

Hultsfred halfmarathon (Sweden) took place in Hultsfred on Saturday 3 september 2016.



Short race = Short update... Although another sub90 and a gold medal at the Swedish master championships in half-marathon deserves a little more than that?

Hultsfred halfmarathon (Sweden) took place in Hultsfred on Saturday 3 september 2016. Fourth half-marathon and third sub90 this year. Planned as training-race, to check the form.

1:29:58 – PB on this route (as this is the first time I run it...I know...I will find plenty of new races for new “PB on this route”). Another sub90 on training-race this year. The race was completed with a 4th place among women, 1st in my age category and 42 of all runners! A good way to start the weekend instead of a loooong run.

The objectives for this race were quite simple: decision to run it was taken one week before the race and it is after all only two weeks before THE half-marathon of the year. So all-in was not the plan, but being the Swedish Masters Championships, you cannot really take it as a “training-race”, can you? Flat and fast course, sensitive to wind. Great!

In Short, the race started nice and easy. The first half disappeared as planned, then kept a 4th place up to km15 where unplanned stomach cramps prevented from keeping up the expected pace. Not a chance for stopping so close to the finish however! Final 1.1km went down in 4:20. Quite ok finish :-)

Rewinding a bit to the week before, when I actually remember the existence of this race and had to find a kind driver so that I could hang along with to get there. Slight change in the training programme from the Wednesday prior to the race and on Saturday I woke up ready to run the Swedish Masters Championships Half-marathon instead of a nice 32km-long run... Got picked up at 5:40am and 3 hours later (and a bit of more sleep on the back of the car) we arrived to a very grey Hultsfred with drizzling skies. Weather forecast was indicating light rain from 11am... Just had to run fast enough to skip them then! Picked up my BIB, met other runners from Lerum (from which my kind driver is part of), a few hi to a couple of runners I knew and it was already 9am and time to warm-up. <

Got to the locker-rooms. Quite empty. Got myself in racing gear, left my bag to the indicated tent and off to the start area. Ran a couple of km on the race route, feeling we would have wind during one long stretch and lots of gravel... Just have to like the situation and run with it! Dropped my arm sleeves to the tent as it felt that the sun would actually be helping enough to keep us warm during the race. Had checked the participants names in my age category and a top 2 was easily achievable, for the race itself top 3 was the plan (or top 5 if any gal felt better than I did!). Countdown started for the marathon runners starting right before us. Getting ready. New countdown for our race. Sun shining, couple of smiles before the start...

PANG! Nice and easy start. Just loving when there is this rush of runners without any pushing and crazy falling at start... Saw Karin S (the one I counted on winning the race) and Anders P (my driver) moving along me and then passing me. All fine, this is where they should be! Just had to have an eye on the ladies in my age category and one of them was running close to me with another gal in Senior class. Passing km1 in second position and with those two gals in my steps. Side wind was there already, but ok. Running on the asphalt would be the golden parts of the race as over 70% of it was on gravel... Plan was to pass halfway under 44minutes and see to get a comfortable sub90 at the end. All was set for this. Music in the ears from km2 in order to skip the wind blowing noise. And from km2.5 we were back to gravel. The route being a 2 loops of 10.5km each with a 5km north loop, back to the start area and then 5.5km south loop and back to the start area. The long stretch towards km3 was already a bit painful/annoying as the side wind made it tricky to hold the wanted pace. Had in mind to find a group of other runners for having a wind-shield but my hope was lost when I saw that most runners ran one after the other and none at the pace I wanted to hold. Got passed by a chick before km3, KS ("Women Senior") was indicated on her back. OK, here goes one place to the total finish, but I am still in the lead for the age category I belong to. I know by now that in longer race, lots can be changed in the final km of the race. So no need to be happy or sad with a placing so early in the race. Little slope up and then snake-like path to run back to the start. First north loop completed. All fine...apart from this stupid wind! The second loop heading south is mostly on gravel and very sensitive to the wind. Had to actually dig a bit for holding the pace than between km6 and 7 and that should not be this way so early in the race.

