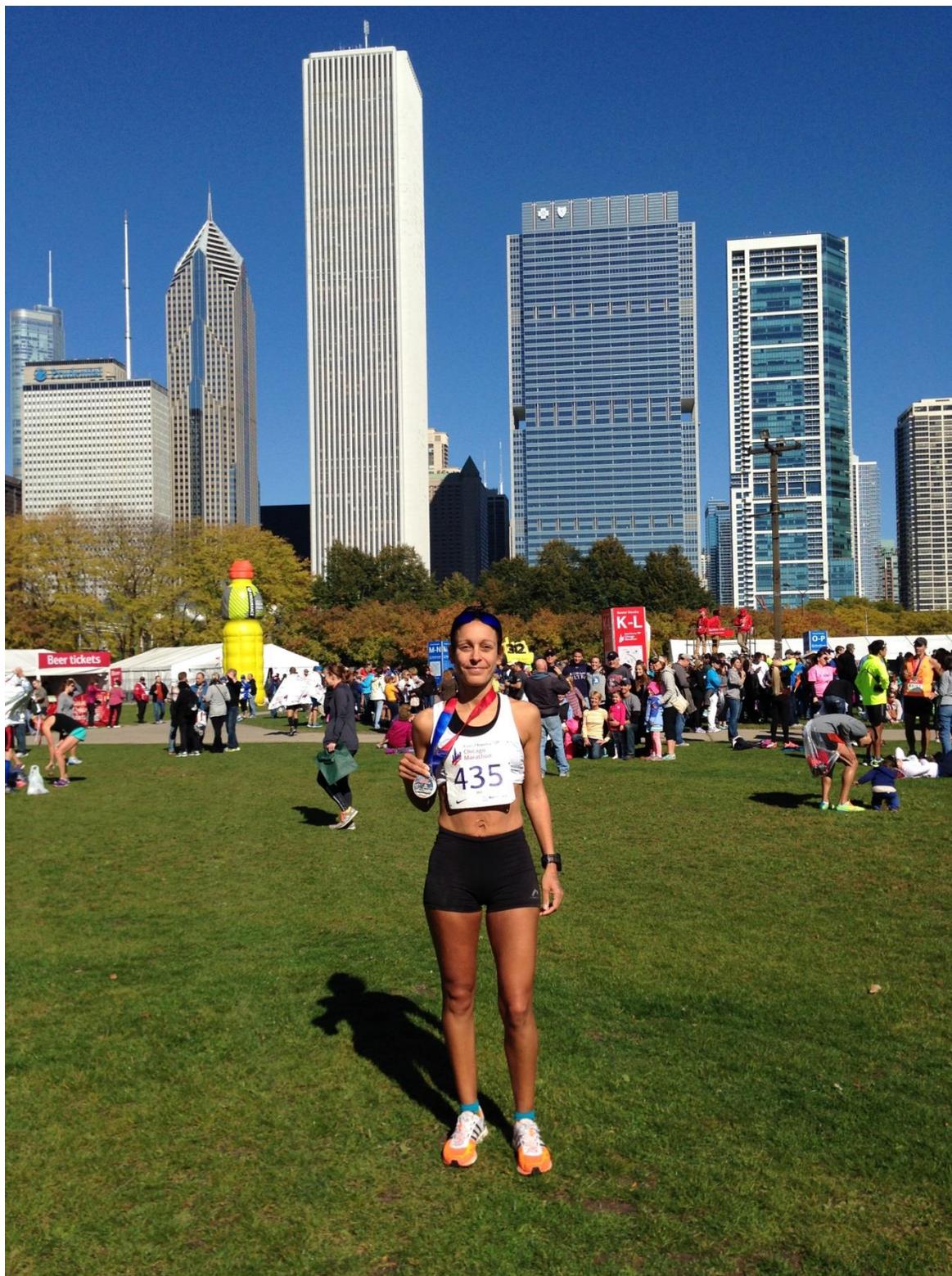


Chicago Marathon Sunday 12 of October 2014



Fast route = fast update...(although it was so overwhelming some times that this race deserves a little longer than “short”...)

