GO! St. Louis Marathon
St. Louis, Missouri
April 15, 2012

Nine isn't a nice, round number. As silly as it may sound, that's one reason why I did the GO! St. Louis Marathon this year. You see, I've finished this marathon in each of the last nine years, and I couldn't just stop there. I had to go for nice, even ten. It's as simple as that.

Actually, I can't believe that I was about to run my tenth consecutive GO! St. Louis Marathon (which was known as the Spirit of St. Louis Marathon prior to 2008). The years have flown by. For decades, I never thought I could finish a marathon, and thus didn't even think of trying. And here I was, going for my tenth, at the age of 57. It's amazing what you can do if you just put your mind to it.

Training

We had the mildest winter weather I've ever experienced in Missouri. There was virtually no snow, and temperatures rarely dipped down into the 20s or below. There were many days when the afternoon temperatures were in the 40s and 50s, which are great for running if you wear the right clothes and number of layers. We also had a good number of days in the 60s and 70s in late winter, and even a few in the 80s. This past winter was a runner's dream.

The mild winter weather presented a great opportunity to be able to get out and put in the training mileage necessary for a good day at the marathon. When training for a marathon, it's particularly important to do some long runs. Some runners will do occasional runs of 16, 18, 20 or more miles in preparation. When the temperatures are in the 20s, 30s and even 40s, though, you're not likely to go out for a long run that may take three or four hours. It's not only unpleasant once you're soaked in sweat, but you substantially increase the risk of getting sick. But when you have many days, like we did this winter, with temperatures in the 50s and above, there are plenty of opportunities to do those long runs.

Over the last ten years, my ability--and perhaps I should add willingness--to do a 16-mile or longer run has faded badly. As a result, in the past couple years, I've gone no more than 14 miles on my longest runs preparing for this marathon. That may not be long enough according to the conventional wisdom, but it was long enough to get me to the finish line. While I didn't finish as fast as I would have liked these last few years, I don't think the lack of long runs over 14 miles made much, if any, difference. I believe that age is more of a factor in my slowing finish times. My legs are not what they used to be.

Injuries

While weather certainly wasn't a factor in my training over the winter, injuries were. For some unknown reason, starting in late January, I started accumulating a bunch of small injuries that, taken together, made running an absolutely miserable experience at times. I had pains in my feet, left heel, left Achilles tendon and right hamstring, and a pulled muscle in my back. Thankfully, those were all gone by race day.

One injury, though, was a major issue, even up to race day. After one, uneventful run in February, the back and inner side of my right knee started causing me considerable pain, and a lot of stiffness. To this day, I'm not sure what it was, but I suspect I strained some ligaments. Every time I extended my knee to take a step, it would hurt. When I would get up from the desk or out of bed after not having flexed the knee in a while, the first few steps were agonizing. The knee was as tight as the head on a snare drum.

With the marathon drawing closer and the knee not healing as quickly as I had hoped, I cut back on the frequency of my running, going so far as to do no running at all for one full week. I used my heating pad more than I had in years. I bought a sport massager back in January to try to loosen up my leg muscles, and used it daily. Very gradually, the knee improved, but it was still questionable for the marathon. All through this period of about two months, I was worried that, whether during training or the marathon, I would injure the knee much more severely and face bigger consequences because of it. Thankfully, that didn't happen.

I'm *very* glad to report that the knee didn't give me any problems during the marathon. I attribute some of it to taking a couple Aleve tablets on race morning. (I swear by the stuff, and take it the morning of every marathon and triathlon to ward off inflammation.) There was certainly some pain and stiffness in the knee in the days after the marathon, but I expected that. One week after the marathon, the pain was gone, thought there was still some stiffness.

Now that two and a half weeks have transpired since the marathon, there's very little stiffness except for a day or two after going out for a run. I suspect this will continue until the knee fully heals--hopefully a few months from now, if not sooner.

Weight

For years, I've been hoping to shed some pounds and in the process gain some "free" speed. No dice this year. I ran last year's marathon weighing 208. This year, 210. That was discouraging. I came back from the Redman Triathlon in September weighing 205. Maybe a miracle will happen in the next year, like the introduction of a Culver's Butterburger or Randy's Frozen Custard concrete with zero calories. That's about my only hope.

