



## 114<sup>th</sup> Boston Marathon 2010

"Been there, run that" is now a phrase I can use when anyone asks about the **Boston Marathon**. What an experience it was! And, without question, your gift to the Children's Hospital played an important role in the event weekend. Thank You Very Much!

Your contribution and the encouragement inspired me. I continue to be touched by the generosity around me – you have reinforced my belief that people are essentially **good** and **charitable** and when the opportunity is right, we come out in full force! Kudos to You!

My promise to match a dollar for every person who donates has been kept – and then some. Early on, I decided no matter what I would give \$400 to the Children's Hospital. I did not reach my goal of \$4000 or 400 people; however your generosity got me to **\$1,334.80**, far more than the \$750 minimum. Wee-hoo!

On April 19, 2010, 200 runners participated in the Boston Marathon for the Children's Hospital. This group was able to raise **\$1,063,431.70**. These runners were a combination of first-time marathoners, patient-partners runners and qualified runners. The patient-partners ran for a specific patient (85 in this event) and the qualified runners were those who met their qualifying time to enter Boston and decided to run for a charity anyway.

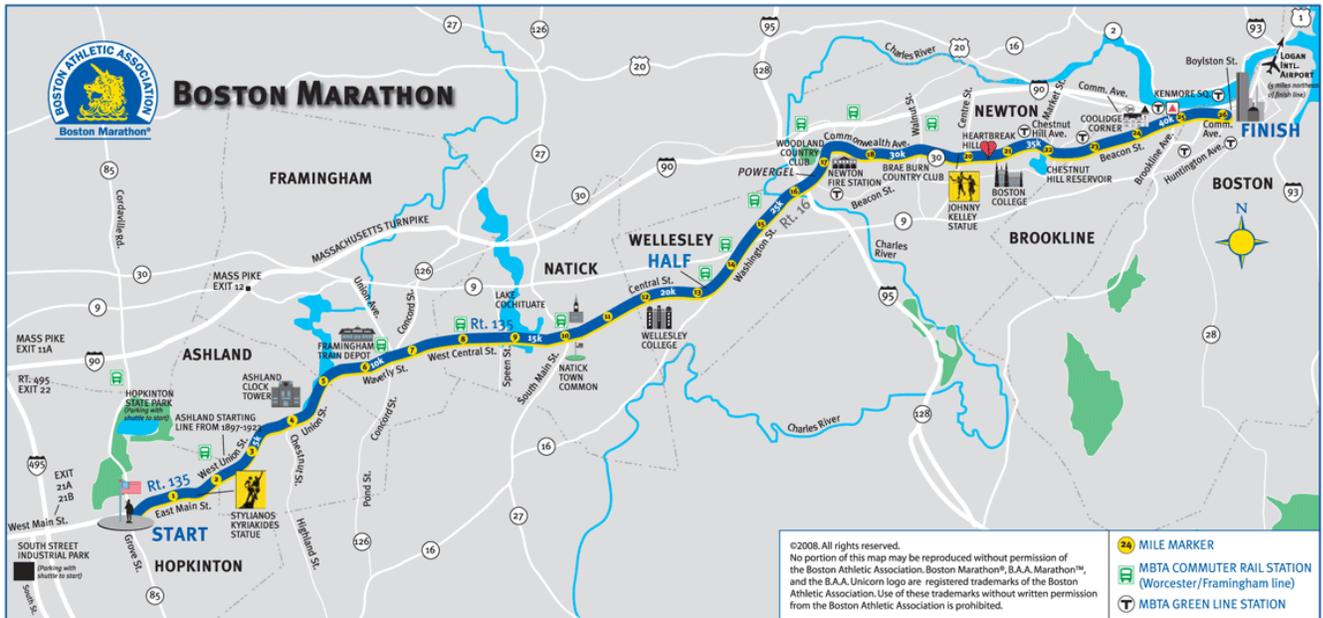
Children's Hospital is a familiar icon of the Boston community and started running at the Boston Marathon in 1996. Since then they've expanded to other races around the country with **Miles for Miracles**. You can learn more about these events by going to their website: <http://www.childrenshospital.org/> and click on "Giving to Children's" in the upper right corner. If you or someone you know wants to run a marathon via a charity, I encourage them to check out this organization. They are well organized, very supportive and will get you across the finish line and raising money.

