GO! St. Louis Marathon
St. Louis, Missouri
April 12, 2015

(This report is shorter than my past ones. They were starting to look so similar, it's silly to rehash the same stuff over and over again.)

Note: I took lots of photos during the race, and published them here.

This was my thirteenth consecutive year of running the GO! St. Louis Marathon. When you have a streak of twelve finishes in a row, you don't end it without good reason. You sign up and do the race again.

A January Preview

The GO! St. Louis Marathon was the only stand-alone marathon I had ever done until I ran the Chevron Houston Marathon in January 2015. I did that race as an excuse to go to Houston and see the city that I had lived in for 15 years but hadn't visited since leaving in 1993. That race went better than I expected, and I finished in 5:19:42.

The finish in Houston gave me confidence that things would go well in St. Louis. However, in March, about a month before GO! St. Louis, I had a recurrence of the bronchitis-type episode that I first had in January 2014. It left me short of breath, making my training runs in the month before GO! St. Louis utterly awful and miserable. By early April, I was confident that I could push myself to the finish line, but it wasn't going to be pretty.

A new course

The GO! St. Louis Marathon course changed a little bit in each of the past twelve years, but this year, the organizers changed it substantially. They said that they had been looking to change it for several years, and decided that they'd do it at this year's 15th anniversary race.

There were a couple of major changes in the new marathon course. For the first time, we'd cross over the Mississippi River into Illinois. We did that

via the Eads Bridge. We ran through parts of East St. Louis, and then returned to downtown St. Louis over the Martin Luther King Bridge. The "two states, two bridges" became a tagline for the race promotion, and the new course was also touted as less hilly. If it was, it wasn't by much.

The new course eliminated the sections along Washington U, through Clayton, University City, and the Delmar Loop.

I hated the new course. Running over the bridges into East St. Louis wasn't very scenic, and the pavement was bad. (I'm surprised that I didn't

see any runners tripping on potholes or expansion joints.) Also, the elimination of the Wash.U/Clayton/U.City/Delmar Loop sections, where we used to have large numbers of spectators, in favor of more commercial and industrial sections, made this a much uglier course with very few spectators outside of the start/finish area downtown and the Soulard area near the Anheuser-Busch brewery.

It was almost the complete opposite of the Chevron Houston Marathon course. In Houston, we ran through the nicest parts of town. For GO! St. Louis, other than the few miles through Forest Park, we ran through nothing that I'd call "nice".

After the race, I happened to talk to a GO! St. Louis official about the new course. He said that a change was being forced upon them by the City of St. Louis. The new IKEA store in midtown St. Louis would soon be opening, and in future years the race would not be able to close down sections of Forest Park Blvd. near the store. GO! St. Louis thus decided to make the change this year. (I believe there may be even more course changes around the IKEA store next year.)

I suspect that another reason for the course change was cost. Participation in this race had been dropping for several years, resulting in a big decline in revenues. (The shrinking number of vendors at the race expo also reduced revenues.) They've already cut expenses in years past (e.g. no more printed race guides), but they needed to do more. By eliminating Clayton and University City from the course, where there were many intersections that needed to be controlled by police, the race would save the cost of hiring those officers. The new sections of the course were all in the city (except for the short segment in East St. Louis), and there were surprisingly few city officers controlling traffic.

Race weather

The weather was among the best we've seen for this race. The temperatures were cool (mid 50's at the start), there wasn't much wind, and partly cloudy skies helped keep the sun from beating down on us. The weatherman gave us no chance of run, but we were sprinkled on for a short time while running through East St. Louis.

A Shrinking Race
GO! St. Louis has seen a substantial drop in participation in recent years, after years of dramatic growth. Here are the number of full and half marathon solo finishers since 2005:

2005	6,039
2006	8,171
2007	8,619
2008	9,747
2009	10,355
2010	12,808
2011	13,461
2012	10,366
2013	9,429
2014	9,188
2015	7,626

The Race

My plan was to run as far as possible without stopping (other than to take photos), and then run when I could and walk when I had to. I was hoping to get to about mile 10 before the run/walk would begin. I didn't make it that far. It was about mile 8 when my legs needed their first break from running. From that point on, I alternated running and walking.

Halfway mark

I reached the halfway mark in 2:31:32. For the last several years, I had kind of been hoping that I could break 5 hours for the full marathon. With it taking 2-1/2 hours to get to the halfway point, and knowing that the second half of the race would include far more walking than the first, I knew that a sub 5-hour marathon wasn't happening today. If I'm ever going to break 5 hours again, I'm going to need to train more. I hate training, and it wastes time. Why train another 25, 50 or 100 hours only to finish a race 15 or 20 minutes faster? It doesn't make sense.