Pre-Race Routine

When you've done a race for nine straight years, you develop a routine that works for you and stick with it. I pretty much followed it again this year. Here it is, in a nutshell: I drove to St. Louis on Thursday afternoon. Went to the dentist Friday morning, then headed down to Chaifetz Arena in the afternoon to register and pick up my race packet. I ate pasta on Friday night, and a steak sandwich on Saturday night. Most of Saturday was spent resting on the couch with my legs elevated. I went to bed around 9:30 p.m., and got up around 4:30 a.m. Ate a light breakfast, took my supplements and left for the race around 5:30 a.m. I arrived downtown a little before 6:00 a.m., and parked in my usual spot--on the street, right across from the FBI's St. Louis offices. My truck was in direct view of the guard sitting in the small guard station at the FBI entrance. You can't expect much more security than that for free. At around 6:15 a.m., I got out and walked the half mile to the starting area.

Race Day Weather

Weather can play a major role in a marathon. We've had quite a range at this marathon the last nine years--from 37°, windy and rainy in 2003, to so warm and humid in 2011 that the marathon course was closed at a certain point.

The forecast for this year's marathon looked a lot like 2011's, although not quite as hot. That was a big concern to me, since I don't handle heat and humidity well and usually end up fighting dehydration.

As the table below shows, temperatures were indeed a bit below last year's, but not by much. The relative humidity remained higher, though, and in warm weather humidity is a bigger contributor to dehydration than temperature. This is too warm for a marathon.

Time	2012		2011	
	Temperature	Relative humidity	Temperature	Relative Humidity
7:00 a.m.	69	65	72	64
8:00 a.m.	70	63	73	66
9:00 a.m.	71	63	77	58
10:00 a.m.	73	61	79	57
11:00 a.m.	74	59	83	47
12:00 a.m.	77	56	86	41

The Race

There were about 1,700 individual marathoners, 500 marathon relay teams, and 8,400 half marathoners at the starting line. The starting line didn't look as crowded as in past years, and the numbers proved it. There were about 200 fewer marathoners and a whopping 3,000 fewer half marathoners this year. In the last couple years, the half marathon sold out. That was far from the case this year. You could still register up until the day before. My guess is that new competition from October's Rock 'n' Roll St. Louis event is the reason. People who only run one full or half marathon a year in St. Louis now have a choice, and it looks like many would rather do so in the fall. The Rock 'n' Roll event is bigger and perhaps more popular as well.

I always have a rough time goal in mind before starting a race, and my goal this year was somewhere between 4:30:00 and 5:00:00, and hopefully something better than last year's 4:54:20. That's a wide range, but I didn't know how my knee would feel, how I would be affected by the weather, or how much my training shortfall might haunt me. Above all, I wanted to finish. If necessary, I would crawl to get my tenth marathon finish.

The race began promptly at 7:00 a.m. I didn't want to go out too fast or hard for fear of hurting my knee and having to deal with that for many miles to come. Actually, going out too hard isn't a big worry. The size of the field prevents you from going too fast, anyway. The first few miles are spent trying to avoid contact with other runners around you and weaving your way through the numerous slower ones ahead of you. It gets less crowded after about four miles, and even more so after six miles when the course turns onto Olive Street, which is six (or more) lanes wide. And once the half marathoners split off near the 10-mile mark, it's pretty much clear sailing.

The course was essentially identical to that of the last four or five years, with only minimal changes. It consists mostly of gradual, rolling hills, with some steeper hills along the way. Most of the hills are long, which seems to eat away at your legs. The long, slow, steady climb from Forest Park Blvd. to Market Street around miles 24 and 25 is particularly grueling on exhausted legs. There are some flat parts of the course (on the way to and from the brewery, and in Forest Park), but they don't amount to more than, say, four miles of the 26.2 total. This is not an easy course by any means.

