

**David Jones Austin Marathon**  
**02/15/2009**



My first marathon was a great weekend, a phenomenal experience shared with my wife, a chance to meet some very cool new friends and an awesome run despite not coming anywhere near my goal time. Even though I did not make my goal, I would not change my race given the chance at a mulligan. I had my pacing right on the money . . . for a FLAT marathon like Houston. While I crashed and burned as you will see below, I had a burning need to rev the engine and see what my limits were (I did that and then some). The race was filled with beautiful scenery, the course was very challenging, the spectators were great, the bands great, it was well organized and it was an overall top notch experience. I also learned to respect that course's hills and that distance. BTW, huge congrats to everyone that finished the race. Anne Clemons more than conquered the hills and came in at 3:47! Waaaaaaay to go Anne!

The 3:45 pacers took off quicker than an 8:30 pace and it was hard to weave around everyone for the first 3.5 miles (ALL of which were UPHILL). I felt good and strong, but we went out way too quick given the fact that the start was a 3 mile long hill. Even though I knew better, I chased the pacers because I did not want to lose contact with them. The next 3 miles were all downhill and felt great, but as I found out later the downhill's destroyed my quads (walking down stairs or even a curb is torturous). I was toast after the first six miles, I just did not know it yet. I underestimated in a BIG way how severely the hills would wreak havoc on my legs in the later stages of the race. At this time we were holding around an 8:25 - 30 pace. At around mile 8 we hit the first hill of the West Austin hills (colinas) and I charged it strong and felt great. The hills got bigger and meaner from 9 to 12.5, but I attacked the uphill and vigorously

attacked the down hills to catch back up to my pace group after stopping to adjust my shoe (at about mile 10 I had a shoe malfunction). I still held 8:28 to 8:30 pace until the Camp Maybry water station (About mile 12 - 12.5) right before the over pass crossing over Mopac. At this exact point, I felt like someone had handed me a small piano so I figured I would try to stride it out and then speed back up. Instead of helping, the longer stride only served to initiate my first set of cramps. That is not what I needed just before the midway point. Despite having played football for 17 years of my life I have never had cramps in any athletic endeavor. I can honestly say that I feel very bad for thinking that some of my precious team mates were wimps for going to get cramps massaged out. I WAS soooooooooo very wrong. Those things hurt!

Anyway, I am approaching the half way mark at this point, so I figured I would shorten my stride and get it back together. I still had plenty of race left and even slowing down to a 10:30 pace for the next mile would get me in below 1:55 at the 13.1 mark so I slowed it down to try to regain my legs for the downhill portion of the race (YEAH RIGHT!). After the half way mark, I got myself back together and really started attacking the down hills and holding an average pace in the 8:35 to 8:40 range. I was feeling GREAT again. Then I hit a few deceptively long and hard hills in the 16 mile range. I wasn't going to back down yet so I put my head down and charged the hill knowing that there was a nice mostly flat straight stretch just ahead. The only problem: as I crested the hill a 15 mph headwind hit me in the face. That was mentally tough but I dug deep to make it to the turn a couple of miles ahead. Unfortunately, I started cramping again right after the hill so I started walking every other water stop to try to regain my form and shake out those pesky cramps. After all, I was still running under 3:50 time and the hard part was behind me (YEAH RIGHT!).

After making the turn, getting out of the wind and being passed by the 3:50 group, things started coming back together and I got back down into the 8:30 pace range and felt GREAT again! Finally, I could get into an uninterrupted rhythm (just what I needed to get back on track). It is amazing how after the West Austin Hills I just could not get back into a rhythm. It seemed that as soon as I would, I would hit a series of terrain changes that would take me out of the zone. The flats only lasted a few miles, but I thought I had pulled it back together enough to finish strong. As before, I begin attacking the down hills and the up hills. At this point, I began to think that I might have chance to pass up the 3:50 pace group that

just passed me. Heck, I was feeling so good I thought I might be able to go after the 3:45 pace group! I started passing people again at a furious pace, but those darn hills got bigger again! Geeze, the second half is supposed to be all down hill right? NOOOOOOT!

