

Boston Prep, Derry 16 miler January 23, 2011

Hills, what hills? That was my mantra for this race. Well . . . it was until mile 10, then I believe the mantra was “stupid (expletive-ing) hills.” On January 23, 2011 I braved the sub-freezing temperature and ran the Boston Prep 16 miler in Derry, NH.

Temperatures at the start line were just above single digits, but the sun was shining and the temperatures were sure to rise! The forecast didn't call for any precipitation and the wind was minimal! For all accounts it seemed like the running gods were smiling on the Boston Prep race.

This was one race that, as odd as it seems, I was eager to run. I knew that it was a hilly course and I was excited for the challenge. However a day later I will always view this race, not as challenging, but, humbling.

2010 – 2011 has been a year of hard work and training. It has been my intention to increase not only my speed but my endurance. I have shaved off between two and two and a half minutes off my average race pace (for under 10 mile races) since my early Strider days three years ago. I've been riding a high from December 5th where I ran the long leg of Mill Cities with an average pace of 7:40, and my January 1st 10k with an average 7:29 pace.

I set out feeling great! For the first few miles I felt like I was a part of a living locomotive. The rhythmic sounds of the runners' feet and the steam chuffing from the mouths of all the participants brought the “train” to life. It was a sight to see, all the ‘little engines that could’ making their way up each hill.

I kept my average pace from the start until mile 10 at under a 9 minute pace. My long run pace was in line with my training plan and I felt great. The hills before mile 10 were annoying but conquerable. With each hill I bounded up I though with every bit of cocky-ness, hills, what hills?

After the half way point I could see many of the engines start to slow a bit. Around that point I felt a pat on my back and Coach Kristina passed on smiling and waving. I am not sure, but it looked as if she was gliding, not running up the hill.

I passed three of the four water stations without taking water, not for lack of trying. Every time I reached for water they retracted and said, “Gatorade.” To be clear, I hate Gatorade, more than I hate tap (or hose) water. There was water but I apparently failed at finding the right person holding it. It seems like the water and Gatorade people were intermingled and provided confusion. I would have appreciated two clear sections, Gatorade first then water or vice versa. In addition at two or three of the water/Gatorade stops they offered Gu. A nice

addition! I am not a fan, but honestly, a nice offering! Also I hear that the Gatorade was warm, intentionally, to avoid it freezing (good call!), but something about drinking a warm yellow liquid is less than appealing to me. Just sayin'.

Enter NH license plate +RONDO+. Dear Lord thank you for putting Rondo on the course. For the last 8 miles of the race the SUV kept appearing intermittently blasting top 40 booty bouncing music. I clearly remember running in front of a pack of 20-something girls and the Train song, "Hey, Soul Sister" came on, their cheerful sing along helped me run on. Rondo probably passed me a good half dozen times, helping me smile through the hills.

Mile 10 the temperatures and my confidence dropped. The steep climb messed with my psyche but I knew stopping was not an option. Kara and I ran from around mile 11 or so to the finish line together, occasionally, quietly complaining. Frequently I dropped the F-bomb.

The wind picked up and my confidence stayed low. I shed a few self pity tears. I was hungry. I am the girl who would gladly indulge in an all-you-can-eat buffet before running a race, and my smoothie and bag of cereal was clearly not enough sustenance.

Around mile 15 on a very flat stretch of the terrain I felt like quitting, I was mentally exhausted, I turned to Kara, and with my jaw nearly frozen shut I said, "I'm tired." Quietly she agreed and on we ran. Nearing the last turn and the home stretch there was a photographer. I smiled hoping the picture wouldn't capture my angst and defeat. With a few feet to the finish line, Kara and I ran side by side, we survived the hills and the chills. I linked arms with her and we crossed the finish line. 2 hours and 35 minutes later, I mark this in the win column!