Hitting "The Wall" at Mile 13

I maintained a steady 9:00-10:00/mile pace for the first twelve miles, feeling OK. Then, at mile 13, I hit the proverbial "wall", in Forest Park, near the second exchange for the marathon relay teams. (This is about the same spot where I hit the wall last year.) It's a bit depressing to see all of these fresh runners join the race when you're falling apart. From here until the end of the race, it would be a constant battle between my brain and legs. My brain would keep saying "go", but my legs weren't listening. They reduced me to a walk many, many times--far more often than I would have liked. (I still can't believe

that, in 2004 and 2005, I ran the entire course without stopping other than at the aid stations.)

Dehydration was also becoming a big issue at this point. The mostly overcast skies were becoming sunnier, and it was getting hotter by the hour. I was completely soaked in sweat. Throughout the race, I tried to stay on top of my hydration and nutrition as best I could, and took my Endurolyte tablets every hour. Still, I knew that I was falling behind. It's unavoidable. On a warm, humid, and now partly sunny day like this, you just do your best to keep moving. In conditions like these, you never want to push too hard, or things can quickly go south. You go into survival mode.

Sticking to My Goal

Even though I was suffering badly by the halfway point, I stayed with my time goal of finishing in under five hours. I knew that a finish closer to 4:30:00 was simply no longer possible. It took me 2:13:17 to reach the halfway point, and there was no way I'd be able to maintain that pace for the second half of the race in my current situation.

It's tough to do math during a race, but at the 16-mile mark, which I reached at 2:50:24 into the race, I knew that averaging 12-minute miles for the next two hours would give me a sub 5-hour finish. That became my sole focus. At every mile mark, I looked at my watch and calculated the time I needed to be at the next one, based on a 12-minute per mile pace. When I made it to a subsequent mile mark on time, I felt encouraged. When I didn't, I feared things were slipping away.

That approach kept me focused, but it also tortured me, more so mentally than physically. My legs, now heavy and hurting badly, would have been agreeable to walking the last 10 miles and finishing in six hours (the time limit to be an official finisher), but my mind kept pushing for five. It was pure hell.

More often than not, I was falling behind the pace needed to finish under five hours. Several times, I was convinced that, despite my best efforts, I would fail. What constantly lingered in my mind was the long, devilish hill that runs from Forest Park Blvd. onto Market Street at mile 24-25. I knew I'd have to walk a good part of that hill, eating up lots of valuable time.

I hit the 22-mile mark at 4:06:12--six minutes later than my plan had called for. I now had less than 54 minutes to run the last 4.2 miles. That meant I'd have to run at a faster pace this next hour than the previous one--something that seemed very unlikely, considering the circumstances.

I reached the 23-mile mark at 4:19:46. It took 13:34 to cover the previous mile, thanks to some short, tough hills that I could only climb by walking up them. The last 3.2 miles--including the infamous Forest Park Blvd/Market Street hill--had to be completed in 40 minutes. It was going to be very, very close.

I was desperately looking for it, but I never saw the mile 24 banner. That was very distressing, because I couldn't determine how I stood with regard to the 5-hour goal. I kept pushing forward, hoping the mile 25 banner would soon appear.

Perhaps the most pleasant surprise of the day came when I suddenly came upon the mile 25 banner. It came a little earlier than I expected, actually. The banner had been obscured by trees along the street, so I wasn't able to see until I just about got there.

As soon as I saw the banner, I quickly looked at my watch, and it read 4:45:56. Everything was now perfectly clear. I had 14 minutes to go 1.2 miles. If it were only 1.0 miles, I would have felt much, much better, because completing one more mile in 14 minutes wouldn't be too difficult. But those extra 0.2 miles loomed large, and could ruin everything. They meant that I'd have to cover the remaining distance at a pace of 11:40 per mile. (I can do the exact math now, but could only approximate it at the time.) I hadn't covered a mile that quickly in the last ten, so it was doubtful.

I pushed myself as hard as I possibly could. I was running as much as possible, but there were times when I was completely out of energy, and had to walk. My legs were dead. I absolutely hated the idea of walking when I could see the finish line ahead of me, and even more knowing that my goal was possibly slipping away as a result of not running what distance was left.

I glanced at my watch one last time, about 40 or 50 yards from the finish line. It read 4:59:xx. I didn't catch the last two digits in that quick glance, and didn't have time to get a better look. I could only hope that they were closer to :00 than to :59. It was panic time. I felt a sudden surge of adrenaline, and literally started sprinting toward the finish line. I ran as if I were running to save my life.

