

CHICAGO MARATHON

Chicago marathon was to be my 5th of 6th Majors....just Tokyo to do now! The 6 Majors are made up of London, New York, Boston, Berlin, Chicago and Tokyo. It has been on my bucket list for a while to do them all....then they add Tokyo a few years ago, bugger.

Marathon weekend started early on Saturday morning with thunderstorms and heavy rain. Absolutely drenched heading for the 5K start which I had kindly entered both my kids for, start being 7.30am. My soaked 15 year old daughter commented "I did not sign up for this"

Thankfully by the time they had a delayed race start due to the weather it dried up for actual race. Two former race winners were there at finish to hold finish tape, the infamous Steve Jones(to me anyway) and Constantina Ditta both former Chicago marathon winners. Steve's British marathon record only went this year to Mo Farah and that was from 1984!! Both kids happy they had done it and nice medal and cap for the memories, Alasdair was 16th of nearly five thousand runners....but had he trained who knows??.

Race day dawned dry with the threat of rain later and it was an early start again with me leaving hotel at 6am for the walk to the start. There was tight security for entering the start areas with bag searches and body scanning in operation. I proceeded to my start area and as ever it was well signposted and organised with plenty toilets, bag drop etc.

Once in our start corrals there was the obligatory singing of the national anthem and introduction of the elite. I could see side of Mo's hat as he was introduced but not for long, lol

Race started and I had a target of sub 2.45 in my head and decided on 6.10-6.15 pace miles. It had been said garmin's were a bit erratic in the early miles at Chicago due to the overhead railways etc, at one point I was doing 1.35 mile pace! This proved to be the case but found myself with a 5.37 second mile, would pay for that later.

Pace settled down a bit after 4-5 miles and knocked out a few steady paced miles until 18-19 miles. Rain started approx. 5 miles into the race and remained wet throughout, was actually welcome because it was a bit humid at start. During the race every feed station was greeted with deafening noise, bands, whooping and hollering.....more later!

My legs started to seize just before 20 miles and I knew then my ambitious plan for sub 2.45 was slipping away and sad to say I walked. Apologies to Ian Beattie!!

As some of you know when your legs go they go!! and it was a then a struggle to hold it together to the finish, trying not to walk too much and not lose more time.

Another issue with my garmin was that my watch would bleep 22 miles yet the official marker was another 0.4 miles further down course, mentally tough when you are struggling. I met a Scottish couple in our hotel who said the same. (I measured 26.6 miles!!) Mind you still missed 2.45 for 26.2 ,but only by a few seconds. When you get tired and legs have gone all you can focus on is finishing and I began to dislike all the noisy cheering....baw humbug, lol

I eventually crossed the line in 2.48.04, a bit disappointed initially but at the end of the day it was 8 minutes quicker than Rotterdam and lack of long runs told in the end. The usual collection of snacks and drink ensued with every finisher receiving a free beer too!. I met up with the kids in family area and it was nice to be heading back for hotel at 11am in the morning.

So the hard work was done and it was off to our very first ice hockey match that night. The rest of trip was spent shopping, sightseeing, Charlie and the Chocolate factory show and trying all the local fattening delicacies like deep pan pizza.

Summing up the experience Chicago is a great city and nice that you can be on the beach one minute then in downtown shopping within a couple of minutes, plenty to see and do. Portion control still does not exist, haha.

Comparing the US marathons. I would go for New York as it wins for sights, Chicago for pb potential, Boston for ambiance....and seafood!!

Worth giving a US marathon a go if you can get in that is. They are all superbly organised, well supported and a good excuse for a holiday

If you are contemplating any the qualifying times are getting a bit tighter but you can get guaranteed entry through sports companies. I actually met a guy in Edinburgh airport who worked for sports tours international, free travel, accommodation, race entry etc etc. He retired in his 50's and goes around the world helping out. Dream job

So now Tokyo 2020 is the aim.....Not the Olympic one I may add!!!