

Cellcom Green Bay Marathon diary: Doug Landwehr

May 14, 2008

Editor's note: The Green Bay Press-Gazette is following several runners training for the half and full Cellcom Green Bay Marathon events May 18. Here are diary entries from Doug Landwehr of Green Bay:

I am a 54-year-old native of Green Bay who started running about six years ago.

My progression was typical: the Bellin Run, half-marathons at Cellcom and Fox Valley and then I tried the full Cellcom marathon two years ago (2006). I completed it in 4:47. (I just died from mile 18 onward, but lived to tell the tale.)

I ran the half last year in 2:09, so want to try the full marathon again this year and come in under 4:30 (10+ minute miles).

Assuming I am able to complete the training (a struggle this winter because of the weather), I hope to toe up to the starting line with the full-marathon crowd in May.

March 19

My thermometer shows more than 50 degrees, which is a far cry from most of the outdoor conditions we have had this past winter. Inch-thick layers of ice on sidewalks and streets made running conditions treacherous. Most runners handle the cold just fine.

We layer our clothes and have super-nifty wicking material that keeps the heat in and the moisture (sweat) out. We stay warm.

Running in snow is like running in sand, so if you are really good at visualization you can imagine running along the white sand surf of a Caribbean shoreline.

Ice is harder to visualize í Your running stride changes when you hit patches of ice. On clear pavement you should have good even strides but on ice, you change to little steps to avoid falls. Too many of the runs (especially after that early morning ice storm in February) were more little steps than strides.

Thank goodness the pavement is now clear of ice, with only occasional puddles from melting banks ô a big improvement over the literal frozen tundra that we had to slip/slide on during the past two months.

March 21

12 mile run (East River Drive); 27-degrees, light north wind, overcast

I was able to get the long run in today before the snow storm that seems to be creeping across the state ó AGAIN! Glad I don't live in Madison this year.

This was the longest run in a couple of weeks due to a vacation and then a bout with a very nasty flu bug. When you begin training the running schedule always looks very promising and clean placed on the calendar in your palmpilot, then reality nibbles away at it. Work schedules, family errands, time off and sickness and injury make hash of your plans drawn in January.

I am in awe of people who run at 4:30 in the morning or 11:30 at night to get their training in. That's not me. I try to stick to the schedule, but if it doesn't happen, well there's always next year. Right now training is going pretty good. I am keeping pace with training that got me through the 2006 Full Cellcom, so I guess I'll be OK. Tomorrow, as they say, is another day.

March 23

4 mile run (Cass Street River Trail); 25 degrees, clear, little wind

I ran by 8 a.m. Easter church-goers at St. Mary's of the Angel parish during my morning run. It's a lot colder and snowier than I remember other Easter Sundays. Last year, according to my running journal it was 57-degrees, compared with 30s this year.

An odd thing has been happening at holiday family gatherings. The conversation (after catching up on what nieces and nephews are doing) will turn to exercise. Who is training for what run. Who has injuries so can't run. It's been a gradual process that started with my brother, Scott, and his family who are all runners and the mania has spread to the rest of the family.

My niece Melissa was proud to say that she ran in her first 5K race (3.1 miles) and was planning on training for the Bellin 10K Run in June. I encouraged her to try the Cellcom 5K. She said she didn't know the 5K people also ran through Lambeau ó that's an incentive to keep training. It's good to see young people develop the interest in running at an early age. The trick is to keep up the enthusiasm.

March 26

8 mile run (Allouez Ave to Target Store); 30 degrees, clear, WSW wind 0-5 mph

The mid-week or medium run in the marathon training schedule has been bumped up to 8 miles. Since the Fox River Trail is not yet open, I needed to find another route on city streets. In the past you would drive a car about randomly and measure distance by watching the odometer. Now the Internet has an easier method.

MapMyRun.com (a free site) allows you to map a route, note mile markers and topography, and

print it out for a run. Today I started near the downtown hospitals and wanted to try running east on Allouez Ave. The road has been redone in the past couple of years and has nice sidewalks and even a wide asphalt path between Bellevue Ave. and Lime Kiln Road.

You mark a starting point and (in this case) a turn around point (the Target/Copps stores) and measure out an 8-mile run. Then all you have to do is run it. The route was nice (except for an area west of the Allouez Ave./Bellevue stop sign which did not have connecting sidewalks so forced you into the street), the day was clear and the run was smooth. What more could you want?

