

# Women's Running Magazine Half Marathon (WMH) – Nashville (9/24/2011)

## Julie's Race Report

WOW! Shirley and I have finished our 3<sup>rd</sup> half marathon this month (4 weekends) – and we still feel great! (Maybe we should find another one for next weekend.) This was Shirley's 9<sup>th</sup> half marathon this year, and my 6<sup>th</sup>.



After checking into our hotel on Friday afternoon Tom, Shirley, Steve and I walked downtown to get our race packets and to make sure we knew how to get to the start line. We decided to take a photo at the start area one day early, and also got photos of the stack of Gatorade and of me checking out the cookies. I also noticed that one of the port-o-lets was designated as Men's, so I switched it to Women's. (Tom said I was ornery.)



Being a Women's Half Marathon, the expo had a slightly different selection of booths. There were booths with headbands, running jewelry, bamboo clothing, running skirts, sparkling running skirts, WMH clothing, ... We also got fancy bags and pink women's tech shirts.



Bill arrived before dinner, and we walked about a block from our hotel to a fun Italian restaurant, Mirko. They make their pastas and sauces fresh each day. It was pretty good and I saved half of my meal for my race morning breakfast.

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After eating my pasta and a banana, we left our hotel on Music Row and walked about a mile to the start line. Tom and his flower went with us – he discovered he had to pay attention when walking under low hanging branches ☺ As we walked to the start we were joined by several other participants. We chatted with someone from the area who confirmed that the course was hilly. Her training group had been able to train on parts of the course.



They didn't let us into the start corrals until about 6:45, so we weren't able to get all the way to the start line for our traditional photo – but that didn't stop us. The start was between the future site of Music City Center (scheduled to open in 2013) and Bridgestone Arena. They were nice enough to have the course starting down hill.



This was one of the first races we've been to that didn't have a wait for the start area port-o-lets. As we entered the corrals, we noticed that they were working on the Music City Center and lifting some big pieces right over

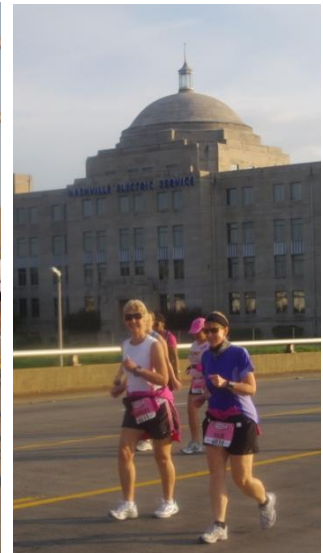
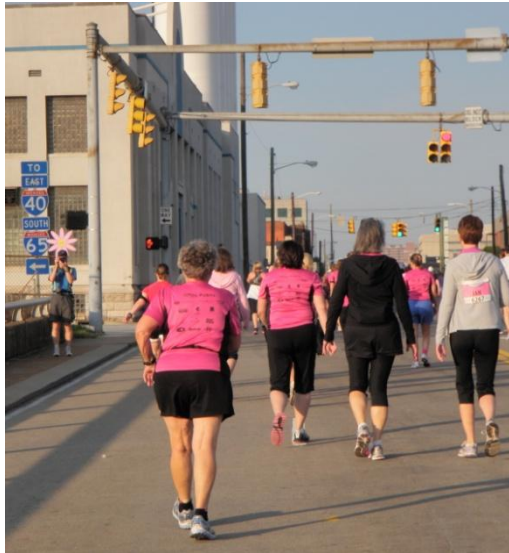


some of the participants. The start went very smoothly; they released each of the 6 corrals in waves. There was a short delay between each wave and we were each sent out with a starting horn. It took us about 6 minutes to reach the start line.



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Shortly after the start we walked along the river. We passed some tents and event planning vehicles. (It turns out they were for an Aids 5K that took place later in the day.) We passed the Hard Rock Café and Fort Nashborough, then headed through downtown on Church Street (Printer's Alley). By the time we'd reached the first mile we had already gone up & down a couple of hills. The entire course was hilly; there really wasn't very much flat territory. But most of the hills weren't very steep. Before we reached mile 2, we saw Tom & his flower. We took each other's photos, then he walked with us for awhile before he headed off to wait for us around mile 5.5. This was about the point that we noticed another lady that we guessed was in Shirley's age group (forefront of photo with Tom & his flower). We decided we were going to try to stay with her and pass her before the end. She was faster than us on the uphill but we kept catching back up. Then around mile 6 we noticed she seemed a little tired. At the turnaround just before mile 7 she was only about 20 feet behind us, but the next time we looked we couldn't see her anymore. Mission accomplished. (It turns out that she was in the 65-69 age group, not the 70 and up age group.)



