and getting my gear bag, I watched others finish for about an hour. I got to see a few friends finish before catching a shuttle back to the start, where my car was parked.

I think this race could use improvement in the traffic and parking situation. Other than that, it's a first class race.