

Vermont City Marathon
May 29, 2011 by David Holmen

On May 29, 2011, I ran the Vermont City Marathon in Burlington, VT. This was my 100th marathon or ultra, and I arranged my race schedule so I would reach this milestone at the same race where I finished running marathons in all 50 states (in 2010).

I was excited to get to the expo, because the race director let me wear bib number 100, and I couldn't wait to pick up my race packet. My friend Laura was one of the speakers at the expo. I didn't arrive in time to hear her begin speaking, but I got there before she was finished and had a chance to say hello.

Before leaving the expo, I bought a new SpiBelt to replace one I misplaced after the Fargo Marathon. It was the third time this year that I went to an expo with a specific need and was able to find exactly what I needed for the race.

Later, I went to dinner with several other runners. Some I had met at other races. Others I was meeting for the first time. It was fun because everyone had interesting stories and we were comparing notes on our favorite races. We took group pictures including one after dinner where we were seeing how many of us would fit in a phone booth.

The morning of the race, there was a group picture of Marathon Maniacs and 50 States club members that was organized by Dave Mari. I saw lots of familiar faces, including several of my favorite maniacs.

When it was time to start the race, I was worried, because my left quadricep had been very sore all week. I wanted to try to beat 3:15, but I wasn't sure if I could run all out without hurting myself.

It was about 68 degrees, but a light rain in the early miles made it feel comfortable. When the rain stopped, the temperature climbed into the 70s and it was very humid. As it turned out, my left leg never bothered me, but the heat and humidity bothered me more than I thought it would. I ran the first half of the race at a brisk pace, but I was slowing in the second half.

At about 19 miles, there was a short section of trail that was so muddy from recent rain that parts had to be covered with plywood. I found it very uncomfortable running on the plywood. A small group of runners in front of me would land on one of plywood planks and press it down. When I landed on the same plank, I would hit it just as it was springing back. This happened several times and it took a toll on my legs. When I reached pavement again, my legs felt dead. I had already been working hard to stay on pace for 3:15, but suddenly I was slowing dramatically.

One thing that kept my spirits up was hearing spectators cheer for me by calling out my bib number. Many thought 100 was a great number, even though they didn't know it held a special significance for me.

In the last five miles, I realized I had no chance to beat 3:15, but I ran the best pace I could manage. This was the second straight year I found myself struggling just to finish this race. I eventually finished in 3:20:04.

Although I was disappointed with my time, it didn't matter once I crossed the finish line. I had finished my 100th marathon and I was ready to celebrate. I made my way through the crowd to reach the food tent, where post race refreshments included Cabot cheese and Ben & Jerry's ice cream. Next, I went to the post-race party tent, where I got a free beer.

After returning to my hotel to clean up and change clothes, I went to a post-race party hosted by Sherry Ricker. At the party I saw a few of the same friends I had dinner with the night before. I also met several other runners. Again, it was fun trading stories and talking about our favorite races.