The halfway point was located near the start/finish line in front of St. Louis City Hall. As the half marathoners turned toward the finish line, the marathoners headed west. We ran four miles to reach Forest Park, another five miles running through the park, and then four miles back to the finish line. Except for about two miles inside Forest Park, the second half of the marathon course is nothing but hills—and some are pretty tough.

Time goal

I kept plugging away, doing the best I could, and hoping that the mile markers would come faster. (They didn't.) I knew that a sub 5:00:00 marathon was out of the question, but I set a goal of trying to come reasonably close to last year's 5:14:34. By the halfway point, I was already 5-10 minutes behind last year's time, so it was probable that I would finish a bit slower than that.

It's much easier to do the time calculations later in the race. I knew that if I maintained a pace of about 12-13 minutes per mile, I could get close to my goal. I was able to do that for some of the easier miles, but not for the tougher ones.

That pace allowed me to walk parts of every mile, but I had to run whenever I could. It's pure torture to have a self-imposed time goal hanging over your head and you know you need to push yourself to meet it, but your legs have nothing left in them.

The final miles

While there have been small changes to the GO! St. Louis Marathon course over the years (before this year's big change), the last few miles have remained unchanged for nearly the entire history of the race. That's not necessarily welcome, as these are some of the toughest miles on the course.

Mile 24 includes a long, brutal climb from Forest Park Blvd. onto Market Street. Mile 25 has one nice, long downhill stretch, but from Union Station to the finish line about a quarter-mile ahead, it's all uphill.

I reached the 25-mile mark at 5:09:06, and knew my chances of beating last year's 5:14:34 finish time were zero. My goal was now to make sure I finished in under 5:30:00. I ran nearly all of the last 1.2 miles, thanks mostly to the downhill section leading down to Union Station. From there, it was all uphill to the finish line. But, with the finish line seen and heard in the distance, the adrenaline started pumping and I found the energy to run (almost nonstop) up that hill to the finish line.

I crossed the finish line in 5:25:04, ten minutes slower than last year.

I was very relieved to have finished this race. Thankfully, the bronchitis-type episode I had in the weeks leading up to the race didn't keep me from finishing, but I believe it cost me some time.

That makes thirteen finishes of this race in thirteen years. It's a streak I feel obligated to try to extend.

It's funny that I clearly recall thinking on mile 20 of this race in 2004 that I never wanted to do this marathon ever again.

Thanks for reading!

Jim Glickert
Osage Beach, Missouri
January 11, 2016 (yes, seven months after the race)

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JAMES GLICKERT
Marathon » Osage Beach, MO

FINISHED
05:25:04

OVERALL	MALE	MALE MASTERS 40-90	MALE 60-64
1,199th	747th	331st	25th
OF 1,432	OF 851	OF 385	OF 34

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Facebook	Twitter	Email

Timing

Interval	Time of Day	Chip Time	Chip Pace	Gun Time	Gun Pace
Start	7:08:46AM				
BRIDGE	7:55:48AM	00:36:31	10:24 min/mi	-	-
10k	8:16:26AM	01:07:41	10:54 min/mi	01:16:26	12:18 min/mi
10Mile	9:01:24AM	01:52:39	11:16 min/mi	02:01:24	12:09 min/mi
13.1	9:40:08AM	02:31:22	11:34 min/mi	02:40:07	12:14 min/mi
20Mile	11:09:38AM	04:00:53	12:03 min/mi	04:09:37	12:29 min/mi
Finish	12:33:50PM	05:25:04	12:25 min/mi	05:33:49	12:45 min/mi

Mile	Pace for this Mile	Cumulative Time	Cumulative Time in 2014
1-2		20:29	19:25
3-4		43:19	39:19
5	11:37	54:56	48:50
6	10:04	1:05:40	
7-11		2:04:22	1:54:46
12-13.1		2:31:22	2:13:55
14		2:42:54	2:34:33
15	11:34	2:54:28	2:47:32
16	13:33	3:08:01	3:00:50
17	13:15	3:21:16	3:15:12
18	12:10	3:33:26	3:27:41
19	12:43	3:46:09	3:40:44
20	14:44	4:00:53	3:53:31
21	13:34	4:14:27	
22	15:01	4:24:28	4:20:47
23	13:14	4:42:43	4:34:17
24	13:06	4:55:49	4:46:50
25	13:17	5:09:06	5:00:22
26.2		5:25:04	5:14:34