



Barcelona half-marathon took place on
Sunday 12 February 2017

Short race = short update... First race of the 2017-season...deserves a bit longer than usual J

Barcelona half-marathon took place on Sunday 12 February 2017. First marathon to start the season, no major issue prior to the race (apart from the rubbish-crazy-cold weather at home...), grey skies, wind, 17,000 other runners and a finish in 55th place and 6th age category. Sub90 to start the year can feel quite satisfactory :-)

1:28:50, within the expected time-range, but a bit slower than could have been. Still...sub90 is a good time for a training race. The body was all good from start to end, and as usual (!) a bit indecently not-tired after the finish line and despite the final sprint.

Completed the race 55th among all women, 6th in my age category, and 1,238 out of 15,242 finishers... A good way to start this year...

Training since the cancelled Malaga marathon in December went a bit down and up, with a few weeks issue with a stupid kneecap pain. But after that... never run that much for a January month: Missed a bit not to run in Dubai this year (at least for the weather...), but it allowed to have a bit longer continuity in the preparation for the first main objective of this year (coming soon...). Felt all fine before the race, a bit disappointed that Barcelona did not offer sunny skies, but hey! Runners don't bother the weather, right?

Short version? Trip down to Barcelona with one representative of my best-ever cheering squad. First 5km were used as warmup, then got into steady race pace by km10, a bit slower afterwards (let's blame it on the wind...) and a final 2km with winning places and a final stretch under 4min-pace. Definitely some strengths left afterwards (and therefore the "not fully satisfied at the end"-look)! Stable result though. A very nice way to start the last day of the week!

Traveling down to Barcelona on Friday went smoothly. Found the apartment and then long walk to pick up the BIB and then back home and eat. Pizza for late lunch and pasta on the menu for dinner. No creativity whatsoever... Body felt all good for running, although a bit sluggish as it often is prior to race. Easy run on the Saturday showed that the 5km from the start were nothing to fear and after that, only the rest of the day was left to relax and prepare.

And Sunday was already there. Up early for breakfast and back to bed. Wanted to test a bit marathon-preparation there. When the alarm rang again, time to get ready and head to the start with G. Lots of people. Cool to do one's own warmup a few meters from the lady having run on world record here in Barcelona in 2015 (and yes we ran slightly the same pace...during the warmup :-). Final hugs and pics and direction start-coral and focus. Feeling fine in this start group. Countdown is suddenly starting...at 5...4...3...2...1...

8:45am and BAAAM! Confettis in the skies...

But not much happening actually. Took twenty long seconds before walking to the start (and yes, I was in the second fastest start-group! Right behind the rackets!). Had in mind to take it easy first km, but this time...it felt WAY too easy. Reach **km1** in 4:17...after an acceleration! First cheering from G there and that was on! Good pace reach finally before we turned right after km2 and then the long slow up to **km5** started. The 1:25-pace setters passed me around **km4** or so and I remained quite close for a while. But the idea was not to get it all today. So I settled into a comfortable pace, following a gal in black outfit and bandana who looked to have similar expectations for the race. Passing the Arc de Triomphe (the one in Barcelona...not the French one!). Stable pace to reach **km8-9** where G was there for more cheering. He even ran by my side for a little while and that set the largest smile on my face indeed.

Would have been great to have this for a bit longer and especially when it became a little up around **km11**, and I could feel the pace dropping a bit. Nothing crazy, but nothing 87minutes-like. My runner-buddy dropped her bandana around this time as well and she ran back (!) to pick it up on the asphalt and I did not see her again. Boring. It was fun to run beside her. Reaching halfway slightly slower than expected, but in good shape. Continued with a nice fast sub4 km and then the wind started to bother me. Nothing crazy, but still. Turned right towards **km14** when I saw the female WR-holder passing on the other side towards her 16km. So beautiful sight and inspirational too. Took help of the slight tailwind to pass a few guys and get along with the stretch towards 14.5 or so and then turn back...into headwind. NOT LIKING IT! Once again, and as in many other races, I could not get into a pack for running (there was NO pack there) and the guys are not necessarily helpful neither. Passed **km15** a bit slower than planned, but that was expected by now. Turned right into the windiest street of the race. Could feel the wind blowing away my feet against each other from time to time. Decided to keep it "safe" and ran right behind two tall guys. Which meant as well slowing down, but for a while it felt ok. After a km or so I got tired of this pace and by **km17** I had passed them. Waiting for the **km18**-mark and the "terrible" little slope that so many were fearing apparently. Saw it coming from a little while and was actually unsure of what I had read. Turned left and took this baby-slope on the top of the toes (yes, I let dudes passing me there...but their legs did not like the pace up and they were passed by little-me soon after :-)). The final 3km were reached. Straight and flat. Did noticed the sea scenery, but honestly, I wanted to have this finished. Passed guys and tried to have some actually following this acceleration. But nope. Reaching **km20** and got final cheering from G and a French guy caught up on me too with more cheering words. And as in other races, happened what I REALLY do not like... a gal passed me! There! On the spot! 1.1km to go! The French guy by my side encouraged me to "take her, but not now. To wait until the final 600m-stretch". Which I did. Had seen the arrival of a couple of this particular race and seen how the race was won at the end by the final sprint. Took it easy. Accelerated progressively. The gal noticed it as she was looking at me. Waited for the final 400m to push a bit more and pass her. As long as I could hold at least that pace. To the end. And there was another gal right before me.

Another place to take! Yoooohoo! Pressing a bit more on those strong legs (which were...hummm...where exactly during the race?...) and pass her too and the final line was there...and the other gal got me by what?...half a second? :-(Does not matter much. The clock was ticking right after 1:29, but having started after the gun, it gave me a nice sub 89!

1:28:50. Official finish time is received after I got my medal engraved. Great! Freezing like crazy. Took a couple of pics and that was it! Good Sunday run under grey skies! Feel like (almost) home!

Walked back home for shower, changing clothes and food. A bit of rest and then we headed for some sightseeing starting with the famous and gorgeous Sagrada Familia.

Good training race, weather could have been better (this is Barcelona after all...), but won't blame it on the wind (too easy!). Stable result and good warming up for the next race to come!

>> Lots of thanks for support and words of encouragement. Even though I kept this race a bit on low profile, it was great to have some knowing about it :-) The greatest and most special thanks goes to G who came along, endured my pre-race mood, my race-morning mood and my post-race mood. Again, with such cheering on the side, one can do great things! A bit of easy run now, continuing the warming up and then should come the first big adventure for this year :-)

Have a great week!

//Kind regards from a grey, cold and foggy place on Earth (aka Gothenburg!)

Karima

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