

MTD 12 Hour 2010 RR by Jim Viggiano

What a beautiful day!!! I don't think the weather could have been any better for an event like this!! I believe it topped out around 60 degrees and remained sunny all day. The wind stayed mostly in check but wasn't an issue for the loop because if it was in your face going out, it was at your back coming back or other way around!! One thing I really liked was the relative lack of change in temperature. For me, there was no need for multiple clothing changes because of cold mornings, hot middays and cold evenings again. I brought clothes but never once thought about having to stop and change.

The scenery was picturesque. The duck and geese were innumerable though they stayed in check all day with no issues. They were a pleasant distraction to watch as you went by them at the many gathering spots around the pond. There were 2 beautiful white swans that danced playfully with each other in the water, chasing their mate in what seemed like an adolescent courtship process. Fun, vibrant, and full of life.. is how I would describe the atmosphere. There were blooms on the trees, budding flowers everywhere, green freshly mowed grass all the way up to the sparkling clean water and a perfectly laid out cattail forest that provided ample cover for all of the wildlife in the pond. There were fathers fishing with their children, families feeding bread to the ducks, kids playing baseball in the neighboring field, dogs walking their owners, cyclists biking on the road, which is also a loop, and scores of runners running the trails along the Genesee river. Yeah... Full of life!!!

The course was a .4902m paved loop around Trout pond with 1 aid station, a bathroom on the course and more bathrooms on site if needed. The distance of the loop was perfect in that you didn't need to carry a water bottle if you didn't want to. You could grab your bottle from the "bottle table" drink a sip or two and through it back knowing that an aid station worker would make sure it was full and back on the table ready for you as you came by the next lap. I saw some runners who carried their bottle would toss it at the AS and tell them what they wanted and on their next pass the bottle would be filled and waiting for them as they went by. The "bottle table" was ingenious!

The food spread was unbelievable. They had M&M's, pretzels, chips, bananas, candy bars, Justin's nut butter packs, goo both caffeinated and not, 2 different flavors of heed, Mountain dew, Coke, Ginger Ale, water and a whole bunch of stuff I am missing. As the day went on they brought out peanut butter sandwiches, turkey sandwiches, pizza, soup, potatoes, cookies, brownies and this is only what I can remember. There were tables of choices and nobody went without. I have never seen a spread like that before.

I'm not sure where all of the volunteers and aid station workers came from but there were people everywhere waiting and willing to help the runners out. From filling your bottle to helping you with a sock/shoe change, to talking you through a low point, helping you choose some food, forcing you to eat/ drink/ electrolyte when they saw something that didn't look right. It seemed as though they monitored each runner to make sure they didn't bonk or get dehydrated. You could tell that they were all very experienced. The support was amazing and second to none in my experience in terms of both size and scope of what they offered. They really made an effort to help every runner both fast and slow, treating each individual as royalty!!!

The race was timed and your laps were recorded each time you crossed the "mat". They had male and female leader boards that were updated regularly throughout the day and you could watch the drama unfold between the runners in the lead pack as well as the second tier racers fighting for position. As you went by, every person at the aid station/scoring table who wasn't doing anything at that moment clapped and or whooped and hollered. Every time!! There were many times that encouragement prompted me to run 1 more lap instead of walking or taking a "break" at the food table. The cheering was definitely food for the soul!!!

Another big boost of encouragement came from the other runners. Many stopped and walked with me during my low points or slowed to encourage me as they went by. One of the leaders gave me a thumbs up or a fist pump or would slow down and try to lift my spirits virtually every of the 40+ times

he lapped me. Another racer and I ended up horsing around playing games with each other and telling jokes every time we'd pass each other through out the day. I felt like I was running with a close friend or a brother. All in the lead packs male and female, were very gracious to everyone that was there. I met quite a few people and some might turn out to be good friends after the race.

My race? It's hard to complain with a distance pr, my first 50+m, or a 14th place finish. Many great lessons were learned and I persevered through a very challenging day. I did not quit even though I wanted to many times. I went from having a smile on my face that I couldn't shake to being to being so low that I was actually crying on numerous occasions throughout the day. It's a hard thing to explain and I'm still sorting out the details in mind, but I may have done some very detrimental things that caused me to fall short of my 60m race day goal.