March 28

14-mile run (Green Bay to De Pere to GB); 25-degrees, clear, NW wind 5 mph

The run today started great. I began at the 0-marker on the Fox River Trail and ran north on the city trail, crossed the Main St. Bridge and then ran south on S. Broadway and Fort Howard Drive to De Pere. Up George Street to Webster and then through the Abbey to join the Fox River Trail at Fox Point Boat Landing.

From that point until I reached St. Francis Park in Green Bay, the trail was hit and miss. Well, mainly miss because it has not seen a plow all winter. Drifts of stubborn ice and crinkly snow 12-18" deep for hundreds of feet block the trail and it looks like the downspout from the 172 bridge is aimed at the trail centerline because there is a 12" mass of ice runoff just north of the bridge. The best you can do is carefully follow icy footprints through the snow.

I have read about how overweight we all are and how we ought to get outside and exercise. Well, the sidewalks and streets are in good shape. Green Bay has done its part on the city section and in other parks, but where are Allouez and Brown County? How much would it take to occasionally clear the Fox River Trail so it can be used more in the winter and earlier in the spring? I am not talking about every snowfall, but going over it a couple times a month to keep the snow levels reasonable so the sun, wind and temperatures can do their job. Right now, parts of the trail won't be open until the end of April. That's a shame.

March 30

4-mile run (Cass Street Trail); 35 degrees, overcast, south wind 5 mph

Christmas came to spring last week when UPS delivered my new running shoes. I order the shoes in March hoping to avoid most of the gunk and slush, and still have time to break them in before the Cellcom race in May. There are lots of paraphernalia you can buy as a runner, but all you really need are a good pair of shoes which should be replaced at least every year or if you are an intense runner every 250-500 miles.

When I first started running I bought the usual department store brand and suffered with aches and pains through a summer of running. My brother, a runner, heard about that and said I should buy a decent pair of shoes. Of course I knew my shoe size, but not much more. You choose your

shoes by the arch of your foot, your weight, and number of running miles per week.

Technically I over pronate (which is a polite way of saying I have flat feet), so I need a motion control shoe.

The runners catalog gives me lots of brand and style options for the motion control shoe. I stayed with Brooks (my 2007 choice) and laced them up for the first time today. At first they ached on the outside of the foot but after a mile or so it was as though we had been friends for years. That's how you want the shoe to fit: you want the support you need, but you don't want to notice the shoe. The good brands do that for you.

April 2

8-mile run Allouez Ave. to Target; 35 degrees, clear, no wind

While running today it seemed like the yards were empty. Looking around I realized that the political signs that had multiplying like rabbits have evaporated. Yesterday was the state spring election and that made me think about the all or nothing outcomes of political races. You get the most votes, you win. You don't get a medal for second, third or fourth, even though you put in a lot of work.

Road racing is not like that. When I enter a race, I don't expect to win.

That's for the kids who are fast and fit. Now my goal is to finish the race and where I place doesn't matter. I have come in fourth place in my age group (just missing a third-place trophy) in a couple of small races (mainly because they didn't have many people sign up in my age group), but competing with yourself is the reward, not a trophy. You don't run against people in a road race, you run with them.

The main reason I run a race is to give myself a goal for training. I might want to get a certain time, but if I don't, hey no big deal. Finishing the race, especially a marathon, is an elite accomplishment in itself. After all how many people can say they did that? And no matter where you finish, unlike a political race, you do get a really cool medal at the finish line.

April 4

16-mile run (Bellin + Fox River Trail), 40 degrees, clear, no wind

It takes me about 15-20 minutes to get warmed up during a run. Ankles pop, knees creak, I am puffing like a smoker unhappy about being propelled down the sidewalk. But the initial heaviness in the legs usually goes away.

Today, the heaviness stayed during most of the run. At mile 3 (Margaritaville on the Bellin Course), it still felt like my legs had concrete cores. My pace was uneven, and at that time 16 miles seemed like a cruel fantasy, not something that was going to happen today. At mile 5 I had a PowerGel packet (vanilla is my flavor) washed down with Gatorade and felt a little better. At mile 6+ I joined the Fox River Trail and headed south to with a steady pace on the smooth

asphalt, but still no life in the legs.

At the turnaround in De Pere and another PowerGel, I was having trouble adding up the mileage (6+5=???). When I am tired math skills escape me, but then I remembered I had figured out the mileage beforehand, so I felt better. My job this morning was just to keep moving in the forward direction. I trudged on and actually felt a little better at 11 and 12.

