

Semper Fi

Semper Fidelis is Latin for “Always Faithful” or “Always Loyal”. It is the motto of the US Marine Corp and approximately 23,000 runners showed their loyalty at the 38th running of the Marine Corp Marathon. A further 8,000 runners ran the Marine Corp 10k held simultaneously. The Marine Corp is a premier local event and Reston Runners were out in force. Many Reston Runners also ran the Wineglass marathon 3 weeks ago yet still put in great performances.

In its long history, the MCM has not only made a name for itself in sheer size as the fourth largest US Marathon and ninth in the world, but stands as the largest marathon in the world neither offering prize money nor requiring qualifying times – thus earning its moniker as "The People's Marathon." During the registration process the 32,000 slots were filled in about 2 ½ hours, which proves the popularity of the race.

The recent government shutdown had created some uncertainty about the race and it was a relief for the runners when race day finally arrived. We all congregated early in Rosslyn and then walked up to the start area next to Arlington Cemetery. There was excited chit-chat, nervous energy, quick photos and last minute potty stops. An electric craic blanketed the runners. The weather was not as cold as predicted; in fact it was perfect – cool, overcast and dry. Many of us disposed of extra clothing before the start. The Marines put on a very patriotic opening ceremony with flag-toting skydivers gracing the morning sky. A howitzer was used as the start signal, first for the wheelchair division and then for the able-bodied runners.

Boom! And we're off. 23,000 people shuffled slowly across the start line and ran down a slight hill from Arlington Cemetery and wended our way through Rosslyn. The first 3 miles were the hilliest part of the course but fresh legs easily covered these miles. This early part of the race is mostly about elbows and shoulders, bumping, nudging and passing. We poured over the Key Bridge and made a sharp turn into Georgetown. About mile 5 is where the course altered from previous years and we ran a 3 mile out and back along Rock Creek Parkway. The nice thing about out-and-backs is that first you get to see who is ahead of you, and then you get to see who is behind you. Rock Creek Parkway is a scenic gorge with steep rock walls on one side and grassy streamside the other.

Running near Watergate about mile 9 I passed an athlete on a hand cycle. He had no legs and 1 arm. I felt respect for our veterans, some of whom have given so much. I also stopped fussing about some minor chaffing.

Every year my favorite part of the MCM course has been along the Potomac River behind the Lincoln Memorial and this year was no exception. The road is relatively narrow at this point and packed on both

sides by appreciative spectators. Many carried signs encouraging loved ones to keep going. The fans roared encouragement and spurred us on. It was a tunnel of noise and I felt like a cyclist heading up a steep Col in the Tour De France. I lapped it all up.

The roaring and cheering around the Lincoln Memorial contrasted sharply with the calm and somber quiet around Hains Point. Along the road were photos and brief bios of fallen warriors, a tribute to their ultimate sacrifice -the honored dead who gave their last full measure of devotion. The world will little note, nor long remember what I say here but it can never forget what they did. It was a sobering reminder of the privileged life we lead and the cost of protecting that. After Hains point it was back to The Mall. The crowds around the Mall were amazing, full of cheers, energizing us with high fives.

There were many placards along the course and these were some of my favorites:

“You run better than the government”

“If you find me collapsed on the ground please stop my Garmin”

“Pain is temporary, internet race results are forever”

“Chafe now, wine later”

“Smile if you’re not wearing underwear”

The loneliest mile in MCM is about mile 20/21 running over 14th Street Bridge. It is the antithesis of running around The Mall. The crowds are gone, there are no water stops, no real scenery and it’s a broad concrete highway. At this point you have run far enough to be tired but not far enough to feel the draw of the finish line. Typically this is where exhaustion sets in and if there is a low point in your race, it will probably be right on the bridge. Certainly there is lots of walking and limping going on.

