Negative Splits

January 2004

Negative Splits, I’ve never heard those magic words before, at least not in relation to my marathons. Negative splits, wow that means I ran the second half faster than the first half. The data from the Houston marathon, first half in 1:55:55 and the second half in 1:54:41, for a net / chip time of 3:50:36, which is an average pace of 8:48 per mile. Two 9-minute miles at the start, due to the congestion, can explain some of this.

So much for the facts, now to the ambience. Four of my running buddies (Chuck Maxwell, Wayne Zimmerman, Jim Karner and) from Michigan came down for the weekend. We are all members of the Fox and Hounds team that competes every year in the 275 mile Great Lakes Relay, which we have won for the last two years, competing against 70 other teams of 10 over 3 days. The relay has an age handicap, which helps. The five of us who ran in Houston were all over 60 – one at 61, one at 64 and 3 at 65 years old. Our fast 65 year old won our age group with a 3:30 and another 65 year old qualified for Boston with a 4:01. The 63 year old did a 4:30, mainly because he made 20 phone calls and received 10 while on the run. By the way he has run 6 Ironmen in the past few years, after heart valve surgery. The 63 year old ran the half in a respectable 1:52, he was already qualified for Boston.

The guys showed up late on Thursday night and spent Friday jogging around the lake and getting ready for the party on Friday evening. That was fun with a fair amount of chips and dips and a lot of race talk. Saturday to the expo and gait and foot analysis, to be told that we will all be in wheel chairs soon if we don’t mind our ways and buy expensive orthotics and take the magic pills. But the main event was carbo-loading at the Italian Café. In the evening we watched the Blues Brothers 2000, which set the mood for the rest of the weekend of revelries.

After the race we took a shower, took a nap, as old folks often do and then went out to San Leon for Oysters ---- and a good time was had by all. Monday took us to Galveston and Mexican Food. Next door to the restaurant was a Goodwill shop and, being thrifty folk we couldn’t resist the temptation of a visit. We found a bunch of ugly shirts, but at a nonnegotiable $5 each we decided to pass. Until we got home. So a couple of us drove back to Galveston to capture these prizes. We added hats, dark glasses and cowboy boots and paraded about the neighborhood and then on to the local running club for a race recap meeting. We presented the local team with the first annual Michigan- Texas friendship trophy as they had a bunch of young fast folk – next year we’ll take the handicap.

Tuesday took the group to Space Center Houston, where they watched IMAX movies rode simulators, visited mission control and Building 9 and bought hats. Steak for dinner capped off a great weekend. I was glad to get rid of these raunchy reprobates early Tuesday morning with promises of getting the Band back together as soon as the dust has settled on this visit