Along the way we saw and chatted with several interesting people. The two girls in this photo were having fun taking photos of each other: one in front of the Krispy Crème store, one with her making a sad face in front of a bakery that was closed, one posing in front of the statue in the circle on Music Row, and one with each of the motivational signs on the last bridge. Since we kept seeing them the entire race, we must have been walking about the same pace. There were several participants wearing tutu's. The center one of these

three had something that was beeping at the cadence she wanted to walk. (After walking near someone with one of those the each of the past two weekends, I've decided that they are very annoying.) Just after we passed them, I heard someone ask "Is someone wired to a bomb?". She answered that it was beeping to a 4 mph cadence. (She wasn't going that fast.)



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In Centennial Park, they were setting up for an art fair (TACA). It looked to be pretty large. There were fantastic gardens, a full size replica of the Parthenon, a static display of a plane and a locomotive. It was a really nice, scenic area with some shade.



The policemen at each intersection controlling the traffic were very nice & appreciative of our "Thank you's". Most of them were also cheering us on. One of the them was at the base of a hill and was telling us to run backwards, that way it would be downhill. (Someone commented that they weren't sure it worked that way.)

All of the water stops were great. They had plenty of people handing out water & gatorade. Most of them were themed and the volunteers had fun costumes, often involving crazy wigs. They all were cheering and encouraging us by name. We saw Tom just before the water stop between miles 5 & 6. That water stop was manned by men wearing togas. They were having a great time.

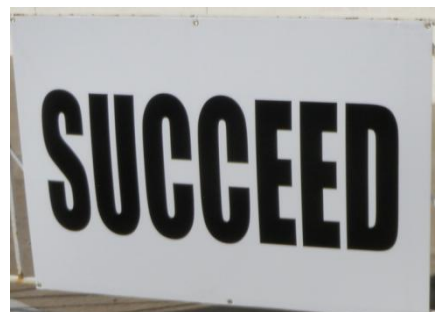
In addition to the water stops, there were volunteers, spectators, families... all along the way cheering us on. It was really a great atmosphere. We saw Tom, Bill & Steve between mile 9 & 10. Everyone around us was happy to see the Flower Guy.

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We saw several fun and motivational signs along the way...



One of the women just ahead of us us said the "Puking is Awesome!" sign was perfect for her friend who was just behind us. They stopped and had a good laugh. Apparently the friend pukes everytime she does a race.



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With all of the great signs, our last mile was our fastest (just under a 15:00 mile). At the finish, we saw Steve's orange hat just before we found the Flower Guy (Tom) and Bill. We finished in 3:22.

We felt great and they had plenty of food left, including the cookies I had eyed the day before. (At many of the races they are out of some of the food by the time we finish – typically over 80% of the participants finish before us.)

Shirley and I managed to cross the finish line at exactly the same time – and we weren't even trying. A great ending to a fun 13.1 miles.



We relaxed for awhile at the finish area. Tom had several requests for photos with his Flower Sign. One was from someone on the event staff. We chatted with her for awhile before heading to Broadway street for a peek in Tootsie's Orchid which was packed, then on to lunch at Jack's BBQ. After lunch we headed to the riverfront and went through the event tents set up for the Aid's 5K and a quick trip through the Fort. Then back to Mike's for ice cream then to the hotel. (Mileage total for the day was about 1 mile to the start + 13.1 for the race + 2.5 after the race.)



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The WMH races have a unique 2 in 1 medal.  
They have a removable charm that can be worn on a necklace or a bracelet.

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### Tom's Stalker Notes

Once again I got a weekend off from running, since Julie and Shirley were walking the Nashville Women's Half Marathon. I walked the girls to the start, which was less than a mile from our hotel. It was going to be a great day for a race, for both racers and spectators. I was reusing my sign from Indy and thought the names would be applicable to most women's only races, but as I looked around I didn't see many matches. As the day went on, Amy appeared to be the most common name. We saw one Tiffany, and a couple of Laura's and Julie's. Once the corrals started to fill, I headed to my first spotting location around 2 miles. The city has an interesting mix of old and new buildings. I like the murals that were painted on some buildings.



I waited on the bridge and watched as the empty lanes of the road slowly filled up with all forms of women runners. At times the bridge bounced from all of the runners. One lady asked, "Were you in Indianapolis?" After Julie and Shirley passed, I took a shortcut to a spot about five and half miles into the race. I had a nice walk along the Vanderbilt campus and came out at a tree lined residential street.



