DCM 2016

Lead Up

Friday 28th I went for my tempo run (6k) – the last run in my training plan and then registered at the Expo. The next day I brought the kids to GAA as normal. My calf was not great – I began to get a sharp point in it about 10 days ago and after foam rolling and compression it was not going away, I was a little worried. Relaxed for the rest of the day, sipping water. Cousins were up that evening, my sister in law Liz was doing DCM too. We had homemade fajitas – chicken, lettuce, tomato, rice, cheese and salsa – very simple and it went down well. We had a little bit of cake (it was my birthday) and I ate a slice but made sure I didn’t eat too much. Stopped drinking water at about 9pm and didn’t drink water again until the start of the race.

Race Day

Slept well, woke a couple of times during the night and enjoyed the extra hour in bed. Porridge with chia seeds for breakfast and two cups of coffee. Headed in at about 7:50am with Liz. On the walk I could feel my calf. I had taken an antiinflammatory first thing and prayed that it would keep the pain at bay. It was a fairly seamless bag drop, said my goodbye and good luck to Liz and went into the Orange section. It was warm and the atmosphere was electric. Did some very gentle stretches and some motion movements more so to take up the time. It was now beginning to get more packed, stayed close to the 3:10 pacers. Met Colm Dempsey and Peter McGoey – we said a few words but we were all anxious and keen to get underway.

The gun cracked and we were off. A busy and slow start as expected. The green 3:10 balloons were a bit ahead but was happy to let things settle as long as they didn’t advance too much. It’s a pretty cool experience to run through the streets of Dublin and the crowds were great. I knew Helena and the girls would be in Stoneybatter so started making my way to the left hand side of the crowd in anticipation. Met with noisy encouragement in Stoneybatter and big shout out to my supporters. Now it was time to focus. Brought my own bottle of water with me so didn’t take a bottle at the first water station. Before I knew it we were in the Park on Chesterfield Ave on the heels of the 3:10 pacers. Was beside Peter McG now and we had a few words, still upbeat and having a joke about how one of the pacers balloons had already popped. Soon Jason Cooke was up beside us and we shared a few words, Colm was circling around too – it was pretty cool that four of us from 3D found ourselves together for this spell. We were all in good form. Atmosphere in Castleknock was amazing – the band were playing U2’s ‘Where the Streets…’ The hairs stood up on the back of my neck. I gave a big wave to my sister, niece Mia and nephew Mike on Myo’s corners – their mom, my older sister, was running too. Still going well. Soon we were back in the Park and downhill. The second pacer balloon caught a branch and popped.

Through Chapelizod and then St Lawerence’s Hill. I was taking it easy but without the visual cue of the balloons and without realising, I had eased past the 3:10 pacers. My effort was still controlled. Through well-kept Kilmainham and got a welcome shout out from Lochlann and Liz, another shout out from Eoin on the way to Dolphin’s Barn. Great crowds again and then it was the slow drag up Crumlin. I was at the tail end of the 3:00 – 3:10 cluster and it was fairly quiet, negatives began to fill that vacuum – am I getting a blister on my toe, is my hamstring starting to get tight? My calf was fine though. Up, up, up until the welcome crowds at walkinstown roundabout – atmosphere electric once more. I had taken water at every station bar the first and I took some additional from some kids on the side of the road. My belly was full of water but I was sweating a bit and could taste the salt around my mouth.

My gel strategy was to take @ 13k, @ 23k and @ 33k, I looked forward to each one and it helped break up the race. I continued on, still fairly controlled but at nice pace. My race plan was to put the effort in from 22k to 35k and then empty the tank in the final 7k. Just kept running, trying to savour the atmosphere and amazing support en route, slowly picking off runners one at a time. Clonskeagh was the expected drag it is, I slowled a little. I was nearly happy to see heart break hill as it is downhill to flat from there, although it looked extremely steep today. Tucked the head in, gently lent forward and plugged away. Let myself go on the downhill section, next on to the Stillorgan road to the UCD flyover. Fergal & Lochlann C gave me a shout out ‘looking comfortable’ – I felt good and it was motivating to hear. (Fergal later told me that I looked quite pale). Down past RTE, spotted Mark Waters – gave him a shout. Rounded the corner at Vincent’s took some water pouring it over my head. On to Merrion Road – only 3k to go… Suddenly I start to struggle. I’m losing power, my brain is saying ‘walk, walk, walk’. Come on goddammit you are nearly there – what about all those training sessions, you can do this. It’s just 3k, less than 14 minutes. I know this section inside out. I’m not cramping just exhausted, really exhausted – stay focused, keep moving. My pace is dropping – 4.35, 4:38, 4:42…. It feels like I’ve slowed to a crawl. I’m waiting for the 3:10 pacers to zip by. Crowds are building. I fight the negative thoughts and try to autopilot – one foot in front of the other as I pick off the metres. I breathe deeply and slowly, I’m afraid I’ll completely shutdown, it’s happened before. Coming up to the canal I know Helena and the girls will be there – I’m looking out for them. There they are– my brother-in-law David and his kids, Sarah and Eugey (dog), and then Helena and the girls – warm, smiling faces. I give a small clap and a limp thumbs up. 800m to go, half a mile, one Yasso… I’m cold but I know I’m there – I pass the canal and somehow find some energy to pick up the pace but I’m running on fumes now. 400m. Savour the crowd – there’s the finish ahead. 200m. I’m on the blue carpet… three, two, one – I’m over the line. I’m home. I walk 10 metres, find a space at the barriers, hold on, head down and breathe deeply for 30 seconds completely in daze. Then there’s a blue gloved arm around my waist, but before I’m asked if I’m ok I take stock and begin to walk on. “Well done” – “cheers” I say. I meet Frank – did he break 3? 3:02 - nearly there, he’ll get it next year. He meets a friend and the three of us share a moment on what we’ve accomplished. My time? 3:06:36 – I’m delighted, PB by 22 minutes. After a few minutes say to the lads that I’ll head on – get my medal and race tshirt, I’m thrilled and thank every volunteer on the way. It’s the march of the zombies to the baggage collection. I get my bag and take my time getting changed. I’m wet and frozen and glad I brought a hat. Call Helena and my Dad – they are delighted for me. Make my way to my family. I did it.

Learnings

* More hill training
* Lose more weight
* Broke away from the 3:10 pacers a little early, should have been more disciplined and waited until mile 13 / 14.

Splits Split Time

10k 00:44.53

Half 01:33.47

30K 02:12.11

Finish 03:06.36

Training

Followed a structured 14 week plan focusing on three workouts a week. For the purpose of the plan Marathon Pace (MP) is 10-15 secs faster than race day pace.

The sessions were as follows:

1. Tempo at MP – starting at 3 miles and building a mile a week peaking at 12 miles in week 10

2. Yassos 800s @ 3 mins – starting at 2 and adding one each week peaking at 10 in weeks 9 & 10.

3. Long easy run with MP finish – time based slow run peaking at 2 hours (22km) with a 10k MP finish, peaking at a total of 32k in weeks 9, 10 & 11

The sessions were the same each week, the only variable was how far you run. I chose an MP of 4.15 - 4.20 min/km in order to hit a race day pace of 4.30 min/km. The prerequisites for the plan were the ability to run a sub 19 min 5k (PB 18.07) and a consistent base of endurance running of at least 3 to 4 hours a week. I didn’t completely have the running base but reckoned my triathlon training would suffice.