



Tokyo marathon took place on
Sunday 26 February 2017
3:02:31

Long race = long update... First marathon of the year and 6th World Marathon Major completed...deserves a bit longer than usual J

Tokyo marathon took place on Sunday 26 February 2017. First marathon to start the year, making a stupid mistake even before start, major issue with the right hip after halfway, sunshine, light wind and a finish in ...no idea! Ranking has not yet been published a few days after the completion of the race. Apart from the 50 first. Which I am not part of... Kind of an ok-start for the year then...

3:02:31, definitely not reaching the expectations for the race, but considering the happenings during the race, that would count as a good training. Sub3 was the plan, training had gone well and according to plan (apart from the freezing stupid cold at home during the last weeks prior to the race...), but runners ain't soft people, right? :-). The body felt fine up to halfway, and then the right hip started to bother pretty much a lot, resulting into an easy decision to lower the pace to limit the potential damages, crazy slow kilometres between 30 and 40, but still strong finish last km with a malfunctioning hip and a not cooperating knee. Still a good way to end the week in the Nippon capital, under sunny skies and a smile of the face! Not every day one receives its 6-stars medal!

Completed the race in probably an ok-place considering the finishing time and the number of participants (30,000+ at start). Still the plan was not accomplished. There will be more races....

The last two weeks of training after Barcelona half-marathon had been going smoothly. Easy as it should be while tapering. Maybe too easy. Maybe too short time for recovery. Still, getting to Tokyo ahead of the race was a good move as it allowed to adapt to the time there (even though being dead tired in the middle/end afternoon each day leading to the race weekend) and being fit for fight way too early for the Japanese time :-). Final workouts in Tokyo were done in freezing cold and windy weather, drizzle and warm weather and finally sunny and chilly weather. Hoping for sun and smooth wind for Sunday! Felt fit enough. Felt prepared. Felt all ready to get there and run on some asphalt...

Short version? Good training, enough preparation to get confident for the objectives set, happy to be there, a bit "scared"/intimidated to be in a country where the language was so far it can be from what I know... Ready to run as I could be! The long trip to Japan did not really impact as the race was in the morning and that was when I was the fittest. Ever. OK-first half, dreadful second half, strong final km. And still 4th best marathon time ever (and best for the 6 World Marathon Majors). Not satisfied regarding the time, definitely happy for the achievement (ie not quitting and completing still with a smile under the sun shining!) J

Tapering weeks worked as they should. Maybe feeling a bit sluggish, more than usual during those weeks before the race, but that is part of the game. Having a half-marathon race as final long run might impact on the race itself, but that was not the first time I had this arrangement (and probably not the last...). Travelled to Japan a few days before the race to get acclimated to the time zone. Up as a Japanese and enjoying a bit of the sightseeing, working for the rest of the days with other time zones. That went fine. Tricky to find food that was ok for this phase of the training, especially as I could not really understand what was presented on the menus...as they all were in Japanese. Chose to cook my own food for a couple of days and when carboloading started, that went easier with full access to rice meals. Body felt all fine and ready. No issue with the calve and Achille's heels as during the last week after Barcelona. The only fear was that the weather would be rubbish. At arrival in the city, I was welcomed by tremendously strong wind and freezing temperatures... Why did I leave Sweden?... Anyway, all felt as usual until I received my BIB indicating I would start in Group A as semi-elite international. Which was cool, just to start with!

Sunday came as it always does. Up right before the alarm rang at 5:00am, got breakfast and a bit tricky to get back to bed, so I reviewed a bit the route. Got a video-call from one of my special little cheering squad back at home. Surely it made me a bit late in my preparations, but that was definitely worth receiving this smile of his! Gear on, out to the cold and direction the metro station. Got cheered by a Japanese lady running (at this early hour already!). Got me a smile on the face. Found my luggage truck, waited a bit and dropped my bag. Headed to the start. Second pitstop. And time to line up in my group. Sitting on the cold asphalt. For over an hour. In hotpants and singlet and having only a long tshirt on me. For sure, I would have turned into an ice cube if we would have stayed longer... Making friends with Japanese chicks who did not speak English, but who cared really? We were there for running and understood each other this way. Japanese anthem. Coolest part ever came when the wheelchair athletes lined up and started. And then the invited and Japanese elites lined up before us. Woowow! Tricky to focus and actually realize that we are not here to just look at them but also to run... Countdown to the start never came really...