During the last two miles, I just tried to keep the pace up while still having something left over at the end. I finished the 16-miles but may need to readjust my eating routine before the really long runs. Maybe I need more fuel for the 2-hour+ runs. Or maybe this was just one of those days. We'll see.

April 9

9-mile run (Green Isle Park/Allouez Ave); 35 degrees, damp, overcast. SSW wind

I needed to add a mile to my eight-mile jaunt, so I cut over to Green Isle Park and ran north on the Resch Family Trail that connects the park to Allouez Ave. The Resch Trail is a mostly asphalt trail following the East River, though there are a couple of sections of boardwalk over wetlands. It makes a very nice running path, even with the light snow covering the boards this morning.

The trails that we take for granted around the city make walking, running, biking and skating a lot more accessible to residents. The Fox River Trail follows the abandoned rail line from Green Bay to De Pere to Greenleaf on the near east side and the Mountain Bay Trail follows the rail line north and west of the city toward Wausau. The Resch Family Trail follows along the East River in Green Bay and Bellevue as a suburban backyard alternative. All of these trails get a lot of use in the summer and on weekends.

The many parks of the city and county have their own shorter trails in addition to some longer gems like the Reforestation Camp, the Wildlife Sanctuary and the Cofrin Arboretum Trail on the UWGB campus. One trail that I discovered this winter starts at East Lawn Park and winds its way to Cass Street, with open athletic fields on one side and the East River on the other. I think we are very lucky to have so many walking and running options within easy distance and it certainly gives you lots of different routes to train on.

April 11

12-mile run (Fox River Loop); 35-degrees, rain/mist; north wind

Last week's long run was not a happy time, in fact it made me wonder if I should take on the marathon this year and go for the half instead. We had a family gathering on Saturday night and I mentioned this to a niece who is working toward a bachelor's degree in athletic training. I told her Friday's run did not go well and I was still very stiff. "Did you stretch?" she asked. Ahhh, no, I said. Then she gave me one of those looks that young girls practice for the time when they are married and their beloved does something really dumb. "If you stretch after you run, you'll

feel better,ö she suggested.

Then she asked, öDid you eat something before and after the run?ö I had a positive answer for that: öYes I did. Banana and orange juice before and cereal after.ö That seemed to placate her, but as we talked we decided that I should try to eat a little more before the run. Perhaps that and the PowerGel packets during the run would keep me fueled and fit and help me avoid hitting the wall before I tie my shoes.

I took her advice this past week. I ate a little more before each run, paid more attention to warming up, and did stretching immediately after. It seems to have worked. I had no trouble with the 9-mile run on Wednesday and today's 12-mile run was rather smooth. I guess this is why you train. It's obvious that you train for your cardiovascular system, and for your muscles, but you also train on what shoes to buy, what to wear for weather conditions, and how to fuel for and recover from weekly long runs. A little help from a niece who knows what she's doing doesn't hurt either.

April 13

4-mile run (Cass St. Trail), 30-degrees, clear, north wind 5-10 mph

Today is a gorgeous, blue-sky day though 30-degree temperatures and a strong north wind freeze morning puddles. The cloudless sky is a good break after a week of Seattle weather topped off by a couple inches of snow on Saturday. I was lucky to get my long run in on Friday and only had a little rain and mist to run through.

Today is a short run, so after a mile of warming up, I decided to do some speed training. Of course in my case öspeedö is a relative term since I train at a poky 10-mile pace. To speed train, I break the run into sections.

I find a tree or sign about 100 yards away and run to it at a faster than usual pace. When I reach it I look for another object about 100 yards away and run to it a little faster and, if I am able, I keep increasing the pace with each section. After third or fourth gear I drop back to a slow run to catch my breath before resuming the usual pace. Then I repeat the cycle through the rest of the run.

The idea, the experts tell us, is that we need to learn to run at a faster speed if we want faster times. With training you are able to run longer at a faster pace and thus a faster time. Two years ago I ran the marathon at an average pace of 10.57 (after a nice first half I hit öthe wallö about mile 14), so if I could increase my pace to 10.30 then my time would improve from 4:47 to 4:35. My goal this year is 4:30 and a lot less pain, and I have a lot of training left to do.

