

Omaha Nebraska
September 23, 2012 by David Holmen

On September 23, 2012, I ran the Omaha Marathon, in Omaha, NE. This is the third time I've done this race. I'm working toward a goal of running marathons in 30 different states or countries to reach the Titanium (10 stars) level of Marathon Maniacs. To keep my travel costs down, I'm trying to include races in all the Midwestern states that are close enough that I can drive. Omaha is about a six hour drive from home.

This year's course was very similar to the one I ran in 2010, but the start and finish was moved to Ameritrade Park. This is a more convenient location, since it's within walking distance of several downtown hotels. I stayed at the Hampton Inn, which was only one block from the start and two blocks from the finish.

A lot of other Marathon Maniacs were doing this race. I had dinner with several of them the night before the race. Several runners I already knew were there, so it was nice to catch up. I also met some new friends.

Before the race, I walked a few blocks to the Hilton for a group photo of Marathon Maniacs. There must have been about 50 of us. This was also a chance to catch up with old friends. One of my favorite parts of traveling to races is all the people I meet. After doing so many races, I now see familiar faces at every race.

The weather was just about ideal. It was a chilly 36 degrees at the start, but warmed into the low 50s by the time I finished. It was sunny, and it wasn't windy.

My goal was to run a time under 3:30. I knew from past experience that there are a few long hills in the first half, but the second half is fairly easy. My plan was to stick with the 3:30 pace group for the first half, and they speed up in the second half. This plan worked well for me in 2010.

The pace group started unusually fast. After four miles, we were already almost two minutes ahead of a 3:30 pace. Although I knew we were going too fast, I decided to stay with them. We reached the halfway mark in 1:39:33. That put us on pace to beat 3:20! Even though my first half was faster than planned, I still left picked up the pace in the second half.

Running a marathon is as much psychological as it is physical. Since the course was familiar, I could remember the way I was passing other runners with ease when I ran this same section of the course in 2010. That gave me the confidence to do the same thing this year. I focused on catching the runner ahead of me. As soon as I did, I moved by quickly and started focusing on the next runner. Doing this, I ran several miles in 7:30 each. With each mile, I grew more confident that I could beat 3:20, which is something I hadn't done since a pulled hamstring in February.

In the last few miles, there weren't any runners immediately in front of me, so I just focused on maintaining a hard effort to the finish. I finished in 3:17:48. That was good for first place in my age group. Since this race was the RRCA championship for Nebraska, I also won the state championship for my age group.

When I finished, there were several people I knew who were already in the finish area. As we talked, we kept seeing other friends finish. I can't remember when I've seen so many people I know all hanging around the finish line at the same time. It helped that it was nice and sunny, so we weren't getting cold. They also had good finish line refreshments, including chocolate milk and soup from Qdoba.