

Pikes Peak Marathon: Aug. 19, 2007

Notes:

1. Acclimatization—Arriving on Wednesday for the race on Sunday worked out well, particularly since the house we rented was at 9200'. Germaine arrived on Friday and also did well. A minimum of two nights at altitude before the race is essential and our plans this year were pretty close to perfect.

2. Acclimatization Hikes—I did nothing on Wednesday, an easy 6-miler on Thursday, the top 2 miles of Pikes Peak on Friday and a very light 3-miler at Pancake Rocks on Saturday. I would have preferred to have gone all the way down to the A-Frame (3 miles) on Friday but we were pinched for time. Also, Germaine had to do this fresh off the plane, no easy task! The toll for the auto road to the summit was \$10/person.

3. Clothing—I wore pure running gear and was glad I did. My biggest pre-race equipment choice was between running shoes and trail hikers. Running shoes proved the best choice. Unlike my experience at the Grand Canyon where the running shoes were completely destroyed, on Pikes Peak they were in perfect shape at the end. There is no reason to wear heavy, protective shoes on the Barr Trail. Also, depending on the weather, a short sleeved running shirt is fine. Even if it's a bit chilly in the morning it is best to start with short sleeves. You warm up quickly once the race begins. Germaine started out with long sleeves but quickly stripped down. Although some people wore tights, I think shorts are fine ten times out of ten. I carried gloves in my kit but never used them. Even so, gloves are good insurance in the event of bad weather and are psychologically comforting to have along.

4. Pack—I will replace my fanny pack with a slightly smaller model. All I need is something large enough to carry a spare long sleeved shirt, gloves, a few GUs (6-8 for the Ascent, 12-16 for the Marathon) and some cash. For this race I stored the GUs in one of the water bottle pockets and 4 or 5 popped out onto the pavement in the first half mile. It's best to keep them in a zippered pocket even though this makes getting at them a bit more difficult. Also, I felt that the water bottle pockets made my existing pack a bit bulky. I like the idea of a minimalist pack, particularly since I've come to believe that I'll never carry a jacket for the Ascent and am unlikely to need anything more than a spare shirt for the Marathon. Because of the large number of Aid Stations, there is never any need to carry a water bottle on the route, provided you take a couple of cups of water or Gatorade at each Aid Station.

5. Prognosis—I ran an excellent race this year but still fell short of my goal of arriving at the top in less than 4 hours. My Barr Camp split of 2:03:33 was 4 minutes better than 2005's and may be a small improvement opportunity. I think that if I really concentrate I can make it to Barr Camp in under 2 hours. This will

require a more aggressive start and running all the flat sections midway. Also, I'll have to choose the right strong-looking runner to tag onto.

My Barr-to-A-Frame split of 54:16 was 3 minutes better than in 2005 and is perfectly fine. I arrived at the A-Frame with 7 minutes in hand versus 2005 and, at a minimum, should have finished the ascent leg in less than 4:15:00. In the event, I lost 8 minutes on the final leg to the summit and finished with a time about 1 minute worse than in 2005. However, the ridiculously long time on the A-Frame-to-Summit leg (1:23:46 in 2007 versus 1:15:53 in 2005) was more a function of congestion on the route to any weakness on my part. The problem is that ascenders have to yield to the descending runners and with roughly 350 runners coming down the narrowest section of the trail ahead of me, none of the ascenders in my group could make quick headway. I think that I could have done the ascent portion of the race 10 minutes quicker if I didn't have to contend with the descending traffic. This would have given me a First Wave qualifying time (sub- 4:15:00) but still a long way off a sub- 4 hour pace. Bottom line: sub- 4 hours is only remotely possible for me. To do it, I'll have to make an all-out effort in the Ascent race where descending traffic is not an issue. Because of the traffic I do not think that I'll ever be able to do materially better in the ascent portion of the Marathon than I did this year.

My plan for next year will be to run the Ascent. To give myself the best shot, I'll have to concentrate on making a fast start to get out front with the quicker Second Wave runners. The one disadvantage of the Ascent is that there are 915 First Wave and 1000 Second Wave runners on the course versus only 815 in the Marathon. This makes traffic an issue on the Ascent as well, though, hopefully, not as huge a one as in the Marathon. In the Ascent, unlike the Marathon, traffic virtually never grinds to a complete stop.

I was surprised by the amount of running (roughly 10 miles worth!) I did during the descent portion of the race. My descending time of 2:37:17 was much better than expected and felt much easier than expected. According to Matt Carpenter's Pace Calculator, my predicted descent based on a 4:21:35 ascent was 2:44:16! I'm amazed that I did 7 minutes better than predicted because I've always considered myself a very slow and cautious descender. I think my descent was helped by the fact that I did not wear sunglasses. I saw the course better without the sunglasses and safely added speed because of this. I'll leave the glasses at home next trip up the mountain.

6. How I Felt—Pre-race, I was definitely concerned about my ability to complete the Marathon. I honestly did not know whether I'd have the grit to turn around and head for the bottom after reaching the Summit. As things worked out, this was not an issue at all. I felt reasonably strong at the Summit and the weather was encouragingly pleasant. I was quite conscious of the fact that my last marathon occurred 28 years before (November, 1979) and was excited at the prospect of completing another one. Also, I had bought a "Pikes Peak Marathon"

cap a couple of days before the race and this proved to be a powerful impetus to continuing. I really liked the cap and knew that I'd never wear it unless I completed the race. Finally, and most importantly, Germaine was unquestionably committed to finishing the race and I was not about to let my end of the bargain down. For all of these reasons I didn't think for a moment about quitting at the halfway point.