This was the 114<sup>th</sup> running of the Boston Marathon, the **world's oldest marathon**. This year was also the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of John Hancock as its major sponsor and the 2500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Phieidippides' famous run from the beach of Marathon to Sparta in Greece. As the story goes, he ran about 25 miles, declared "We are victorious" and then died. The Boston Athletic Association chose to hold the race on Patriots Day, the day that commemorates Paul Reveres famous ride proclaiming "The British are coming". I was hoping for something a little less dramatic than either of those for my first Boston Marathon: a finisher's medal, some cookies and a tee-shirt would do.

Okay, on to the race report. For the non-runners reading this, I certainly apologize for the insanity you are about to read – if you had asked me 5 years ago if I'd run 26.2 miles, I would have thought you were crazy. Now that I am on the other side, it's confirmed: you've got to be a wee bit insane to do this. Marathoners have a screw or two loose, no doubt, and we have fun anyway! There is method in our madness.

As my Grandma Sally used to say, "You can accomplish anything you put your mind to." And gosh, darn it, she was right. Running is not just about physical ability; you must have a mental will to do it. Every time I line up before a marathon, there is a shared sense of camaraderie, anticipation, and magic. You are there to run; to beat the distance, or have it beat you! There is nothing like the feeling of your first marathon, except maybe your first Boston Marathon. I believe Frank Shorter said, "Once you run a marathon, it changes your life forever." Amen.

To find out more about the Boston Marathon go to [www.baa.org](http://www.baa.org)



## Pre-Race

Here are some fun shots of Boston prerace. Saturday and Sunday are rainy, but the construction of the grand stands and finish line are well underway. On Sunday the Boston Athletic Associate hold a 5K and invitational mile. Both end at the famous finish line. I stayed at the Westin-Copley in Copley Square just steps form the finish along with a few other running friends. Dana was running with her mom, Linda. Jack, my coach, came up to run his 4<sup>th</sup> Boston. His wife Missy was there to cheer us on. We spent the weekend at the Expo and touring the area. On Sunday we ran an easy three miles just to loosen up.



A rainy day does not stop construction  
(Linda and Val)



Picking up our Numbered Bib's at the Expo  
(Val, Dana, Linda)



View from my hotel room – the famous CITCO sign at mile 25 in the distance



Just think, next time I am here I'll be facing the other way!



The Famous Lenox Hotel on Boylston Street: Irish Pub included!



Indulging in dessert after our pre-race meal at Joe's American Grill  
(Val, Linda, Dana, Jack, & Missy)



The flags are waving over the finish line band stand on Boylston Street

## Monday, April 19: Race Day

6:00 AM – The Children’s runners have gathered in the lower lobby of the Westin Copley. Jack and I hang out with the other charity runners – for some of them this is their first marathon ever, and their faces show it! As soon as we are allowed, Jack and I grab a seat on the first bus. It’s in the 50’s outside, glad I brought a throw-away blanket to wrap-up in! Jack has a flannel and long pants. Dana and Linda are taking other transportation to the start. Our busses are heated – thank goodness!

As our busses pull out we can see the other runners walking west to the main bus pickup. They will be traveling to Hopkinton in yellow school buses. Along the way Jack and I partake in our ritual Inaccurate-Historical-Facts game. We point out structures and places and provide completely false “facts”. For example, we passed Fenway Park and Jack pointed out that was where Washington won the battle of the Bulge. Another fun game is Obscure-Movies-Quotes. At some point, however we always seem to degenerate into popular scenes from Monty Python’s The Holy Grail. We do get strange looks; hey, it’s our way of passing the time without going nuts before the race.

The road to Hopkinton from the highway is your typical country road. Today over 22 thousand runners, and thousands of volunteers and spectators will descend on this little town. God Bless them for putting up with us!