The first and most obvious error was to try new supplements on race day. A bad choice, I know and I knew it going in, but I had convinced myself that these products were going ensure a victory and give me the edge I thought I needed. I had ordered them about 10 days before and they came in the the day before the race. The first product was a pre/mid workout drink called Purple Wraath and the second was the popular Perpetuem by Hammer. I drank the PW through the first hour and Perpetuem during the second. By the end of hour 2, I was full and bloated, feeling sluggish and starting to get worried. My stomach wasn't emptying. The realization that I may have made a mistake and that I may not hit my goals started to play with my mind and I was getting down on myself. I took my second pack of endurolytes at hour 3 but still no help. It was right around here that I started to have those " the elites drop if it's not their day and so can I " thoughts rationalizing it by thinking my recovery will be quicker so I can train more for Burning river!!! I was encouraged by some veteran runners to take some more elctrolytes. They tell me that I had dried white salt streaks covering my face and forehead. I did and they helped some, but it may have been too late.

The second big error was to not stop and walk right from the beginning. Sometime between hours 3 and 4, my quads started to cramp very badly. The only other time I remember this happening was at Bpac 3 weeks earlier. (maybe another mistake? 2 hard races 3 weeks apart?) I should have given them some built in rest right from the get go. They were hurting so bad that I decided to run on the grass for the next 3 hours or so because the extra pounding from the asphalt was too much to bear. This is now coined as the Jimmy Shimmy in case you were wondering!! One of the more experienced runners in the lead pack told me he was going to run 25min and walk 5min all day. Looking back, he looks like a genius now.

Another biggie no no was to not stop and take care of my feet. This applies to both pre race and during the run. My shoes are very old. My guess is that they have 1800miles or more on them. They hadn't ever given my feet a problem and they are kind of like my "good luck" shoes. I like them alot. By hour 4 or 5 though, the bottoms of my feet were on fire. Every step I took was excruciatingly painful and at certain times I would run the loop with with the sole desire to get back to the aid station so I could sit for a minute or two to rest before I went back out again. Apparently someone noticed the wear on my shoes and asked how old they were. If it's that obvious to a stranger then maybe it's time for some new clogs? Somewhere around hour 2 or 3, I noticed I was getting a blister in between my big toe and his girl friend. I hurt but I didn't want to face it. I never ever get blisters and wasn't prepared to deal with this one. By the end of the day it had taken over the whole side and top of my second toe. Admittedly I stopped noticing the pain later in the race, but the middle hours were brutal.

One more big dummy mistake I did was to cross train during my taper week. Specifically I did a hard pushup routine among other exercises the Thursday before the race. My chest muscles were still sore and the repetitive bouncing from the running made them hurt. It's embarrassing, but true.

That last problem worth mentioning was my attitude. I had run the course before, felt a little too confident in my abilities and went into the race with little to no preparation, mental or otherwise. My first thoughts about race day were literally at 9pm the night before as I got my stuff packed and ready. Even my taper was dictated more by my other responsibilities than by the need to properly rest for the

race. I thought my goal was easily attainable and I took it for granted. I admit that I have been humbled by the sport and I hope that will not take an adventure like this so lightly again.

At the end of the day, after fighting through an 8 hour "death march", I am feeling really good about my results. The lessons I learned were invaluable to me especially considering what lies ahead of me this summer. Though I have never felt this bad before nor this early in a race I did not quit. I know I can(that I have the will) go on and it doesn't always get worse. I finished with 54m and 110 laps running about 80 of them in mild to brutal pain.

I want to give a special thanks to all that helped me including 2 separate groups that were crewing for other people and all of the crowd who supported me even though they were there for someone else.

Even after the post race pizza party and the other fixins I was still down 6lbs after the race so I guess I was dehydrated too? I bet even Jillian Michaels doesn't ea pizza and lose 6lbs in a day!!! lol Apparently last night I had some wicked dreams. My wife tells me I was talking in my sleep saying things like " I don't care just don't pee on my head" and "look at all the beautiful colors in the crayon box"... fun fun fun... can't wait till next year!!! Thanks MTD