While doing the ascent portion I felt good but was very much aware that I was pressing more than in 2005. Accordingly, I was frankly surprised when I saw my pace lagged the sub- 4 hour standard by 1 minute at No Name Creek, 2 minutes at Barr Camp and 7 minutes at the A-Frame. I expected a greater reward for my efforts! One mistake that I made after seeing my time deficit at the A-Frame was to freely abandon the sub- 4 hour goal and settle for whatever pace the pack gave me. I lost aggressiveness and had no time goal in mind thereafter; I just wanted to get to the top and not over-exert myself in the process. Even allowing for the problems caused by descending runners, it is absolutely absurd that I didn't finish the ascent quicker than in 2005. While my conservatism was definitely influenced by the knowledge that the trip down would be arduous, I think that I let myself down by not making a full-fledged effort to top out in under 4:15:00. I'm confident that next year I'll do much better on the A-Frame-to-Summit leg. This will be aided immensely by the fact that next year I'll do the Ascent rather than the Marathon and won't be facing a hoard of descenders or be fretting about surviving the trip back down the mountain. My goal for the final leg next year is 1:10:00. This is about 6 minutes faster than my time in 2005.

Finally, I think that the weather factored into my performance and this gives me reason to hope for a better result under more ideal conditions. It was in the 60s when the race started at 7am and near 70 degrees when I topped out. These are wonderfully agreeable temperatures for most pursuits but not nearly cool enough for really fast running.

7. Ranking-- I'm thrilled that I accomplished the goal of finishing the Marathon in the top half of all male runners. Being in the top 48% of the men and top 45% overall is excellent. Given the fact that pretty much everyone who runs the race is a serious athlete a top half finish is fantastic. My age group ranking of 14 out of 46 puts me in the top 30% and that's also great. I'm satisfied that I'm more than holding my own. Also, next year I'll move up to the 60-64 age group and should be able to do even better in the percentage rankings. This year's time would have put me 7 out of 29 (top 24%) in the 60-64 age group.

8. Physical Condition—My health was perfect this year. Because I didn't want to battle a cold like I did in 2005, I started taking Airborne a few days before leaving for Colorado. I don't know whether this helped but I'm certain it didn't hurt. It was a mild mental boost to do something pro-active to avoid a cold.

My physical state after the Marathon was markedly better than when I finished a Rim-River-Rim hike six weeks before. After the Grand Canyon (5.5 hours and 16.5 miles) my legs were cramping terribly and I was very sore for several days afterward. Part of this was certainly attributable to the brutally hot conditions high on the Bright Angel Trail. After the Marathon I felt tired but otherwise great. One thing that I think was very helpful is that at all the Aid Stations I downed Gatorade instead of water. The potassium in the Gatorade helped ward off cramps. In the Grand Canyon I drank nothing but plain water and was greatly affected by cramps. The only cramping I experienced on Pikes Peak was a brief incident shortly after beginning the descent. I dealt with it by slowing to a walk and eating a GU. GUs also contain a bit of potassium. I was back to running within just a few minutes.

One thing that I'm sure was helpful this year was that while on the trail I ate more and more regularly than ever before. I finished about a dozen GUs during the course of the race and while it is never pleasant to force them down, they definitely provide sorely needed energy. Vanilla flavor is far and away the best, in my opinion. Next time on the mountain I will religiously get one GU down every 30 minutes. I'm convinced that doing so will materially enhance my prospects for a good time.

9. Germaine—Germaine's performance on the mountain was nothing short of remarkable. Her time of 6:40:55 put her in the top 36% of all finishers and in the top 26% of all women runners. What is really impressive is that she did this with virtually no previous experience on the mountain whatever. The first time she ever stepped on Pikes Peak was on Friday when we did an acclimatization hike covering the top two miles of the route. Amazing stuff!

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<u>Waypoints</u>	<u>Cum Mileage</u>	<u>Stage Miles</u>	<u>Altitude</u>	<u>Alt Change</u>	<u>Cum Time</u>	<u>Stage Time</u>	<u>Pace/mi</u>
Marathon Start	0.0	0.0	6,295	0			
No Name Creek	4.3	4.3	8,800	2,505	1:11:16	1:11:16	0:16:34
Barr Camp	7.6	3.3	10,200	1,400	2:03:33	0:52:17	0:15:51
A-Frame	10.2	2.6	11,800	1,600	2:57:49	0:54:16	0:20:52
Summit	13.3	3.1	14,115	2,315	4:21:35	1:23:46	0:26:51
A-Frame	16.4	3.1	11,800	-2,315	5:12:37	0:51:02	0:16:21
Barr Camp	19.6	3.1	10,200	-1,600	5:42:19	0:29:42	0:09:31
Marathon Finish	26.2	6.6	6,245	-3,955	6:58:52	1:16:33	0:11:32

Cumulative ET=>	6:58:52	0:15:59
Up=>	4:21:35	0:19:38
Down=>	2:37:17	0:12:13

2007 Marathon Statistics

	<u>Place</u>	<u># of Finishers</u>	<u>Top % Ranking</u>
Male	282	584	48%
Overall	351	773	45%
Age Group	14	46	30%

2007 Marathon v. 2005 Ascent

	<u>2005 Time</u>	<u>2007 Time</u>	<u>Better/Worse</u>		<u>2005 % Rank</u>	<u>2007 % Rank</u>	<u>Better/Worse</u>
Barr Camp	2:08:00	2:03:33	0:04:27	Male	51%	48%	3%
A-Frame	0:57:00	0:54:16	0:02:44	Overall	44%	45%	1%
Summit	1:15:53	1:23:46	0:07:53	Age Group	40%	30%	10%

Cumulative Difference=> **0:00:42**