The corrals line the street up to the start. Yes, I said “up”. The runner’s village is about seven-tenths of a mile from the start and they must walk up hill to get to it. Notice I said “they”. The Children’s runners are bussed to the Masonic Lodge near the starting line and next to the church where the elite runners wait. I’m feeling special already. The lodge is two-story and we can wait inside. This is nice since it’s still a bit chilly and windy out.



Jack and I clown around at the start, taking advantage of the “empty” streets. Once the elites arrive, security locks down tight. I am able to make my way up to see the line up of the mobility impaired runners. One man is running on a full leg prosthetic, one man has no arm, another is blind. There is a woman with one of those neat-looking race legs. And most inspirational is a man, maybe in his 60’s, who has tubes in his nose attached to oxygen tanks he carries behind him on a cart. He has a pacer with him to



shield him from the other runners. I get choked up just seeing them there. I actually meet up with the man with the oxygen cart in Wellesley (mile 13) and get choked up all over again. Inspirational!

The mobility impaired runners and wheelchair runners get a head start as do the elite women and men. The first wave of the mere mortals is let loose at 10 AM. Jack is with the first wave so we wish each other good luck and off he goes!

10:15 - I make my way to my corral. Watching the other wave start has gotten my juices flowing. I have a silly grin on my face, I know it! I am ready!

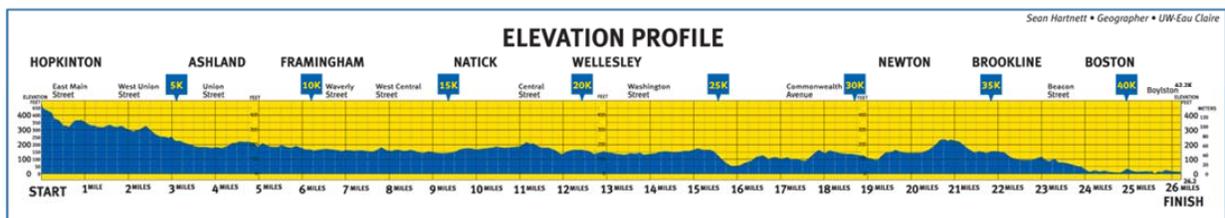




10:00 – The second wave is let loose! The cheers go up and off we go! Once we hit the start line, the mat is a steady buzz as our chips pass over top. Above the buzz you can hear the runners’ personal stop-watches and Garmin’s go beep as we each set our exact start time. The hill then tilts forward and for the first 6 or 7 miles we’ll be on a decline.

I let the other runners rush past me. I look at my Garmin – 9:20 pace. Not good, I want a 9:45 or slower. I try to pull back but I am fighting a rushing current of runners who want to take advantage of the down hill. Ah well, they will learn soon enough!

Boston is a funny race. The beginning is mostly down hill, and then at mile 16, the Newton hills begin. Everyone knows about Heartbreak Hill but many don’t know why it is named as such. Most believe it’s because of where it is in the race, and that many runners’ hearts are broken when they try to climb it after running 15 miles down hill. The real origin of the name is from the 1936 race. “On this stretch, defending champion John A. Kelley caught race leader Ellison "Tarzan" Brown, giving Brown a consolatory pat on the shoulder as he passed. His competitive drive apparently stoked by this gesture, Tarzan Brown rallied, pulled away from Kelley, and went on to win—in the words of Boston Globe reporter Jerry Nason, ‘breaking Kelley’s heart.’”<sup>1</sup> My concern right now was a lesser known but equally chilling “Heartburn Hill” named for an incline at mile 7.75.



It's the first noticeable incline of the course and this is where you find out if you went out too fast. If you run the start correctly, the incline should be no problem. From the starting line to mile six I am passed and passed again. I am doing my walk-run where I run for five minutes, then walk for one minute. My Garmin sets off a little chin at each transition. I stay to the left, raise my hand and call out "walking". The runners around me acknowledge my strategy and a couple of them even thank me for the warning. I have a plan and I'm sticking to it.

