

The Butler Blog

Boston 2011

The alarm didn't wake me at 4am on April 18, 2011, but a text from my training friend Kara S did. So began my race day journey for my 3rd consecutive Boston Marathon. I quietly got ready and tried not to wake my parents or my boys. I tied up my signature Princess Lea meets Mickey Mouse braided double bun hair-do. I applied the L'Oreal Infallible lipstick in Pomegranate newly renamed Strider red. I was rocking my Lululemon attire and my sassy red Strider singlet. I look fierce, well, for a kindergartner.

I quietly kissed my boys goodbye and was wished good luck by my Mom and Dad who woke to see me off. Out the door I make a quick Dunkin Donuts stop and then off to the bus to Hopkinton at Salvatore's. When I pulled into the parking lot I had a quick panic attack I didn't see any buses, was I in the wrong place? I was relieved when I saw Kara S. We anxiously awaited for the bus arrival. I imagine all the Striders were a bit panicked waiting for the buses to roll in. I remember Kara's hopes being raised and lowered when she said, "oh I hear it, there's the bus, oh no, that's a garbage truck!"

A short while later, Kara and I piled into Elisa's van where the Strider Red lipstick made it's way around the van, Donna, Christine D, Kara S, Doreen even Amy. Ticky tacky ticky tacky.

On to the bus (finally) now we could all breath easier and enjoy the trip in, laughing with friends and talking strategy. My strategy was to faithfully follow my pace band. Only think of a mile at a time. My goal 3:40. That would be a Boston Qualifying (BQ) time for me. It would also be a 28-minute PR if I could pull it off. Lofty goal. I trained and put the time and money (on babysitters) in, let's see if it paid off.

The bus in to Hopkinton is one of the most fantastic experiences. The energy is electric, the cameras are flashing, and everyone is laughing and sharing training and race stories.

The bus erupts in cheers as we arrive. More pictures, relaxing and getting race gear on. Doubts about race attire are left behind as we make our way to the start line. I walk with a cluster of my training friends to wave 3 corral 6 and the nervous excitement builds.

Here . . . we . . . go. Rob and I start out, mile 1, the band says 9:16. Can do! That was easy, I say with my cocky little runners swagger, that will be tested and humbled later. Next 8:48. Can do! Just after that I see my former neighbor holding up a yellow sign with "Marcie" in purple letters! My brain was swirling and thinking of pace and how to pull off a BQ, I awkwardly call out: "Hey, I'm Marcie." With a huge smile I run on side by side with Rob. Early on we perfected hand gestures, not the obscene kind. Signs to tell the other to slow down, speed up, or show we were on target. After those first few miles the pace kicked in, alternating between 8:13 and 8:08. I felt good and thought I had

a decent shot at BQ-ing! Holy cow, it's within my reach. Around mile 10 the chaffing under my arms hurt, badly! A mile 12 stop at the med tent took 20- 40 seconds but the mole skin tape was worth it! RELIEF!

Most people look forward to Wellesley for the College (which is amazing), but I love that my parents watch for me at mile 14, that motivated me to keep moving forward! My Mom, Dad and boys were there to welcome my arrival with a brief stop, smiles, hugs and baby smooches. Then on I run! Rob and I kept our pace on target for the next couple miles. Just before mile 16 Rob ran ahead a bit to see his family. He told me to look for them between miles 16 and 17 on the left. So I kept my eyes peeled, because, looking for familiar faces in the crowd keeps my mind from wandering to self-doubt. Around 17 and a half I heard my name and there they were. Not just Rob's family but coach Scott too! I was so happy to see them! THRILLED! The brief stop and realization that I had been chugging up the incline lead me to, in my exasperated voice, say two words. Two, highly inappropriate words. Mother F---er! Oh my goodness did I just say that out loud. Coach Scott may have been used to my random hurling of expletives, but the spectators definitely were not. WOOPS! I guess Rob's Mother will always remember me! At my request Coach Scott had a twizzler in hand for me, but for some crazy reason I refused and happily huffed off up heartbreak!

The next miles were a blur. Rob and I parted ways about a half mile to mile after I dropped the F bomb on his family. Rob was doing so well, I felt good, better than in any previous marathon, but I couldn't keep pace with him.

The most fabulous thing about Boston is definitely the people and knowing people along the way is the frosting on the cupcake. I saw Donna Phaneuf's husband, Chris and son, Drew twice during the race. The first time I spotted them, it was thanks to the Face Book picture informing runners of how we could spot them. I got a great smile and high five from Drew. The second time, Chris spotted me. I heard an enthusiastic, "Marcie, Baby" from the crowd, that renewed my energy and kept me chugging along.

Before the race started I wrote three "mantras" on my rib cage to keep in mind as I ran. They were not written there for the world to see they were there for me. When I was in a

funk or period of self-doubt I put my hand over one of the mantras and repeated it to myself. My favorite was one Elisa came up with while sitting in her van in the morning: "Honor thy number" and that was my intention, honor my number that MVS afforded me the ability to run with. So when I repeated that mantra I would suck up whatever I was whining about and just RUN!

19.38 miles that jumping bean was calling my name. There she was just as promised: left side and a huge smile. She was bouncing and calling my name as if I was a celebrity! Crissy Lippman you helped me up that hill! Your enthusiastic cheering got me to the top so I could take charge of those last few miles.

23.25 miles I was surprised to hear my name again. There was a bubbly Lyn Licciardello calling for me. She snapped my picture as I smiled through my exhaustion and newly developing back pain. Lyn emailed me the picture the day after the race. I love it, gosh I look hideous in it, but you can read my face clearly, no caption needed. When I get tired during a race I do one of a few self-abusive things, one being I violently bite the inside of my cheek, pushing my cheek out with my tongue then repeatedly biting it. Don't ask me why, I can't really rationalize it, I know I shouldn't because today as I type this (3 days later) my cheek still hurts.

QuickTime™ and a
decompressor
are needed to see this picture.

Just after seeing Lyn I attempted to do math. Not recommended with less than 3 miles left in a marathon. I clearly remember thinking WOW I think I can do this! I think a BQ is possible! I had 20 minutes to run in the last 3 miles. So my calculations told me if I could pull off 9 minute pace I could do it! HA! Math and I were clearly at odds. The wheels slowly churned and I realized in fact I COULD NOT do it. Disappointment set in but I ran as fast as I could because I wanted my PR to be as great as I could muster it to be. Then I told myself if I am not going to BQ then I am going to rock a cartwheel finish.

Running up the last two tenths of a mile I ran as fast as my tired legs could carry me, and kept my eyes on the space between me and my nearest competitors. At finish line and I went for it, a cartwheel in all it's glory. I bet it wasn't pretty but it was the best cartwheel

I've ever done! I heard the announcer ask me to do a few more, but I just smiled and walked on. After my time set in I realized how much all my hard work had paid off and I cried. I cried because another marathon was in the books, I cried because I was so close and yet so far away, I cried because with 27,000 other people I managed to make it from Hopkinton to Boston and most importantly I cried because I took 23 minutes off of my previous Personal Record!

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Start line picture by Dave Leonard
Picture of the boys and I by Peter Butler
3rd picture by Lyn Lliccardello
Cartwheel finish by MarathonPhoto