9:10am and PANG!

Confetti in the skies and we were unleashed! Women on the left and men on the right for our elite and semi-elite groups which was to avoid accident. Very well-thought actually. Having frozen for a longer while made it tricky to run at expected pace from start. The bum felt like frozen while the legs took shorter time to get into proper fitness level. Downhill to start with. A bit strange asphalt too. And it felt that I really had to make a pitstop. Really?!?!? What is that preparation of mine? And downhill running ain't making it easier. Deciding boldly to stop right at km2 for 25seconds and then started again. This stupid stop just killed whatever flow I had from the start and will never get it back. My watch had indicated a 3:17min/km first kilometre...Hummmm... sure... I am not even THAT fast in my dreams. The high buildings are making the GPS acting like crazy. This stupid pitstop had killed my rhythm. Should I really continue? Or can we start all over again? If I say, please? Trying to get along a few gals which I cannot recognize. All the ones I had in sight at the starting line are gone. For good. I am not happy. Beep, says the watch. Cannot focus. Passing the 5km at the expected pace for a 2:58-finish time. Rubbish! The first 10km are downhill "à la Boston". I was planning to gain a bit of time on THOSE kilometres. OK, try to focus.

Reaching km7, I feel better. More confident. Still no clue about which average pace I am having, but I am running on streets I have run the days before as training. Feeling nice. There we separate the marathoners on the left side of the road from the 10K-runners on the right side of the road. I can as well get myself on the right side and finish this stupid thing right away. Seeing the turning point to the left towards our 10K-point and I am no longer thinking this. I am here for a 42K and I will get one. Even if this is in disastrous time. Passing the 10K still at 2:58-finish time pace. Still not happy, but ok. The next part towards km28 is also one I have trained on. Running straight on small little bridges does not feel as heavy as during training. Sure...there must be something wrong with me then! Reaching km14+ and seeing the elite women turning on the other direction towards their 16km. Really nice and inspiring! Not liking at all the stretch to km15...and seeing the Kaminarimon gate which I visited early during the week... Have we run THAT far?!?!? Turning back and getting finally to the stretch towards the halfway mark. The new route is brilliant. Can see the elite men passing by. So beautiful flow in their movement. Hearing myself cheering loudly. Probably the only one in English. More focus on my race, you! Passing the km25 and still quite ok for sub3 ending. Passing halfway under strong sun and light wind and right around 89minutes. Have not seen the 3hr-pace setters and don't want to see them...

Second half starts with this little light up towards those small ups&downs hardly notable (apart from when you already have 20km or so in your legs...). Turning towards km25, seeing runners reaching on the other side their 16km. I am happy to be on this side... Still quite ok, but not fully. The right hip is struggling a bit and I try to figure out how to make it stop bothering me. Getting to km26 and I see them in the window... the 3hrs-pace setters with their golden balloons... One is even reaching my side for a few seconds... Nooooo! They shall not paaaaaass! Accelerating (I think?) and yes, there is nothing more motivating than a bunch of guys running fast and staring at your... back(?). Don't want to let them pass me. Feeling strong(er), with a hip not cooperating. I don't care really. Reaching my neighbourhoods again and turning towards km28. Go go go! They are not there. If I close my eyes and sing in my head, I am pretty sure they will disappear... Well, they can still be THERE, but not ahead of ME. And then it just happens... the first pacesetter passes me. His back has a lap indicating that his "gun time" is 3hrs.

