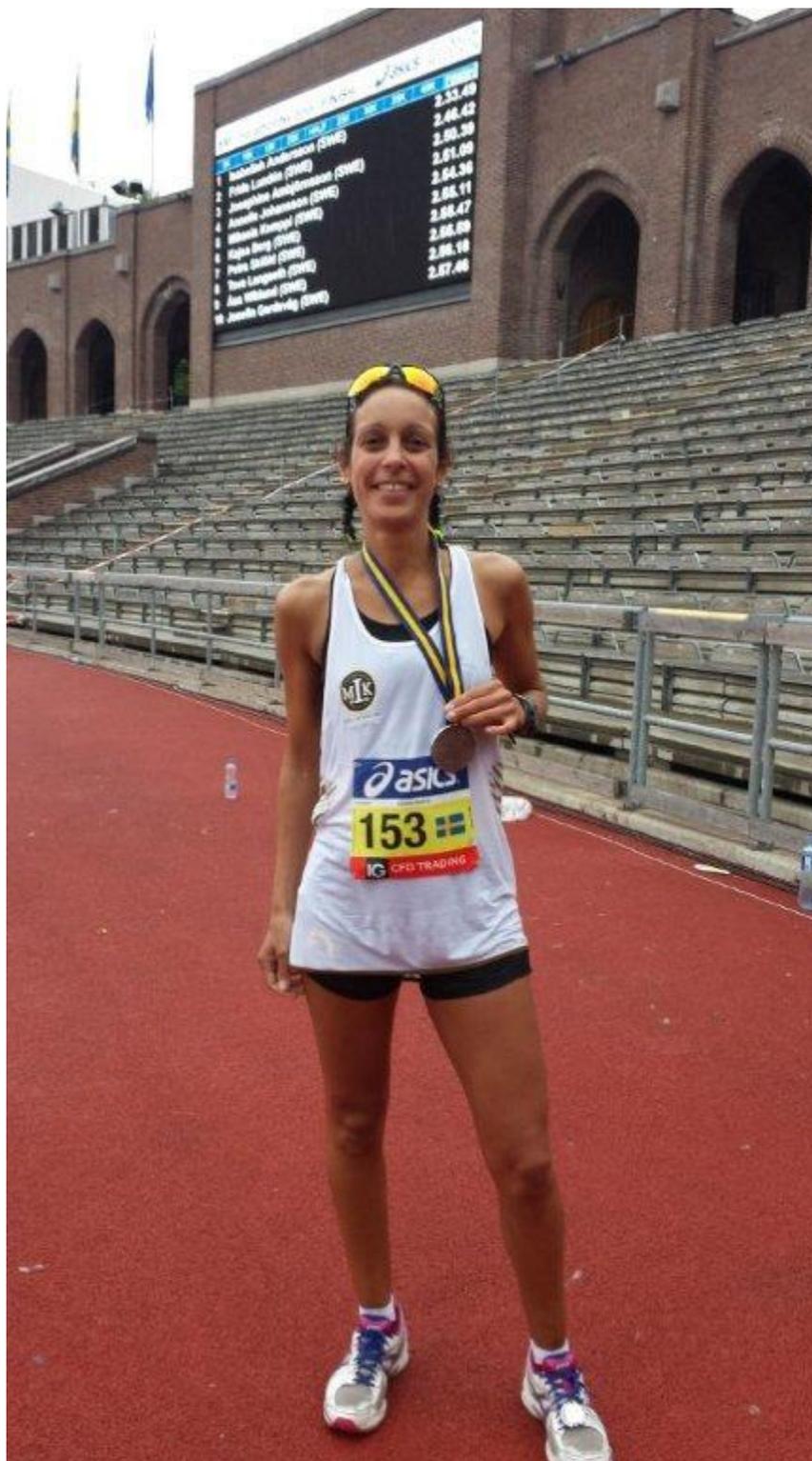


**Subject: News from Stockholm**  
**From: "Karima Makrof"**  
**Date: Tue, June 4, 2013 11:18 pm**

**Fastest race will make a faster report, right?**



Quick update on Stockholm marathon which took place this Saturday 1 June. Weather conditions perfect for running despite high humidity, average temperature of 21°C, start in Elite group and first participation in Swedish Championship (SC) for marathon. The 26.2 miles disappeared in 3hr 10min 21sec. Meaning 1min 24sec faster than previous personal record set in Dubai in January 2013... This gave as well as 37th place among women all categories and 20th place in SC... not too bad for a high humidity day!