Chicago marathon took place on Sunday 12 October 2014. Fourth and final marathon of the running season, first time running this route, sunshine and nice in the air, a protesting calf and a fully completed thirteenth marathon J

PB on this route (1st time run J): 3:04:32. Nothing to make the crowd shout...well, actually yes, it did. On Sunday they were 1.7million (!) people out in the streets of the windy city for cheering for the runners...Yapp, Sunday...early morning... “Finish time” wise, the race felt like a decent accomplishment. Completing the race with a 172nd place among women, 35th in age category and 1380th place total (with 40,418 participants finishing the race :) Not bad for a race done with a complaining calf...

This race’s objectives were neat and simple (they always are J): sub3, sub2:58 and anything faster than the fastest would also be ok J Considering however the concerning ache in the left calf since 4 weeks before the race (don’t know where it comes from. Just happened. But all was fine the last week of tapering. So sure, let’s run then!). Objectives felt fully achievable.

Short version? (there is always one!) First 20K pretty similar to Stockholm almost to the seconds, very controlled and easy cruising, fully following the expected time plan. Although from km15 the left calf made itself reminded and then objectives were changed. Races come and go. Not my calf. So reached halfway with a decent sub90 and then completed the second half slower but definitely under enough control for having the “calf issue” in hand *AND* enough strength for getting a sprint (?) over the last 2.2km. Odds were good at start, then less good after halfway and finally the race was completed with a smile on the face J Fully satisfied!

Got to Chicago after a 5 hours-delay on the flight from North Carolina. Not ideal, but not a real issue either, because I could sleep like a stone before the plane even took off and opened the eyes well-rested when landing in Chicago (with a time difference as well). Took a while to get to my apartment and after midnight it was time to hit the pillow again. Counting to... probably not counting at all! Just slept. Up early and to the expo to get my BIB number and then time for final run. Chose –strategically- to take the CTA to km40 and run the final stretch to the finish line, as well as continuing to the start and then back home via the “halfway” mark street. Felt all good. Except when doing the math in the evening: adding all the walking&running this day made up to 17km... Probably not the recommended behaviour before a marathon...

Sunday/Race day had come. Up early for breakfast, then just got late on my schedule and had to jog the 2.7km to the start. At least I would have done a warm-up... Already cool to see the light showing on the horizon of the water (I know, it is a lake, but I like to say “the water”). Crazy many people heading to the start. Berlin marathon-feeling. I like it. Made my way to the American Development Program tent and there...had 7 minutes (!) to get off my clothes and be race-ready before they brought us to the start corral before the elites would come. (Not too bad actually to had run to the start.

Warm up would have been inexistent otherwise...as usual...). Sun going slightly up, not showing yet, but the light was nice and it was cool in the air. Got placed in a corral right behind the wheelchair athletes. Soooo cool! Then it was time for the US national anthem. Hearing an angelic voice singing in such an event is just so extremely powerful, it brought tears to my eyes (same as before San Francisco and Boston marathon). Then it was the start already for the wheelchairs marathon race. And the start for athletes with disabilities. We moved corral to be right behind the elites. Once again, the cool part of those races J Being right there, where the winner of Rotterdam and the lady winner of Chicago and Boston are (among other fastfastfast runners) . (I did feel a bit misplaced hearing the gals around me talking about their expectations for the race, and one saying that would this be a bad day, then it would end in 2:39... Hmmmm, ooook. I might set myself a bit further in the group maybe. But nope. Did qualify, so as good to be right where I am. 7:30am - the start was given. Did not hear anything. Just felt the human wave moving and off we went. Tunnel in and out and first 90-degree turn (of 31 on this course!) and km1 was already done and soon mile 1. Felt all good and the best was all.those.people.out.there! Cheering and yelling and encouraging. Guys! Seriously? A Sunday? 7am? And this will be all along the course this way. Thumbs up for this really. Setting Chicago at the same cheering level as London (but London is starting around 9-10am, correct? More decent time for cheering on a Sunday J). Back to the race. We got to State Street and then turned North into LaSalle Street and heading towards Lincoln Park. No time to enjoy the scenery (did we pass a zoo?). The sun has gone up and is nicely warming us. But I feel that the stretch to mile 7 is a bit longer than expected and then turn and turn again aaaaaand we are now heading south. Good. Cruising at 4:06/07min/km and that is all fine. Not too fast not too slow. Thought to maintain this until halfway or slightly slower and then would have a little range for dropping the pace if necessary for ensuring a strong 10K-finish J But reaching km15 and the left calf is shouting a bit. No good sign. Continuing steadily to km20 without dropping the pace but passing the halfway slower than expected (but still sub90 J). So happy to recognize Adams Street and the bridge I ran the day before.