About 10 yards ahead of me was a four-person, female relay team, leisurely jogging side-by-side toward the finish line. I had to make a quick decision. Do I just hang behind them, possibly throwing away a sub 5-hour finish and not ruin their finish line photo, or do I go around them?

Chivalry and sportsmanship be damned. Less than twenty yards from the finish line, I sprinted around them, even stepping to the outside of the traffic cones guiding us to the finish. I may have ruined their finish line photo, but in my frame of mind at the time, they're lucky I didn't knock them down running *through* them, instead of around.

I crossed the finish line, not knowing my finish time. I didn't have the presence of mind to stop my watch when I crossed over the timing mat, and had good reason not to look. Seconds after finishing, I realized I was going to vomit. I hurried over to the side of the finish line area and did so. Twice. It was the first time I've ever vomited at a race. If you have to vomit at the finish line, you know you've given it everything you had. And, by God, on this day, I did.

On one hand, I wanted to know my finish time, but on the other, I was afraid I'd find that I had missed my goal by a matter of seconds. In 2005, I finished in 4:00:17, despite a similar sprint toward the finish line to break 4:00:00. It's disappointing to miss a goal by so little.

It wasn't until later that night that I checked the results online. It was a huge relief when I saw this pop up on the screen:

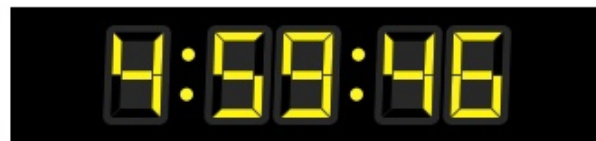**GO! St. Louis Marathon and Family Fitness Weekend 2012 – Marathon**

April 15, 2012
Last updated on April 15, 2012

James Glickert #1284
Osage Beach, MO
Age: 57 Gender: m

4:59:46

Distance	MAR
Clock Time	5:03:04
Chip Time	4:59:46
Overall Place	1191 / 1600
Gender Place	812 / 1025
Division Place	46 / 61
6Mi	57:11
Half	2:13:17
17Mi	3:02:43
20 3Mi	3:44:31

Marathon number 10. Done.

Afterthoughts

This marathon finish also happened to be my slowest. But after dealing with all the injuries and less-than-desired training these last few months, I feel lucky just to have finished. Heck, I was lucky to even be at the *starting* line.

Will I try for an eleventh GO! St. Louis Marathon finish? I won't decide until next year, but there's a good chance I'll be there. There were times during this year's race that I absolutely swore I was done with marathons. But then, I've told myself the same thing during all of them.

Thanks for reading!

Jim Glickert
Osage Beach, Missouri
May 3, 2012

Mile	Pace for this Mile	Cumulative Time	Comment
1	9:04	9:04	
2	8:59	18:03	
3	9:46	27:49	Uphill to brewery
4	10:11	37:59	Ate a gel
5	9:23	47:22	
6	9:48	57:11	
7 - 11	10:03 (avg.)	1:49:25	Ate a gel around mile 8
12	11:03	2:00:28	First walking break, up hill to Jewel Box; ate a gel
13	11:41	2:12:09	Hit "The Wall". Hard.
13.1		2:13:17	Halfway split
14	12:06	2:25:28	Flat stretch of Forest Park
15	11:35	2:37:13	Wash U. field house; ate a gel
16	13:22	2:50:24	A couple tough Clayton hills
17	12:19	3:02:44	Approaching Delmar
18	12:04	3:14:48	On Delmar
19	12:27	3:27:14	Nearing Big Bend
20	12:22	3:39:36	Delmar Loop
21 - 22	13:18 (avg.)	4:06:12	Delmar to Forest Park Blvd.
23	13:34	4:19:46	Long uphill on Forest Park Blvd., near Wash U. Medical School
24 - 25	13:05 (avg.)	4:45:56	Never saw mile 24 banner. 25 took me by surprise. Long hill from Forest Park Blvd. to Market Street.
26.2	11:30 (avg.)	4:59:46 (11:27)	Downhill, then uphill to finish line