Crystal City is where marathon dreams go to die. Crossing the 14th Street Bridge over the Potomac you can see the Pentagon on the right and the apparent way home to the finish line. However this is a false hope as the course turns left and runs about a mile south before turning back. I was aware every step I ran in Crystal City was a step in the wrong direction, a step I would have to retrace. I was tired, thirsty, dispirited, sore and glassy-eyed. This was my lowest point, my darkest passage and I have no secret formula about how I get through these moments. I have no magical phrases, no soothing elixirs and no mental images that will fix me. There are no shortcuts. I simply keep going and the rewards will surely follow.

Around the Pentagon there is a small hill that on any other day is just that - a small hill. On mile 25 of a marathon there are no small hills and nothing at the aid station will fix your pain or flatten that hill, your only resolution is to soldier on and finish. After cresting this mini Mt. Everest you will eventually see mile marker 26. No matter how many marathons I run, I keep making the same mistake of seeing this mirage as the finish line. But no, there is the matter of the “.2” on the end of 26.2 and at MCM its 200yards up Heartbreak Hill to Iwo Jima and the finish line. It was as if the course was saying to us “we are done when I say we are done”.

I had a great day and a very unexpected PR. I was thrilled with 3hr 22min 1sec. I truly did not expect anything close to that and even up to mile 20/21/22 I thought there must be something wrong with my Garmin and my mental arithmetic. Running sub 3hr20 would have been a moonshot to me and like any runner I have dissected my race to see if I left 2 minutes on the course anywhere. I have to admit I lost a few seconds in the final miles but overall I ran hard, pushed myself and kept my head in the race. I ran the best that I possibly could on the day and achieved 67th out of 1710 in my age group. I gave it my all and did far better than I had any reason to hope. I did it for me. I liked it. I was good at it. And I was really... I was alive. Time is one way to measure a race but self-respect and the satisfaction of knowing I had done my best on the day are just as important. Not every race will be a PR so if you want long term fulfillment from running, then find another yardstick. But still sub 3.20...

Marcy F also had a great day only 3 weeks after racing to a PR in the Wineglass Marathon. She started out very slowly and took 15 second walk breaks every mile marker. In the first part of the race Marcy was smart to tread lightly. However she opened up the throttle at mile 18 and with a negative 2.17/2.09 split finished in 4hrs 26min 26secs. That was good enough for 53rd place out of 309 runners in her age group. Take note runners – this is how you are supposed to race. Well done Marcy.

This was Jim B's 19th (yes, count 'em) MCM and he was injured with a sore hip, knee and plantar pain. He wisely ran well within his means. Jim decided it would be fun to run with Deedee to start and then drop back when he tired. He ran with Deedee for the first 10 minutes weaving through about a thousand runners. After that he felt the strain, wished Deedee well and dropped back. Jim kept Deedee in sight for a few miles, but steadily lost ground, and soon transitioned from passing people, to getting passed. Getting passed became the theme for the rest of the race and Jim tried not to let his competitive nature sucker him into chasing down usually slower runners. This was a very zen experience for Jim. He had to change his attitude to allow himself to accept several hours of getting passed. He did not allow himself to be a passer (other than the occasional walker) until about 2 miles from the finish. Jim was overall quite successful at running a smart race and was delighted to be able to finish on such a beautiful day full of enthusiastic crowds and runners. For anyone who may have finished ahead of Jim B – just because you beat Jim B, don't make you Jim B.

Ecris is the team co-ordinator for PRR and entered 7 teams in the MCM. Most of the runners are members of the =PR= racing team including many Reston Runners. Many Reston Runners are also

"Friends of =PR=" and participate in races like the MCM as team members. Many of her racers are listed below in the results.

Gordon was planning to cheer Anna along the MCM course but Tuesday he received a surprise that he would actually be running his first ever marathon. Gordon only started running in June and got up to 6 miles in August. By September he had reached 14 miles and was enjoying running. Naturally a marathon must ensue. Not surprisingly, he enjoyed himself for about 15 miles and then the wheels fell off. Gordon took a page out of Jim B's book and thought that maybe what he needed was to run faster, not slower. He sped up around mile 19 and got his second wind. Gordon waited for Anna to catch up just before mile 26 so they could finish together. Gordon has fit right into the running community and seems to have absorbed the mental disease that afflicts all of us. The next day Gordon was completely trashed - like the worst version of a 1st time marathoner. It's always entertaining to have one of those in the house.

