

Paris Half Marathon 7th March 2010

Arrived in Paris on Saturday afternoon, and after checking into the hotel we went for lunch then took the Metro to Chateau de Vincennes and the Parc Floral to pick up my number.

Just how cold it was hit me as we were walking from the Metro into the Parc to the collection point. A biting wind didn't help either, and I was hoping for an improvement in the temperature for the race the next day!

The hotel we stayed in was close to the Arc de Triomphe which meant a half hour trip on the Metro to the start the following morning. Got there in just enough time to drop off my bag and get to my starting pen. Met Melanie, my wife, who wasn't running and had followed on a later Metro to keep out of the cold as long as possible! Later race reports suggested that the wind chill was -4 and it felt like it, the consolation was the sunshine with not a cloud in the sky.

I was well wrapped with two t-shirts and my Striders vest with tracksters as well as gloves, hat and buff, normally some of these would be removed as I warm up but as I didn't, they weren't!. The start was OK apart from having to avoid the discarded bin liners. I saw one woman go flying and numerous other stumbling about. I managed to avoid any mishaps and after a slow first mile started to get close to my target pace of 9 minute miles. Tootled along quite nicely, enjoying the event through the first water/orange/banana station at 5k, avoiding the hazards of wet, slippery orange peel and banana skins. Saw Melanie at the Place de la Bastille as the route passes through twice at about 5.5k and 10k making it a good place for spectators.

After Bastille it's a left down to the Seine passing Notre Dame and the Hotel de Ville before going back up to the Place de la Bastille. Not long after is the first real incline and where I finally managed to pass the man carrying the Eiffel Tower on his head! It looked about ten feet tall and appeared to be made out of Meccano, therefore heavy and needing the four or five runners he had helping him out.

Pretty uneventful after this apart from avoiding impatient pedestrians crossing the road and one fool on a bike who managed to take out a couple of runners at about 15k.

I was feeling better as the race went on and was trying to pick the pace up to make sure of a sub 2 hour time. At the 19k marker was a Powerade feeding station which helped give people a boost for the final 2k or so. Not that many managed to run the whole of the final 2k!

That was because the finish of the race was a bit of a shambles, came to a stop about 100 metres from the finish line and it took a good 10 minutes to get over the line! I stopped my Garmin when the queue started, as it was showing a distance of 13.22 miles. The time was 1.59.12. Officially my chip time was 2.08.15 which just about matches the time it took to cross the line.

Apparently the finish had been changed from previous years and they had misjudged the flow of runners coming in between 1.50 and 2.20. The queues for the chip removal and handing out of medals were the cause of the problem. They eventually opened up gaps in the fences to allow the queues to subside a bit, but it meant putting your foot through the fence to have the chip removed and getting your medal handed to you through the fence!

Apart from the obvious problems at the end I enjoyed the race and would definitely do it again. You don't get to run past the main sites of Paris, other than those mentioned, they are left for the full marathon in April, but that doesn't detract from a good race and I would recommend it to anyone.

David Reed (pictured below raring to go and then being chased by batgirl (?!!))

