

Free State Marathon Report by John Shaw (Colorado Springs, CO)

Ran the Free State Marathon in Lawrence Kansas this past Saturday. This was a trail marathon in the true sense of the word... a little mud, some streams to cross, lots of hills, and a great group of runners and volunteers.

I did not have any real goals for the race other than to have fun and be there for my daughters first marathon. She did fine. Training with the Trail Nerds prepared her perfectly for the run and she cruised through the race.

I on the other hand was a little light on my training and depended a bit on having done this many times in the past. My longest run before the race was about 17 miles of hills. I think a couple of 20 mile efforts might have been a good thing. Had a few cramp issues in the last couple of miles which I need to think about and figure out whether it was the distance, hydration, or electrolytes.

The race itself was well organized and staffed. There were sufficient aid stations of which some were staffed and some were unmanned water. Carrying a water bottle was required but since I never run without my hip pack and a bottle, this was not an issue. I would suggest all runners who plan on doing long races, get used to some hydration pack. What you train with will help when it is race time.

The race started with a 3 mile or so loop which I liked so I could warm up and then shed extra clothing as we passed back through the start line. I know in my mind that I will warm up after a couple of miles but hate the chill feeling of starting with the correct clothing. The rule of thumb for this is that if you feel a bit chilled waiting for the start, you probably have the right amount of clothing on.

During the first 3 miles, I tried to keep my daughter from going out too fast but I know she has seen so many races that it should be second nature but still, there is the tendency to get excited when the pack bolts out of the start. After a few miles, she was gone and I settled down for the trail ahead.

Most of the race, I followed my plan which was to run downhill, flats, and some of the shallow hills. I tiptoed through the mud and some of the water crossings (not sure why) and enjoyed talking to some of the runners and took glances at the scenery. Too long a look would have probably been the receipt for a crash...

The people at the aid stations were great and the food was spot on. I can remember finding Coke at one station (my favorite replacement drink) and just draining the cup...great stuff...got my motor running again. I think I tend to be a sugar junkie during the later parts of a marathon because it seems to hit my system faster than other food sources. I did partake in the PBJ also for a slower hit down the road.

Like my daughter, my GPS was not very accurate on the course however from her telling me that this was the case during her training runs out there, I was expecting it. The downside was that I did not know when I was close enough to make the final push to the finish. I agree, some signage in the last 3 miles would be a great help.

I guess I am ready to pass the baton to the next generation... and just run for the sheer fun of it.
(yea right).

I highly recommend this race to anyone looking for a good race on the trails. Any of Ben's races are good (especially if you like mud).