OK, meaning that if I get still along with them I might reach sub3. But this group is not running at 4:16-tempo. I can tell you. Even though I am not fast, I know they are running faster than planned. So I let them go. Keeping a bit close and still having 2 pacesetters behind me until we reach km30. There I lost them. All of them. My hip is hurting like crazy and I cannot think of a better way of running it for ever than continuing to push to catch up with those guys. Therefore I chose to slow down. Crazy slowing down. Not even sure that my heart is beating faster than when I sleep now. I can hear the people around me heavily breathing. My breathing is light and nice. I could even be singing clearly. So for sure, the pace ain't fast and crazy. Getting to the stretch towards the final turn. Passing Zojo-jo park... What? I have been there too during my sightseeing this week. And it was FAR away... The sun is a bit strong now. My arm sleeves are down. Have my gloves in my sports bra. I would like to get rid of my singlet too. Seeing the elites on the other side sprinting towards the end is a delight. An inspiration. When I reach the turning point I decide to stop being slow. To get to the next gal ahead of me and then to the next one and another one. Easier said than done. Catching up a Spanish guy and cheering for him saying "Vamos Italia!" ... The mind ain't there any longer I think. At least he smiles and cheers back to me. A Mexican guy catches up with me and cheers there as well. Saying it looks strong. Hearing once again on the side of the course the "Heja Sverige!" (Go Sweden) from a gal who had cheered already twice earlier on the road. At least she got me smile! The countdown has started for me since the gun went off...but now the km-signs are decreasing. 5...4...3... and finally 2 to go. Taking my final gel, glups little water and pressing whatever is left without killing this hip of mine. Passing one gal with her friends and now there is only one km to go. Final turn right, a few 100m and then turn left into the nice alley with plates/cobblestones like. Not the best (for me) to sprint. But still pressing to pass another gal. Half-way to the end of the alley the left knee is stopping to respond and I almost fell. Oooooohh...no! Not here and not now! Don't want to have the gals I passed passing me. Pressing for more. Getting more "Go Sweden, Go" from the cheering crowd. Limping is definitely the style I have during this second half of the alley. But it is soon finish. Seeing this giant blond gal before me. Just this one. Reaching pass her on the left. Not falling, which is an exploit in itself. Accelerating for all the strengths in the world and seeing...well, actually not seeing the finish line. Feeling that the hip pain is gone, the hurting knee has disappeared...this is where pure adrenaline is running into the veins! And that.is.it! Done! Fini! Slut! Stopping the watch without looking. Does not matter really. I have finished. That's what counts. For today...

3:02:31. Official finish time received later when I got back home. Knee feels slightly better right after the finish line, but the hip ain't good. I stop. Getting support from my Mexican running-buddy. Limping badly until we get our finisher towel, finisher picture and walk walk walk probably one km or so to get our bags. On with warm jacket, final hug to my cheering new friends and then heading back to Hibiya park to get my 6-stars medal. Will bet there...eventually...after walking 3 extra km back... The body does like it actually. The hip and the knee are back to normal. Seeing other runners which are in really bad shape. Sun is shining. The head is happy. For now. Fine Sunday run! That was definitely The Day We Unite :-)

Walking back home takes 5km instead of 2 (no idea how I did this...), hot shower, rest on the bed and food in nearby restaurant. Not fully tired though. Packing all my stuff as I am heading to Kyoto early the day after...

Fine race, weather for runners (as earlier said, *runners just do it... they run to the finish line even if someone else has reached it first...*), happy to complete my 19th marathon, getting to finish my 6th World Marathon Major and indeed still smiling at the end despite a rather boring slow time. More races will come and faster they will be. Warmup had gone well, just have to figure out what happened with this hip of mine. Then it will be time to get to the next adventure...

>> Lots of thanks for the support and encouragements during training and prior/during/after the race. This should not be undermined the power of small easy words, sms or whatever signs. They are what makes the whole preparation strong(er) and what the mind is thinking of when it gets tough or when it goes well. Special thanks and hugs to E for that morning video-call and the kind words of encouragements. Still have to figure out how to get some sunning buddies for lunch runs now. But they shall come. Like flowers with the spring...when the race season will start for them :-)

Cooldown and recovery this week. Thereafter, time to get on with the next challenges ahead.

Have a great week!

//Kind regards from a lightly raining place on Earth (aka Tokyo!)

Karima

>justrunningaround<.