April 16

9-mile run (Green Isle Park/Allouez Ave); 45-degrees, clear, east wind 5-10 mph

I was finally able to switch to running shorts this morning. The long sweat pants that I train in during the winter are comfortable and I could run a race in them (and I do such as the ice and snowy Seroogy's Valentines Day Run in February), but it's good to get into lighter clothes with

temperatures in the mid-40s. I am still wearing two layers on top: a long-sleeve cotton shirt and moisture-wicking T-shirt or sleeveless underneath. That cotton long-sleeve shirt has got to go, weather permitting of course.

Clothing choice on shorter runs are not usually a problem, but your wardrobe needs some thought when you are doing the longer runs or planning for marathon race day. In past years, I had worn running shorts and one or two layers on top depending on weather. My racing top in colder weather (such as last year's Cellcom) had been a bike jersey from Rome with the words "Italia" stitched across the front. I'm not Italian, but I enjoyed shouting "Bongiorno" to people along the course.

Unfortunately the Italia jersey had been worn and washed too many times and was retired last year, so I am without a fun top. I have some generic synthetic shirts and sleeveless shirts but nothing with the flair of Italia.

If I want something new, I need to purchase it soon, try it out on runs and wash it a few times before race day. The Cellcom is almost one month away and getting closer.

April 18

18.5 mile run (marathon route); 43-degrees, overcast and damp. NE wind 5-10 mph

18 miles on the 18th and only one month away from the Cellcom Marathon. The forecast was rain so I dressed a little heavier to stay warm in wet 40-degree temperatures and decided to wear last year's shoes so my new ones wouldn't get wet and dirty. That might have been a mistake. My knees and legs are unusually sore after pounding the pavement for over 3 hours. Is that because I am 54 years old, a bit overweight and haven't done this distance for two years since my last marathon or is it because of the shoes? Yep, probably the shoes -- and it didn't rain.

I ran a lot of the route that we will be running on race day. Biemert to 9th to Wood and Shady are some of my favorite parts of the course (along with the trail). The streets take us through southwest side residential neighborhoods that I biked in and drove through in high school. On race day they are the early part of the race so everyone is relaxed, chatting and cruising under the tree canopy. It's a good start.

Easterly Morris Ave takes me back toward the stadium and the industrial section of the race as we run past a variety of blue-collar businesses on Potts Ave. (appropriately named) and turn right toward De Pere past Georgia-Pacific (where I worked during college summers), the Railroad Museum, river condo and office developments, Schneider National parking lot and rounding into De Pere past the Fairgrounds (and a lot of Friday night dirt track memories there). Over the new bridge and back on the Fox River Trail for a 4-mile closing run home.

Cellcom includes a little bit of the Green Bay area in each of its sections.

You run the race and see a lot of what we are about as a city and community.

It's a good route and, after all, it would get boring to just run around Lambeau Field 53 times.

April 20

4-mile run (Cass Street Trail); 46-degrees, clear, NE Wind 5 mph

Runners in training get to a point where a distance that was once challenging is now pretty easy to do ó especially during the shorter, õrest dayö runs. The rest day runs are those times you want to get outside, stretch the legs and just go at an easy pace without pushing fast/slow intervals, or trying to reach the wall with ridiculous distances. Youõre adding mileage without the stress. Iõve noticed that õrestö distance varies by the race distance.

When the 10K (i.e., the Bellin Run) is the goal then a two or three-mile run is a rest day. To really push it you run, four, five or, OMG, six miles at one time, though sometimes you save the long six mile run for the race itself. After all, you donõt want to stress yourself and break something you õll need before the race.

The half-marathon extends that rest day to four or six miles. Enough to break a sweat but you are still not pushing it like you might with an eight, ten or OMG 12 mile run. The marathon distance extends the rest day even more to four to 10 miles. Twelve is now a comfortable run, but late in the training it is no longer the challenge it was compared to the dreaded 18 and 20 mile runs.

It seems to me the point is not the distance you run, but to do your best based on race at the end of the tunnel ó so to speak. As long as you are challenging yourself, the 2-mile, 5K or 10K runs can be as difficult as the half, the marathon or the ultra. The achievement of a weekend runner is to be able to plan, organize, time manage and push to complete a distance in competition that was only a dream a few months before. If you do that, you win. Time and distance don't really matter.