I pass the 20 mile mark and was still feeling good, but then the wheels started coming off in a big way (MAJOR QUAD CRAMPS and my foot) at about the 21.5 mile mark, and I started walking again. My legs simply would not bend at the knees. Other than the cramps I felt great. Talk about frustrating! Anyway, the 3:50 group goes back by and then 3:55 group. Despite being in major pain (cramps and now something doesn't feel quite right with the cuboid area in my right foot) I started running again. Unfortunately, I simply cannot make my legs work right and I let the 3:55 group go. At this point, I am walking those darn hills now, but I am about to hit a long down hill section through Duval to UT where I will have to attack the Dean Keaton HILL! I got to the crest of the hill at Duval and readied myself for the down hill and the home stretch confident that I can still hit 3:55 which is just ahead. I took off with determination and did fine for a while. I was going great AGAIN and was holding an 8:46 pace even through a few small rolling hills. Then at about the 22.5-23 mile mark as I was coming down a serious down hill, my quads absolutely locked up. I massaged the inside of my right quad for a few moments and was able to bend it at the knee again. So I started hobbling along like a ghostly pirate (at this point was also probably as white as a ghost), which seems mildly appropriate considering my name. I must have looked really funny because numerous people came up to me to see if I was ok. I told them I was fine, and just experiencing some slight cramps (yeah right, that must have sounded hilarious as bad as I looked). At about this time, the 4 hour pace group comes by and I decide that I am not going to finish above four hours. Some how, I get up to speed and again start to feel fine. Unfortunately, we come up to another down hill at about the 23.5 mile mark and my quads decide that they are not going any further and lock up again! WOW that was really painful! My quad muscles must have known they were at a sporting event because they decided to do the wave for all the runners going by me. Either that, or several baby aliens were making their way throughout my legs. This time, I can't move my legs so I start hobbling on both legs that will not bend. It must have been hilarious. I only wish I had a video.

Then, at just the right time, Uncle Bob (Robert Herskovitz) of Runners World Mag fame (Robert was featured in the Human Race section of the Feb. Runner's World) stopped and taught me how to unlock my quads. We

had meet earlier in the chutes and had an awesome talk. He is friends with the people that organized Team 413 (Phillipians 4:13, I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.). I just so happened to be wearing a Team 413 shirt and had heard about him from one of the Team 413 guys the day before. Uncle Bob had wanted to run a 3:45, so he just happened to be at the 3:45 pace group as well. He had not run the new course, so I assume that once he started into the hills he decided to put it into cruise control and enjoy the day (fyi: Robert runs to work 20 miles every Friday morning). Thank God he put it in cruise control, because I probably would not have finished with out his help.

So Uncle Bob spent the next five minutes or so (or at least it felt like 5 minutes) helping me hobble to a post sign where he showed me how to do assisted squats. Amazingly enough, IT WORKED GREAT! He then showed me how to run with short strides landing on the heels of my feet and rolling onto the balls of my feet. I was purely in survival mode at this time. I could not believe that I was up and moving, just moments prior, my legs simply would not bend at the knee joint and I was done for the day. Cardio-wise I was fine and ready to go, but the hills hit me in a way that my legs were not ready for. I used leg muscles that simply were not properly trained for those kinds of hills. Not at that pace anyway.

Uncle Bob helps to get me going and we walk through the water stops. However, we run the hills so we could say that we conquered the hills. At each crest we would take a 30 second walk break and get it going again. So we get to the sadistic hill at Dean Keaton and I make it with no cramps. We walk the crest for 30 seconds, I do some more assisted squats and we take back off again. So I hobble my way through the drag and we even pass a few people. After a few more hills in the last 1.2 miles, we crest the second to the last hill, walk a few seconds and then we both take off and finish strong!

In the end I finished with a 4:09, much much slower than I had wanted. However, I wouldn't have changed a single thing about that race. I knew I was going to be redlining it through the hills, but if I had made it I thought I was home free from then on out. I laid everything on the line and ran with more heart than I thought that I had. Right now, I would not give that feeling and confidence up for a 3:55 safe time. That was by far one of the most gratifying and educational experiences I have ever had. I learned much more about my self having gone for it all and failed miserably, than if I had played it safe. And most important of all, I would not have gotten to know

Uncle Bob. But most important of all was sharing the experience with my wife and seeing her lovely face at the finish line (it was a surprisingly emotional experience). Driving home with Jaime and laughing at my trials and tribulations (most of which were self inflicted due to ignoring the advice of many on this e-mail list) was a blast and something I will always remember. I truly am a lucky man to have had the opportunity to enjoy such an wonderful experience!

Thanks to everyone for your support. I really appreciate it and have enjoyed it immensely.

David L. Jones

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