Anna B ran her trademark slow and steady race staying well within her means. Injury prevented her from running long for the past 6 weeks; so some of her conditioning slipped away. However Anna has an enviable resume of long distance running and the long very slow twitch muscles that never fail her. Consequently she finished MCM #19 fairly comfortably with only minor soreness the next day. Now Anna has 19 MCM and 19 Reston Triathlons completed. The plan is to have 19JFKs done in a month (Jim B, of course, has the same number). Her mantra is "I've still got things left to do".

Ellen is another runner who ran Wineglass 3 weeks ago and still showed up for MCM. Like many runners she got excited about a new pair of running shoes and decided to use them for the very first time at MCM. Possibly not so smart and her feet really hurt during and after the race. One of the Golden Rules of Running Ellen was reminded of is "Never, ever, ever wear something in a race you have not worn before".

Mary K enjoyed the beautiful day at MCM and was moved by the tribute to the KIA troops along Hains Point. She also liked the well-organized finish area with spectators and families kept back at Ft. Myers Drive. Mary and Ellen both recently made the trip to Iowa and Illinois for the Quad Cities Half and Full Marathons, where they had fabulous experiences running along the Mississippi River.

Deedee ran an awesome 3.08.25 PR at the Wineglass Marathon 3 weeks ago and today ran a sequel 3.09.33 on a tougher course.

Cris H just felt like running and had an unexpected PR 4.19.49. Cris rode a bike century the day before (training for Cozumel IM). She had a negative split and a strong finish. This just 2 weeks after running the Baltimore Marathon. Well done Cris.

Chris D was very happy with his race and worked hard to earn a 3.48 against a goal of 3.45. This is a Boston Qualifier by nearly 7 minutes. He commented that the weather was the best of any MCM he could recall. He ran his first MCM over 30 years ago. This year also had the biggest crowds, the most signs, and the most noise he ever remembered at a MCM. The race was well organized, well supported but perhaps a bit crowded in spots.

For those folk who want the MCM experience but are sensible enough not to do the Marathon, there is the 10K option. It starts on The Mall and runs the same final 6 miles as the marathon. Deb M and Kevin H took this option and really enjoyed the morning.

Thanks to Deborah M, Anna, Mary, Jim, Ellen, Marcy, Bill D, Ecris, Jon W, Mike F and Chris for content. Thanks to Walter White (Breaking Bad show) and Abraham Lincoln (Gettysburg Address) for inspiration. Thanks to the MCM organizers for a wonderful event. Thanks to Steve C and Jim A for cheering us on.

Official Reston Runner Results

(per RR club policy this list excludes those running with someone else's bib ie. bandits)

Runner	Time. Hr.min.sec
Tatiana S	3.02.07
Deedee L	3.09.33
Affie A	3.30.30
Luz B	3.30.40
Lisa J	3.31.57
Mary K	3.41.07
Sonja D	4.44.25
Karen H	3.45.43
Ellen H	4.15.08
Cris H	4.19.49
Marcy F	4.26.26
Justine I	4.28.17
Marlyssa K	4.30.37
Kristen D	4.32.07
Tammy B	4.36.58
Anna B	4.44.34

Jean G	4.44.57
Maria N	4.59.04
Susana D	4.59.50
Amy F	5.10.50
Jeanne D	5.17.58
Barbara M	5.31.57
Maurice M	2.52.47
Emmett D	3.22.01
Paul H	3.26.56
Jim B	3.32.02
Bree R	3.34.08
Brian D	3.40.13
Chris D	3.48.09
Mike M	4.03.31
Mark J	4.28.47
Harry P	4.43.47
Jack T	4.44.25
Keith W	4.35.31
Rodney W	4.36.46
Tom D	5.00.33
Kevin A	5.07.32
Srinivasarao K	5.15.06
Ramesh G	5.23.31

Emmett Delaney October 2013