

Stockholms Half Marathon Saturday 13 September 2014



Short race = Short update... Participating to the Swedish Championships of half-marathon deserves maybe a little more than this J

Stockholm Half marathon took place on Saturday 13 September 2014. Fourth half-marathon of the year, final (?) rehearsal before Chicago marathon in October...

New PB on the route 1:28:38 (easy to have a PB as this is the first time I run this route J). Completed the race with a 48th place among women (same place as Göteborgsvarvet!) and 39th in my age category. Finishing 36th in Swedish Championship and 533 of 13,473 runners feels quite satisfying J

Objective set simply to sub90 and if all good to go closer to sub88. No plan for getting faster than Copenhagen (sub85), mainly because the course is pretty difficult and the main aim is after all to check the form before the October challenge. No training-race though, but no all-in either. All good finishes good. And a large smile after the finish line. The form is definitely there!

A bit tricky few days before the race, as a nice restaurant evening ended with stomach cramps for three following days (i.e. until the day before the race). Nevertheless, the final quality run -completed real early J - did confirm that training was going well. (OK, this was done *before* the restaurant visit...). Travel to Stockholm went smoothly, final run around the lake became "final run lost in the forest because I cannot find the lake", but still: it went fine. All good preps for the race. Early up as usual on race day. No easy task to sleep the day before a race. And when a race is mid-afternoon it is even worse! Followed a similar setting as before Göteborgsvarvet with morning run at 9:00am (no croissant this time, but I did find the lake!). Breakfast and lazy morning until lunch time arrived. By then, I could close the eyes and see the red line of the course map in Stockholm J Train travel with runner friend and got early at the start. Directly to the elite tent and after a bit chat, got ready for warming up (which is not my strong side before a race). Real cool to warm up beside a fastfastfast male elite (but at least if I do the same warmup as he does, it cannot be THAT wrong this time). Time is flying (unsure how) and it is already 10 minutes to start. Final quick drink and heading to the start line. Found myself surrounded by male elite runners (the extra-fast kind), which made me feel a bit misplaced (especially when seeing behind me the fastest female runners – the ones who ran in Zürich a month ago...). But that's all ok. Feeling good still.

Start shot and off we go. This human wave from start just has to be experienced. Passed quickly by all fast runners as well as some from the group behind. When finding a comfortable pace (I think?), we turn left into... a tunnel! And there we run for 800m or so. Impossible to estimate the pace or running feeling (this will remain for the rest of the race...). It feels muggy and it is wet on the road (is it raining inside tunnels in Stockholm?). The 1:24- pacesetters pass me right at the end of the tunnel and kindly we cheer to each other. No worries, I'll get them next year in Stockholm marathon ;) The first 2 km disappear in less than 8 minutes (yes, I know, too fast already, but was slowing down after that!). Up to km5 it feels like there are lots of turning left and right.

The main flow has settled into their pace, seems like. Before km5 it is already too warm with a singlet, so I cleverly (?) unpin the lower part of my BIB to get my singlet up. OK, I could have thought of this before start, but now it is km5 and it is passed right above 20 minutes. Yaaa, I know...already too fast still. But continuing and not extremely pushing. The reason being that all comments on this half marathon said "easy 10-fast 7-crazy hard 2-push to the max in downhill 2". So I kind-of listen a bit here. Once again, passing female runners mean a better ranking in the race, so two passed before km9 feels good :P One more tricky water station (I know I know...half-marathon does not necessarily mean you have to drink...therefore I tend to throw the water on my head instead...). Km10 is reached 4 seconds above the 41minutes. OK, now I am actually a bit behind my plan... Wake up! To the halfway, the road is flat and I already don't like this road during the Stockholm marathon...it is the same here! Now there are more people cheering and reaching the castle is a part I really like. Don't see km12, km13 disappears as well and then it is...what? Km15 already? (yes, I did miss one km...). OK, now I am 2 minutes later than expected/hoped, but still with margin for not seeing the 1:30-pace setters passing me (they wouldn't dare, would they??). Straight line to km17, sun in the face, reflection on the water...just beautiful and enjoying fully. Taking no water at km17-station (enough with the showers...feeling already soaking wet!) and the long difficult-terrifying-awful long slope starts... Well, actually it is long, it is not fast, it ain't easy, but Gothenburg does offer a similar slope at the end of the race, so the aim changes here to "pass the two ladies you see ahead of you before the finish line". Meaning: easy to the top (let them get tired) and then full speed until the end (i.e. not until I die, but until the finish line (= the end)). And this plan is working. Reaching the top, I see the two ladies slowing down surely, being a bit scared when seeing a little very steep slope ahead of me, realizing quickly that we actually turn left here...aaaaand the downhill is finally reached....less than 2km...downhill and full speed...passing first gal before the second right turn... shouting a bit to guys who apparently decided they are fully entitled to run in the middle of the road without thinking of the fast gals coming behind (and passing them btw J). Seeing on the way down the runners on the other side moving towards their km13. No time to cheer them up (just loving encouraging others generally, but not this time). Where is the end? Stretching the neck to find out where the finish line is...nowhere!!! The tunnel vision is starting... and then all runners before me turn...left? I thought the bridge was on the right?... (yes, there is *a* bridge on the right, but not *the* bridge!)...And where is this finish line? Have they moved it? Final left turn and seriously, nothing else matters now but those red numbers above the finish line...1:28:xx... just a little bit more. Not a chance I pass the girl ahead of me...but passing a few guys will work as well J more encouragement both from runners I pass (thanks!) and from the crowd (at this time, cannot see anything else but the 1:28 ticking and ticking and ticking...) aaaaaand it is finished. This time, not a chance to have a miss of sub90. It is done and well-done! Yippiiiiie! Once more under 1:30. Short breathing before a large smile welcomes me from a runner friend, clap on the shoulders from guys I passed and more smiles. OK. Back to elite tent. I am happy. I am not tired. I am ready for the second part of the race. Where is it?...

Official net time: 1:28:38 – finish time, 46th women to pass the finish line...More than satisfied. Strengths are there, left knee behaved well, hamstring did not complain and the smile is constant. Training shows its results. Third sub90 half marathon this year (without counting the first half of all marathons this year which also were sub90). A good year so far J

>> Loads of thanks for the cheering during the training, the race and after race... as well as keeping up with the running-talk and the understanding for “wearing-sneakers-at-work” week before the race (high heels are nice, sneakers are safer!). Just continue the running, at lunch, early morning (yes, I can even bike to the meeting point if needed!), under rain, sun, wind, you name it. Good Saturday under nice Swedish afternoon sun!

Have a great week!

//Kind regards from a still sun-shining place on Earth (aka Gothenburg!)

Karima

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