Second half starts in Greektown and here this is full cheering. It hurts the ears and warms the mind J Long stretch before two new turns and then Jacksons street it is. Loooonng stretch again and here I surely feel that this cannot continue. Skipping the plan of sub3, even though the pace is still "ok". Not a chance I would push the limit this time because I do know I can finish with a decent time even though it is not the time-objective set. "Completing the race" becomes the new goal (well, it always is the first objective of any race). Km25 I walked a bit at the aid-station and the left calf feels like stone L (OK, the other one as well, but it does not hurt at least when I touched it...). The 3:00-group is passing me (sounds like elephants charging and then disappearing). Would not care less. No chasing. I do my own little race to the end. Km30 is passed and only 12km to go. Just like a regular morning run (where I usually have NO cheering).Then 2 more km done and it is NOW the 10K-race start (yaaaaa...all before was a good long run!). And the kilometers just pass by and one more and one more... I just want to reach Michigan Avenue and push for a strong finish... Now we should be in it.

I can see the Willis Tower (I think?), but no 40km-sign. Have I counted incorrectly? Nope, here it is. Just have to use whatever strength is left and lots is left actually.

Making a personal objective to pass the girl in black shorts and blue singlet as well as the gal with rainbow socks. Aaaaaand done. And now the sign shows "1 mile to go" ... Gooood! But how long is one mile? Does not correspond to anything my mind can relate to. I want to see the "1km to go"-sign! Where is it? Would never see it but soooo happy I am to see the "800m to go" (although now I see one more gal to pass...) And this stupid calf that is showing its full potential now... Where was this "potential" between km15 and now?!?!?! Little uphill (feels actually like a little mountain to climb the little bridge to the 600m to go). And this guy behind me running and cheering loud and clear to everyone that the finish line is there. Just to push a bit more. All are looking good. (and no, this is not my mind making this up. This guy was REALLY running behind me). Passing one more gal before the final stretch...and noooo, there is one more in front of me and only 200m to go. Not.a.chance.I'll.pass.this.one. Still 3:04:xx on the clock. Missing a bit the cheering here. AAaaaaaaaand it.is.DONE! 03:04:32 J

Completed, legs a bit shaky, the calf now complaining fully, taking all what is proposed for food (banana, powerbar, protein drink – don't like the vanilla one L). Admire my lovely medal under a strong and shining sun. Heading to the After-party area, getting a so well-deserved massage (which probably sounded like "ouch, ouch, ouch" – no swearing). Back to the American Development Program tent. Got my stuff. A few pics. A bit of rest on the grass and then back home the 2.7km to get a well-deserved cold shower and some rest. Afternoon dedicated to the usual: not much more than rest, walk and food.

A couple of day resting in the windy city with so much walking that probably my calf will complain for a while more. All is better than sitting or laying down. Therefore all the walking! Got medal engrave and another celebration on Monday evening with favourite post-marathon ribs+fries J Never taste better! Long trip home then and a full week of recovery without running. Plan is to get this calf back on track and get on the road again within short time. This was a great race with optimal weather conditions and despite not getting my target time, this is one of the nicest races I did. Thanks to the public out there!

>> Loads of thanks for supporting words received throughout the days of training, standing the "running talk" (or even participating to it), joining to lunch intervals or early morning runs and more which I usually forget here. Racing might be all the fun, but is nothing without all the preps.

Have a great week!

//Kind regards from a very rainy place on Earth (aka Gothenburg!)

Karima

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