



Cheers From Boston!



Will and Jen Ortlinghaus on the hallowed ground of Boylston Street.

October 18, 2010 began as a regular day. I woke up at 5:40 a.m. just like I would on any workday. However, instead of doing my normal morning routine, I headed straight to the computer and went to baa.org. It was opening day for registration for the 115th Boston Marathon! Although registration wouldn't begin until 9:00 a.m. EST (6:00 here) I wanted sign up early, and then go to work.

There I sat at the computer, no shower, teeth unbrushed, no coffee, just fidgeting and watching a few clocks in the room. I had better start trying to click the registration tab at 5:57 or so if I wanted to be the first to sign up. Click, click, click...YES! The registration form appeared! I typed in a full page of information from name, address, birth date, to credit card number and hit "submit." Woo hoo! I should have a submission i.d. number any second now...

Instead of a submission i.d. number, I was staring at a blank registration form. I guess a couple of other people must have shared my excitement and were trying to register immediately as well. Maybe the server was too busy? Okay, I'll fill out the form (including my credit card number) again. Another try on "submit" and another blank registration form. Already I started to worry.

The torture of submit and blank registration form went on for another 45 minutes. At this point I decided that I could never make it to work in time, so I called in my absence in order to complete this registration. Another 10 minutes of trying to submit my information (by now I have memorized my credit card number) and my husband walked in to find out what time our work carpool would be leaving. In a not so kind tone I replied, "I already called in! GO!"

The Empire Runner

After about an hour or so of filling out the same form, I had an idea...I "like" The Boston Marathon on Facebook! I'll check in with my friends there. Successful registrants had been posting the correct link to the registration form right there on Facebook! I tried the alternate link that everyone was posting. I filled out the registration form, clicked "submit", the computer screen paused, and then I got my submission i.d. number. Of course I'm grateful that I put in all that time at the computer, because as you know, the race sold out in just over 8 hours.

After all the stress of registering, I was extremely eager to compare my story with those of other runners. I wondered how long and how many tries it took everyone else. Paul Berg, Shirley Fee, and Ty Strange all got through on their first try.

Fast forward to April in Boston. I run my qualifying races barely below my qualifying time, which makes me one of the slower Boston Marathoners. I realize that my bib number is going to be high, and I'm going to be in the second wave. It's all fine with me; I'm just happy to be in the race. Oops- no second wave for me this time. Because the Boston Athletic Association wanted to improve the efficiency of the start, they decided to add a third wave. The way I look at it, I was a part of history since this was the first Wave Three AND by missing Wave Two, I was placed in corral 1 so I actually got to start at the starting line!

Most things went well on race day. I heard that the three wave start was great for the first two waves. Runners were called out of Athletes' Village in groups of 3 corrals at a time, so that the corrals could be loaded orderly from the front to the back. Wave One started nicely at 10:00 a.m., but the Wave Two corral-loading slowed down. Things start on time in Boston, so they had their 10:20 A.M. start. Somehow ALL of the 8,000 or so Wave Three runners ended up trying to get to corrals at the exact same time. I knew I wouldn't make it up to the front if I stayed back and walked with the masses, so I exited the barricades and ran across front yards to make it just in time for the prompt 10:40 a.m. start.

My run wasn't fast, but it was fun. Since I spent so much time on the course, I got to take in many sights and sounds that the fast people might have missed. There were the enthusiastic bikers at the beginning, the Vermont Fiddlers, and plenty of barbecues and free beer for the runners. It was awesome that throughout the race many people had signs that said, "GO JEN!" I couldn't resist telling each one of those spectators that, "I'm Jen!" They all gave me extra cheers.

I remember noting around mile 11 that the official clock read 2:12:30. I thought, "Huh. I have been running for only 1 hour and 32 minutes so far. I am going to be out here for about 2 hours and 15 minutes more. The race is already over, and somebody has won." Of course I was wrong since Geoffrey Mutai had won the race about 9 minute earlier in 2:03:02.

Through Wellesley, I high fived every possible spectator that I could, and after passing the "scream tunnel" the noise echoed for another quarter mile. Also fun was watching the groups of college men choose a runner and chant his name such as, "CHUCK, CHUCK, CHUCK!" Or maybe it was "chug." And look out Canadian runners...In as friendly a manner as possible, spectators let runners representing Canada know, "It's a sin to be Canadian!" and, "We're going get out a broom out on you're a#@!" (The Red Sox were in the process of sweeping the Toronto Blue Jays.)

Getting out of the finishing area took over 45 minutes, but once I got to the Family Reunion Area, it was easy to meet up with my husband and start making our way back to the hotel so that we could shower and get ready for some fried dough! Unfortunately the fried dough stands were closed by the time we were ready to go out, so we had to settle for cannoli at Mike's Pastry.

The day before the marathon, Will ran in the B.A.A. 5K. The weather was NOT friendly. In fact it was so windy that tents were beginning to fall, marathon banners were on the verge of snapping, and American flags could not be displayed. However, being as determined as he is, Will ran the exact race that he had planned. Wearing his Empire Runners singlet, he earned another P.R. Obviously I was very proud of Will, and I was also thankful that he ran so fast because it meant we could get to Fenway Park even earlier to see the Red Sox win 8-1.

The Empire Runner



Will sporting his B.A.A. 5K medal and a PR Grin!

Boston is an amazing city, and there was an incredible amount of energy in town while we were there. There was the anticipation from the runners and encouragement from anyone and everyone we met. The locals were filled with pride and excitement for the Bruins and Celtics who were both at home competing in play-off series. And of course there was the non-stop chatter from the loyal Red Sox fans because the team was embarking on a win streak. Will and I have visited Boston a few times now, and we always find something new to experience. This year we spent some time in the New England Sports History Museum which is located in the TD Banknorth Garden. In addition to viewing memorabilia from the Red Sox, Patriots, Bruins, Celtics, and Marathon, we had the opportunity to watch as the home ice was prepared for the Bruins game. I am hoping to return to the Boston Marathon next year...as a spectator.

Jen Ortlinghaus