Reviewing the objectives of Boston in April, this time was a bit different. Aiming for sub 3:12 and definitely for 3:10. Of course all under would be a nice bonus ;) Expectations for the SC was a 25th place. This marathon was preceded by 2 marathons and 2 half marathons since January. So popping at a tough time of up & down in training...

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Calm and nice at the start, the elite field felt different from during Göteborgsvarvet two weeks ago. More serene and quiet. Quick warmup as (for the first time!) I had place for doing it. Looking at the male runners in the group B, they looked pretty hungry to start (almost scary). The feeling of being in the elite group is pretty special, not as overwhelming as last time. The atmosphere is quite nice, lots of smiles all around and high five with the international elite runners :) 12:00pm – start shot and the legs just get a life on their own. The plan was a first half at a pace of slightly under 4:30min/km to be able to “compensate” for a slower second half. Understand my surprise when the first km passed by with an average under 4:08... turning the first 5K into 20:52 (the fastest 5K done ever).

Then the km-marks are just passing-by, 6, 7, 8... passing 10K in 41:51 (1 min faster than during the half-marathon in Paris...). Reaching the scary bridge “Västerbro” (actually the little slope before is short but tough especially the second time you get it under your feet!), it is indeed long, but not tougher than the Golden Gate bridge and

definitely not as stiff as the bridges in Göteborgsvarvet (which are shorter though). By mid-bridge, change of strategy: no need to continue aiming for a “slightly under 4:30” as I am already running at 4:13min/km. Therefore decide to keep this pace and get the first half so close to 1:30 as possible. This would spare extra minutes for the more difficult second half. Reaching km15 and seeing the Stadium. Nice feeling, this means that the first lap is finished and the second one is starting (this is the particularity of Stockholm marathon: two laps around the city, although the second lap is longer...). Arriving in the green park of Gärdet, the pace-keepers for 3:00 are passing me! A bit surprised as they are 1 minute ahead of their time... which mean I am good for a 3hr pace! Reaching the halfway in 1hr 29min 27sec (new PB on this distance! 37 sec faster than Paris in March!). And still smiling.

The water-stations are very crowded and it is difficult to get refreshment. Lucky for us there are showers along the route. From km25 it start to get tougher. More hills or small slopes, but with all those km in the legs, they feels like mountains! Km30 is reached with already lots of walking, then 31, 32, the terrible bridge again (this time walking up the little slope – but with a smile!) and running up and down the long bridge (I am pretty sure that it is longer the second time we run it...).

The long way to km37 is terrible and painful. Walking, cheered by the public so running again. But not too enjoyable. Finally getting some coca-cola (no bubble and half warm. Yummy!) around the Central Station and it kicks some energy that is left in a very tired body (or more likely tired mind...). The last long road is tough but supportive runners are cheering around, then the 40km-mark wakes the mind and the legs start running again at a faster pace.

Reaching the stadium but passed by two female runners in the last 800m. Pushing to the max to pass the finish line and...3:10:21! Yippie! Happiness, soaking wet (again!), but so proud of the finish time.

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**After the finish line: Chat with other female runners, my coach, getting a tough massage to get the legs fine again and time to celebrate with a nice dinner :) Long day, starting under the sun, under drizzling rain from mid race until the finish line and heavy rain in the rest of the afternoon.**

**Got my time confirmed 45 minutes after my arrival. Fastest ever, and the places reached are more than satisfying: women all categories (37th), age category (32nd) and Swedish Championship (20th). New personal records as well for ALL distances measured during the race (every 5K). Wow, race really!**

**Summary: Stockholm marathon is not an easy route as Dubai (which is flat and fast), therefore double-happiness regarding the result! Training is paying off. Of course the first half seemed really offensive (10min faster than second half...), but honestly it did not felt this way, almost close to effortless. A bit of work left to do to keep this pace in the second half though :) Never felt better after a race.**

**Body is fine and mind is happy. The race in Gothenburg definitely helped regarding the weather and humidity as well of all the training since a while... Good choice of races! Great experience as well as once again running in the elite field. Now one full week of rest (from running)...**

**>> so many thanks for the support shown during my training, the race and the after-race! This is half the work already done, really! Stockholm was a nice place to run, really!**

**//Kind**

**regards from a very nice and sunny place on Earth (aka Gothenburg)**

**Karima**