



January 28, 2007

It all started on September 24th, 2006 when my friend, training partner and running inspiration, Kim Nelson competed in the Toronto Waterfront Marathon. I was training for IMHawaii at the time so I took the opportunity to incorporate my long run into the visit with Kim, and I joined her for part of the race. After watching Kim work her way out of the 'black hole' at about 32kms, and finish with an amazing time of 3:30 I KNEW that I wanted to have a marathon experience. Kim had once again motivated me to try something new (I'm not sure I'm up for the 100 miler though Kim!) The lure of a 'shopping trip with a long-run' in Boston with Kim, combined with the opportunity to see my friend Jennifer (Jay Jay) Laurence (with whom I'd done my first IM in '99) convinced me to register for the Miami Marathon – to be held on Jan 28, 2007.

It wasn't long after I'd registered that I got two emails – one from Dave Ahrens and the other from Claudia Bolognesi – both confirming that they were going to join me in the race. Dave would run the marathon and Claudia the half. It was great to know that not only was the trip going to be to a warm place (a bonus for a January race!), it was now also guaranteed to be a lot of fun.

Luckily the winter weather in Toronto didn't arrive until the week before the race, and so I was able to do all my long runs outdoors. The arrival of a serious cold the week before the event however didn't help with my final preparation. That being said, I was lucky enough to do my last long run outside before I had to take a few days off training and work to recover from the illness.

Arriving in Miami was awesome, the warmth and the sun were really welcome. Dave and Claudia has arrived before me, and were already on the pool deck when I arrived at Jennifer's condo. We spent the rest of the day doing some grocery shopping, resting and having a wonderful dinner with Jay Jay and her family – including 3 month old Alexander!

Saturday morning we registered and took a walk through the merchandise tent. Not wanting to be on our feet longer than necessary, we were quickly out of there and off to you guessed it...SOUTH BEACH! Ok, spending almost a full day lying on the beach might not be the ideal marathon prep. but none of us wanted to pass on the opportunity to take in this experience... it was well worth it ☺ !!

It turned out to be a good thing that we spent Sat. at the beach as Sunday morning dawned with rain! Yup, that pretty much sucked for the beginning of my 'second only marathon-on-its-own'. Luckily, the rain let up just before the race was to start – we were totally soaked by this time anyway, but at least we wouldn't have to run in the rain....just the sauna like conditions it created!

Claudia had to start in a separate corral to Dave and I, so after a quick good-bye and good-luck, we headed over to the marathon start shoot. We didn't have to wait too long before the start, and I even managed to keep up with Dave for the first little while, all the time jumping over puddles and rivers and rain water.

After the first turn on the race course we had to go over a causeway to the 'beach side' of the city of Miami. Running past the cruise ships moored to the left of the bridge was a neat experience. Sadly, this is about the last thing that I remember from the course. After the race Dave and I both noted that neither of us really took in too many of the sites on the race course. You'd think that we would have taken in the sites as we ran through South Beach and Miami Beach, but as this happened in the dark (the race started at 6:10am) we missed most of the interesting buildings to look at, and all the beautiful people were likely still sleeping!

I was really pleased that I was able to keep on my race pace, although I felt like I was working harder than I wanted to. The course is primarily flat, with the exception of the two causeways and one bridge (the bridge surprisingly located at about mile 25!!!). What did make the course a bit difficult were the metal grates that were on these bridges, they were slippery, and the grating was quite big – I was scared that my toes would catch in a hole.

I made it to the 21K marker just over my goal time, and it was then that the 3:30 bunny caught up to me (I had started the race half way between the 3:20 and 3:30 pacers). OK, I thought, time to grab on and keep going – opps, couldn't do that, the 3:30 group passed me and didn't look back. I felt pretty badly that I couldn't keep up with them so it was 'refocus' time and I just kept moving despite the pain that was seeping into my quads.

Around mile 17 I started to take drinks from the aid stations. It seemed that this helped as I started to feel better, and I was making time on a girl in front of me – she was wearing a shirt that had on the back "My 1st Marathon". I kept her as my marker, and began to work my way up to her. A couple of guys were riding beside her taking pictures and chatting with her. At one point they dropped back to where I was. I asked if she was a friend of theirs – it was. I told them that I was using her as my goal, which they found pretty funny. Then I suggested, in the nicest of ways, that it would be really nice to have some Coke, and that their friend would probably like some too – and wouldn't it be great if they could ride to a store and get some for us! They weren't having it, and rode off. I never imagined that I'd miss Coke so much – the aid stations were not the buffet that we are used to in an Ironman!

At about mile 20 I started to run with another girl from Columbia...she had to finish in 3:40 to get her Boston spot. We agreed to run together - she provided the pace- which was a great help, and which I was surprised I was able to do – and I provided the helpful 'thumb-in-the-back' when she started slow a bit on a slight grade. At the top of the grade there was a guy running just ahead of us calling to her – she ran up to him, then joined hands and he pulled her along, and away from me!!! So much for my pacer! It was just about this time that I passed Dave who had to walk for a bit due to his bad back – it was nice to have his encouragement, but I felt pretty bad that he was struggling.

At mile 24 I ran passed Jay Jay and Alexander –which provided a little extra spring in my step - and of course dropping my soaking wet shirt and empty fuel-belt bottles helped too!

My finishing time for the race was 3:41:25 – so much slower than my goal of 3:30. It was good enough though to qualify me for Boston, and to place 6th/115 in my AG and 48/927 women overall! Woo Hoo – who said getting older isn't a good thing?! Boston will be the next training target, but I'll have to be happy with an even slower race there as after that it is off to St.Croix only two weeks later!!!

Thanks again to the regular crew of fabulous friends and supporters, especially Jay who's hospitality was really appreciated, and to Dave and Claudia for taking up the challenge to complete as well – South Beach wouldn't have been the same without you guys!! I also want to really thank my Pearl Izumi sponsor. The great shoes were a huge benefit as I didn't have the soaked feet and heavy shoe problems that may people – including the third place finisher over all who had to take his shoes off with 10K left to go and ran in with sock-feet!