Still feeling fine. Running under the trees felt nice...if it was for training! The ground was far from flat and welcoming, but ok. No need to complain, there is still one loop to go! Have passed some marathon runners by now and from the opposite direction arrive the fast half-marathon runners. Cannot do anything else than look and admire the style they have! More focus on the race. Seeing Karin S and Anders P on the other sides, getting thumb up and I reach the turning point of this loop...after being passed by the two gals I had to keep an eye on... The Senior and the K40 are moving along and I got a cheering. OK, just have to keep them within short from me and will ensure to have a better finish than they do. Reaching back the asphalt right before km9 and those ladies are 50-60m ahead of me... Hmmm...ok... how did this happen? Fortunately my legs are getting back their energy when the asphalt is under the feet. So I catch up with the two gals by the time we pass the 10km-sign. All fine and we are now running side by side the 3 of us. I pass the half mark sliiiiightly before them in 44:xx. OK. In time, but would have been good with a few seconds (or minute...) in the credit bank so that the second half could be slower. Second time on the north loop. The K40-gal is slowing down and I used it for taking the lead. The KS-gal is hanging with me and cheering for her running mate, who answer to go because she cannot hold it. Just what I wanted to hear! Have dropped the earplugs since we passed the halfway mark and set my steps and breathing on a good race pace. Hearing the KS-gal running the same steps and breathing the same way. Soooo in sync! Perfect. We are a bit slow passing the km12.5 and then back to the gravel and the side-stupid-wind. Passing a couple of half-marathoners. We are not talking to each other, but from time to time a word or two is getting out for encouraging and pushing the other one. This long stretch with side-wind is making me a bit tired but there is no chance I am letting her get before me. Back to the little slope, the snake-like path and we are back to the start area. Finishing the north loop for the second time feels great. Have a smile on my face when passing the start area and hearing my name. OK, only one loop left, 5km, nothing. Then it started from nowhere. Like a knife strike in the stomach. What is going on? Cramps are just growing and I seriously consider to just stop and see if that help. But the KS-gal is cheering and I tried to continue to run. Although passing km16 is a real H*ll. I feel that my body is folded in two (not really, but I know I am not holding my back straight). Have dropped the pace and left the gal run alone. OMG! This is painful. And for sure something must be done.

Another thought about stopping and see what happens comes into mind... until I see the first guy in the race running on the asphalt road a little above me. I have passed km17 and he is on the finish stretch. This gives a bit of strength. The run under the trees is way less pleasant than the first time I passed here. Still passing people, which is good, but the one I want to pass is the gal ahead of me and the distance between us keeps on getting bigger. Seeing Karin S and Anders P passing on the opposite direction and I know I have lost much time now. Not checking the watch any longer. I need to finish this, whatever time and not letting any gal in my age category pass me. That's the new plan. Reaching the turning point and almost tripping on my feet and falling on the grass there. Yap. Something is seriously wrong and I am still running... Seeing the K40-lady on the way to the turning point after me. Have no clue how far we are from each other...30m? 50M? Well I decide not to stay along and check more. Getting more cheering from guys I pass and runners from the opposite direction. How can I pass guys there? Which are not in the marathon race? And with those cramps in the stomach? Just want to sit and wait until the pain pass now. But then arrives...the asphalt! Yooohooo! This is what the legs were waiting for. Still seeing the KS-gal, feeling the light side-wind, but nothing really matters. Passing the 9km-mark from the previous loop. This feels good. I can actually accelerate and run "properly-like" here! Passing two more guys before the 20km-sign and from there on, it is just get to the finish line as fast as the legs can. My watch indicated 1:25:35 when passing the 20km. Meaning a 4min-tempo should bring me under 90 minutes. Of course I always forget and miscalculate that there is 1.1km left and not 1km... But at this time of the race, there is no chance that I will argue with myself on this "little" 0.1km-detail. Running like it would be an interval-training, reaching the little slope down and back to gravel. Passing the km21-sign. WHERE IS THIS FINISH LINE?!?!? Seeing the clock ticking. Well...more guessing than seeing. 1:29:54...55...56...OK sub90 is lost, but at least I have the placing I wanted. Hearing my name, raising the arms, trying for a smile and passing the finish line. Stopping the watch and swearing silently. It shows 1:29:58. Of course I have missed the 90min...

Official time: **1:29:58**. A well-deserved 4th place in a windy (one-way), gravel(y) race. But consolation price (?) is a 1st place in my age category, which gives a nice gold medal and nice "titel" of Swedish Master Champion in half-marathon K40! Not too bad for a race that was not in the plan a few days ago...

Getting my race medal, taking a glass of water and a banana. The euphoria of the last km has disappeared now and the cramps are just exploding. Cannot do anything else than bending in two and trying to wait that they pass. Which never happen. Walking to the locker-room for a bit of rest. Meeting Anders P who got a nice fat PB and who kindly tells me to keep walking to get the cramps disappear. Which is not happening. Taking a couple of laps around the track for cooling down. Hot shower and changing to warmer clothes. Waiting under the sun for getting to the podium (and for sure a bit annoyed to see the KS-gal on the third place of it...) and then getting up to the highest step for my age category. Back to the car and 3 hours drive later we are back home. Coca cola and sesame bagel to celebrate this achievement in the evening. Sub90 once again...but too close for being fully satisfied. On the other side, legs feel fine, heel feel fine, hips and head feel fine.... Only the stomach is impaired and would need the four following days to be back to kind-of normal. Never had those cramps before in race and hope very much to skip them in future race. But end of the story: Gold medal and sun shining!

>> Thanks for the kind support received during the training and the listening of the painful end of the race :-) This very much felt like 15km run-5km mental fight-1.1km sprint. Definitely worth it! More running to do, the ultimate goal of the year is approaching...maybe too fast now! Still warming up!

Have a great week!

//Kind regards from a quite-sunny-and-warm place on Earth (aka Gothenburg!)

Karima