I was starting to be recognized. A second woman asked if I had been in Indianapolis. Other comments included, "flowers are sprouting everywhere", "does it spin?", and "haven't I seen you before?" Two women asked about my shortcut. I told them I'd have to kill them if I told them what it was. They offered to provide the bullets. Unlike the Indianapolis race, men were permitted in this one. I think there were about 60 guys running. Most of the pace team leaders were guys and several men appeared to be running with

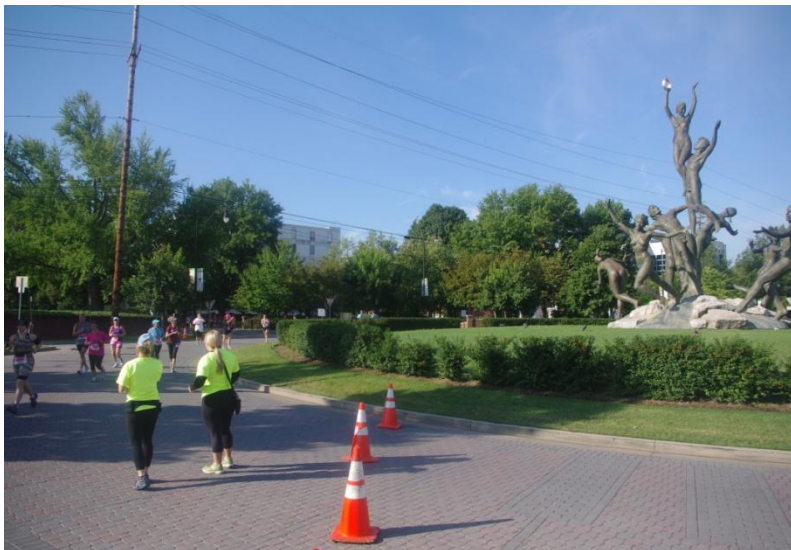
spouses or children. Another stalker showed up at my spot on a bicycle. She was not from the area and was struggling with the hills and directions. I told her my plan and she was surprised I was on foot. About a half dozen racers stopped to take pictures of my sign.

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When Julie and Shirley came by I joined for a short distance to the split where they would do an out and back. We separated at the Toga water stop. The guys were having a great time handing out water and I think the ladies were enjoying it too.



I followed the course back to the circle and met my brothers. Along the way I passed a couple of women holding a sign, “puking is awesome”. I laughed when they said, “your sign is adorable.” It seemed like such a contrast. The traffic circle has a huge stature of naked dancers and on race day was also a music stop. The music at most races usually isn’t much fun to listen to, but this singer was actually pretty good.

Our hotel was in a great location near the circle, so I took a quick restroom stop and met my brothers. This location was about nine and a half miles into the race. People were starting to get spread out. I think a higher percentage of people were enjoying the race than most races. The 3:00 pacer came over to shake my hand and no one was with him. He was having a hard time keeping his group together, but we later noticed that he was able to round them up at the finish line and get everyone across. When the tutu triplets came by they yelled, “We love you Flower guy.” Other comments were, “you’re everywhere”, “I’ve seen you 4 times”, “we need to stop meeting like this” and “your girls must be proud”.

After Shirley and Julie went by, Bill, Steve, and I walked downtown to the finish area. We got a good spot at the finish line and cheered for my new friends including the “Tutu triplets” and “Double Amy’s”, which I saw earlier in the day. We spotted Shirley and Julie a block or so away and started to cheer for them and they finished strong.

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The race is amazingly well run. They had skids of water and Gatorade left and also plenty of food. Ellen from the WHM Event Staff took a few pictures of the flower sign and enjoyed hearing about the attention it received from runners. We also talked about the new race which has been added to the series. It is scheduled for August in Bloomington, MN (near the Mall of America). She said they will likely expand into other cities over time, but they don't plan on becoming too large.



After the race we went to Jack's for lunch and then wandered around downtown. Several race participants came over to thank me for my enthusiasm and support. We happened into the expo for the Aids 5K walk that had taken place earlier. There were some interesting characters in that crowd, although they might have thought that about me since I still had my big flower sign. We stopped at Mike's for ice cream before leaving downtown.

I walked about 7 miles during the race keeping tabs on everyone and another 3 between the walk downtown and exploring Nashville after the race. I would definitely recommend the race whether you plan to run it or watch it.