

Twenty-Six Two Race Reports

July 2011

Seattle Rock 'N' Roll Marathon

By Morgan Puckett (and Megan O'Connor)

Our Coach says, "Getting to the starting line is the hardest part of a marathon." On June 25, 2011, he could not have been more correct with that statement.

Pre-Race: Calm before the storm

The morning started out like any other marathon morning: nerves, toast, Sports Shield, ditch clothes, bib, timing chips, Nuun, gear check bags. We were out the door of our hotel by 5:05 a.m., heading for the buses a half mile away. Along our way, we met a nice gal from Seattle to keep us company on the chilly walk. The weather was great – about 50 degrees. It was not raining, yet it was cloudy. Rather perfect for a Saturday long run and a much welcomed break from the 95+ degree heat we had been running in Texas.

Getting to the Start: The storm of chaos

We arrived at the bus loading zone at about 5:20. We encountered masses of runners waiting for only three school buses. It was absolute chaos. Runners were shoving to get on buses, and there were only one or two Rock 'N' Roll Race Crew to manage this madness. We were surprised and disappointed to see such disorganization. So, as we waited and waited, and tried to avoid the shoving, we decided to share a cab with our new friend and try to get to the start line.

We thought grabbing a cab was the perfect option. We hailed a taxi and the driver told us he could "take us anywhere," so we hopped in. Then, when we told him where we needed to go, he responded, "I don't know where that is." Perfect...time is ticking. So, we told him to follow the buses. This seemed reasonable, until the bus was able to exit to the start area and we were not. So, we drove on and took the next exit. All the while we were listening to the cabbie complain about Seattle and Canada, the marathon traffic in general, and how he had "never done this before."

It was bumper to bumper traffic with runners trying to reach the start area. There were no officers to direct the traffic jam and total disorganization...once again. Great job, Rock 'N' Roll! We were stuck in this traffic for about 45 minutes. We finally decided we needed to just get out and walk to the start. We saw crowds of runners, so we figured we were close enough to the start area. It was 6:45 a.m. (start time 7 a.m.). We paid the cabbie the hefty fee for all the quality time we spent with him that morning (yes, I am being sarcastic with the word quality), started walking.

How to turn 26.2 miles into 28+ miles

As we walked on towards the start, we asked some folks in front of us, "How far to the starting line?" They responded that it was about 1.5 miles. So, we started jogging knowing we had to get our bags to gear check. We ran at least a mile and a half, and we still saw no signs of the start. We continued running and reached what looked like a park (turned out to be an industrial center). We thought we were close, but we were still about .5 miles out. After running around a Jack in the Box, we finally reached the start area (still with hardly any signs saying "start line" or "gear check"). It was about 7:05 a.m. We threw our bags into the UPS gear check trucks (thank you UPS, you were the best part of that race crew), and continued trotting to the start - our corral was #8, and we ended up leaving with corral #16. Before we crossed the timing mats, after our prerace jaunt, we looked at each other and laughed. We reminded ourselves that we had come to run this race for fun.

Finally, the Race: Hills do not look the same on foot as they do in an online course profile

The race course had major and minor climbs and bridges sprinkled throughout, and we all know bridges aren't at sea level. However, it was a scenic course and gave us beautiful views of the city, the mountains, and the water. The kicker was the 151 foot climb between miles 17 and 19. Ok, we got a little downhill after climbing up, right? Sure, but only to get to mile 20. At that point, we climbed 214 feet to get to 20.5. It flattened out for a bit, then went down again, only to climb back up to mile 25 (the online profile didn't tell the whole story). After a few negative words about Rock 'N' Roll, a walk break or two in the closing miles, a cramped calf/Achilles, and a few classic mile 22-26 one liners, we happily finished the race in 4:06.

Post-Race: Happy, as always

Our Seattle experience left us with mixed feelings. We were sorely disappointed with the organization of the event, yet enjoyed the beautiful scenery, lovely weather, and experience of running the race together. Sitting back home in Austin, we both agree that we are glad we had the experience, but will probably think twice about a second Seattle run.

By the way, after telling this story to another runner pal, she asked "How were you not freaking out when you couldn't get to the start?" I said, "I was with Megan, and I knew she would get us there."



Morgan and Megan with former Austin runners Will and Krystal Gulley (now living in Seattle)



Morgan and Megan relax before race day