I see Heartburn Hill ahead of me, and the Wendy's to the right; it's closed. Bummer; I was hoping for a Frosty. Then at the top of the hill I see him: Elmo! I have to stop! The hill is no problem and I continue up and over. I start to pass a few people here and there.

By mile 10 I've forgotten that I am running and the thrill of the sights and sounds engulf me. It's a blur: spectators clapping and cheering, kids in trees looking down at us, families having bar-b-ques in their front yard cheering us on, biker bars open for business with scantily clad ladies offering up beers and hooting and hollering. It's amazing! I stay to the left and for every kids' outstretched hand, I try to give-em-five. I am wearing my Children's Hospital tank and when people see it they scream "Thank You Children's Runners" and other happy wishes. If I can't slap their hand I give them a thumbs up and big smile.



Then I hear it: that low hum that grows as we approach. It becomes a loud roar as we pass the dormitories. Yes, the Wellesley Girls are out in full force today. "Kiss me" signs and screams welcome us to mile 12. Thankfully they are along the right side of the course and I can hide (somewhat) from their screams. Some runners stop for a kiss or two, the rest of us push on. (Yes, I ran through my walk break at this point, and not because I wanted too; I just could not hear my Garmin's poor little chin over the ladies' cheers!)

The next thing I know we are passing over Route 95 (mile 16). Last chance to get on the



expressway. Gee, have we hit the Newton Hills yet? I guess so, because we are climbing! Again, I seem to be getting passed less now.

Then, there it is! The Newton Fire House! EXCELLENT. This is the famous right turn at mile 17, so I stop for a picture.



I know Heartbreak Hill is around here somewhere. Before that, though, I should point out that I had planned on taking four Gu-Gels at mile 5, 10, 15 and 20. In my planning I also decided to wear a skirt with no pockets so I put one gel in each arm warmer pocket and pinned two to my skirt. In the process of waving at the crowds one of the Gels in my arm warmer must have fallen out. So I only had 3 Gels. I took one at 5 and again at 10. I decide to take the next one at 17 and try to find munchies along the way. This would be the first time I take any food from the crowd. I am encouraged by the tradition of this race and feel comfortable taking Twizzlers, pretzels, and orange slices from the crowd; something I would never do at another race. I suppose it's part of the magic of Boston. These spectators are here each year. It's a tradition for them. This is Patriot's Day and Marathon Day. There is a deep trust between the crowd and the runners that I have not felt at other races.

As I run, I see we are at mile 20. I ask a spectator "Is this Heartbreak Hill?" She says "Yes!" And I scream "Great!" At this point I appear to be one of the few runners. I am passing people left and right – most are walking. My pace has stayed constant save the walk breaks. My Garmin chimes for a break and I decline to take it. I will NOT walk up Heartbreak Hill!

Merrily I continue up. I see a fellow Children's runner – she is walking and looks beat. I come up beside her and say "You are doing great, you look good, the hill is yours to take" She looks up and without changing expressions she starts to run. As I crest the hill an older runner comes up on my right and says "I heard you encouraging your friend back there and that's just what I needed. Thank you. Thank you!" And off he goes. Wow.

Just when I thought the girls at Wellesley had cornered the scream-volume market, we enter Boston University at mile 21. This time BOTH sides of the street are lined with college students. Okay, clearly drunk and rowdy college students. They push into the course and scream at us. Many cheer for the Hospital. And then I hear chanting behind me. One of their own is in the race and they must, simply must chant her name. And yes, some boys even jump in and run with her. Good Lord, get me through this in one piece!



