

A Good Run Spoiled

by John Farrow

How come you can never find a good hole when you most need it? This is the story of my first race after three weeks of vacation during which I ran nary a step and was therefore wanting to ease slowly back into running and racing.

Too many times after a layoff I've come back too fast and hurt something. This time I was determined not to let this happen and decided to run a 10k to get in some miles and to force myself to keep to a moderate pace of eight minutes or so per mile, about 49 and a half minutes for the race.

Before the start, I actually enjoyed just hanging out and chatting with friends, instead of warming up and stretching and focusing on the race. And when it came time to line up, I moved towards the back.

Once under way, I found an easy stride without a hint of strain. Several friends asked "What are you doing back here?" After I explained that I hadn't run in almost a month, we discussed each other's vacations, latest injuries, training and what-not. The first mile went by in 7:54. Perfect.

In the next mile the pack thinned out a bit and jokes about people making their move were common. Two miles in 15:46. Just slightly ahead of schedule and everything felt great.

Much of the next mile was spent daydreaming about nothing in particular and watching some ducks on a pond swimming at the head of perfect Vs on the calm water. An elderly Labrador looked on lazily, as if to say "Have your fun now, guys. In my prime I could have taken you for breakfast!"

Friends started coming by after the turn-around and I called out encouragement. Most were concentrating and running hard. Conversation was more difficult as everyone began to bear down, so I stopped trying to talk to anyone and watched some birds swooping.

In the last mile, I was still running comfortably even as most people around me were picking up the pace. I resolved not to sprint. No sense pulling something after such a pleasant run. And then it hit me.

Nearing the finish line, I could hear the race announcer calling out names and finishing times. Oh, no! What if he calls out my name and the time

I'm going to run? He wouldn't do that, would he? "48:05" boomed out from the finish line up ahead.

I'm right on the pace I wanted to run, but maybe this wasn't such a good idea after all. Maybe I should have just gone out for a leisurely run alone instead.

I try to hide in a group of high school kids so the announcer won't pick up my race number, but with a 100 yards to go they sprint for the finish. All of a sudden I'm naked.

Oh please, God, don't let him see me! I can run faster than this! You know I can! I'll run faster next week, I swear! Just give me a break this one time! Oh, please, don't let him see me oh God oh God oh God oh puh-leeaze **"John Farrow 49:35"** No! Wait! Let me explain! Arrgghh!!□

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