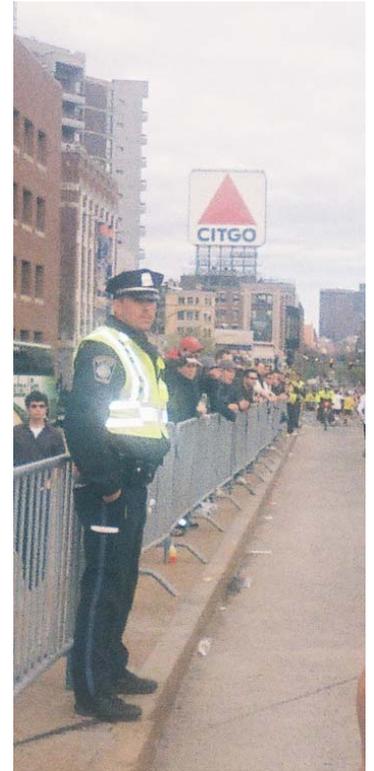
Then one of the Children's coaches spots me and runs with me for a mile. I tell him how much fun I am

having and he gives me a run down of what's to come. The coaches will run with each of us as they see us at this point to make sure we are doing okay. He leaves me when I give him the thumbs up. Then it happens.

Usually at mile 22 I get something – a slight tummy ache, calf ache or something. Nothing major, no wall, just “something”. Today my tummy is telling me something but I can't figure it out. So I look for a rest stop. Nothing in sight. I run on for a spell and find a medic tent at the bottom of a hill. I take a bio break, but nothing seems wrong. So I leave the medics and figure I'll just run until it either stops or I stop. About a quarter mile later, I get my second wind! Onward!

Mile marker 24. Are we really almost done? Ah shucks! I forge on. I love this course! I love this race! It's a beautiful day! I lost one of my arm warmers! Arg! Yes, I took off my gloves and tucked them in my skirt at about mile 10. Then I took off my arm warmers as the temps started to rise and tucked them in my skirt too. Now I have only one. Ah well. If that's the worst of today; I am ahead of the game.

Mile marker 25. There it is! The CITGO sign. It grows in my view. Wow and the skyline of Boston. Double-Wow! Must get some pictures. The Policeman does not seem amused!



Then the final right onto Hereford – the brownstones of Boston welcome us – and a quick right onto Boylston, next to the Convention Center. Are we here already? And there it is in the distance – the finish. I do a little happy dance and snap a picture, then sprint on to the finish. I am grinning ear to ear!

As I cross the line I am happy. The cheers from the crowd, the buzzing of the mats. It's amazing. And now to walk it off. I must say that the organizers have some of this right – there is ample space to walk after the race. At Marine Corps they put you almost immediately into a shoot and if you need to walk you are out of luck. Here you have room to move.

The first group of tables is handing our cold water. This would be fine, but the sun seems to have gone behind a cloud and now that I am not moving, I start to feel the chill. My friend Colleen is volunteering today handing out Mylar blankets – all I want to do is find her and a blanket! There she is right in front of me – screams and hugs of recognition and excitement follow. Then she wraps me in a blanket and tells me to get warm. I move on.



All I want is to get to my hotel. I can see it from where I am but must walk two blocks up and two over and two back to get there. I make my way through the reuniting families to my hotel. I can feel the cold in my hands and legs. I begin to shiver. This is not good. My chest it tight; breathing is hard. The wind is biting!

Children's has a suite in the hotel for the runners where they have medics, food and our clothing bags. I make my way to the suite and when they ask me what I need I whisper, "I am having trouble breathing." Two medics take me to a chair and check me out. I am so very thankful they were there. The combination of the cold air and drinking cold water were the cause, nothing major. I ask for something hot, but all they have is warm bottled water. It will do. I also get a big chocolate chip cookie. Yummy!

Having sufficiently recovered, I obtain my bag, thank everyone again, and take the elevator to my floor. No ice bath for me. No sir. I take a hot shower taking care not to get my legs too warm. Then I pull on the compression socks I had purchased at the Expo and snuggled into bed. The socks massage my worn-out calves and I get some rest. Ah! Sweet victory!

Well, I hope you enjoyed my report; I had fun writing it. This would not have been made possible without your support – both monetarily and emotionally. I look forward to running with (most) of you and wish you the very best health and happiness. Thank you again for your support: **Children's Hospital is most appreciative!**



Run on,

Val  
Finish Time 4:22:03, Mile Pace 10:00

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<sup>1</sup> The ultimate guide to the Boston marathon (Blog)