April 24

20-mile run (marathon route); 56 degrees, partly cloudy, gusty SE wind

The 20-mile run is dress rehearsal for the marathon. You prepare for this longest training run of the schedule the same way you prepare for the marathon in 3+ weeks. I hydrated the day and night before the run, packed packets of PowerGel and filled the water bottle to the spout with Gatorade Endurance. My running outfit was simple: shoes, socks, shorts and a nice top that even matches the shorts ó the height of marathon fashion. The iPod Shuffle was charged up, new songs added and resorted, and I also had a cell phone, a \$10 bill and emergency ID in case I needed to take a cab home from the farthest point, or just keeled over and am found by a street sweeper.

I had a lot of trouble with the 14-mile and 16-mile runs during my training, so I approached this run with caution and preparation. The 18-mile run last week was pretty good, but I know the 20 can be something else. On the other hand, if you complete this run, then you have a lot of confidence for The Day.

The first couple of miles I was just trying to stay loose and find my stride. The iPod volume was

skittish so I ended up holding it until I had a volume level that I liked and then when I tucked it inside the pocket in my shorts, I hit the +volume and had to start over again. My water bottle was full and heavy, so it kept bashing my behind and moving my utility belt around.

By mile 5 everything had settled down into a good rhythm and I had my first PowerGel packet. I decided to have the vanilla pudding at 5-mile intervals to keep energy flowing to the muscles. By mile 7 I finally found a good sustainable stride ó I thought ó for the distance. At mile 8 and 9, my left knee joint was giving me some pain. It felt like something was out of place inside, but a combination of walking and side-of-the-road stretching made it runnable, though still with some pain, until mile 10 (another PowerGel packet) when it became just a dull ache and then went away.

At mile 15+ (the last PowerGel) I was almost blown off the De Pere bridge ó my it gets windy up there -- and picked my way through De Pere street construction (again) to the trail. Once I was on the trail, I was home. The trail is sheltered from most of the SE wind and what there was was pushing me home. Miles 16, 17 and 18 went by quickly and then I realized I only had 2 miles to go. The pace was good, the weather (though windy) was fine and I finished the 20 with still a lot left. Today, I could have completed 26.2 miles. Thank you Carol LeGate for a great training schedule!

Now, a couple of hours later (after stretching and refueling), I still feel good. The long runs of the training are done and now I have easier weeks ahead. I want to work on speed on the shorter runs, but I've done the main long training to get me to the finish line. Will I make my goal of 4:30? I don't know, but I suspect that I won't feel as beat up as I was during my first marathon. A little experience, and a good training schedule, goes a long way ó even 20 miles.

April 30

7.75-mile run (Abbey Loop); 40 degrees, clear, no wind

This is the last run of April, always the highest mileage month of the Cellcom training schedule. I ran a different route today on sidewalks south on Webster to the Abbey, through the Abbey to Fox Point Landing and then returning home on the trail. I try different routes and combinations of routes to keep the running interesting and fresh. The morning was cold but no wind, so it was a nice change from the past couple of blustery runs.

You build your mileage from a base in January, up it a little in February, survive the change of seasons in March and then in April really put on the miles with long runs of 16, 18 and 20 miles. The theory is if you increase mileage gradually you will log training distances that you could not have attempted at the beginning of the year, and avoid stress injuries and complaining muscles. If you do follow the schedule (for the most part) and are lucky, you can begin May in shape and ready for the final training push.

Running gods willing, I think that's where I am right now.

May 2

12-mile run (River Loop); 48 degrees, rain/mist; E wind 5-10 mph

I had been very lucky to avoid the weekend rain that has plagued the Prevea Runs on Saturday, until today. The weather was overcast and misty and then a respectable spring rain for the last quarter of the run. Not to worry though, once you are running and sweating, the rain doesn't affect you unless it comes with strong winds and lightning. Squishy shoes and dodging worms on the sidewalk can be annoying.

In fact, I would prefer to run in a light rain or mist than under clear skies and 70-degree temperatures, which is one reason why the spring-time Cellcom Race (16 days and counting!) is so attractive. The entire race was run in a downpour a few years back when I ran my first half-marathon. I remember the race was delayed a half-hour because of a strong thunderstorm moving through the city and the runners waited out the thunder-front in the shelter of Washington Commons (we started downtown that year).

At a signal from organizers, we all jogged out to the Main Street Bridge to start the race. The runners were drenched by a downpour on the bridge, and it was still thundering around us, while dignitaries under umbrellas at the starting line gave rah-rah speeches that we could not hear because of the wind and rain. We were impatient to start running because, one, then we would no longer be a 4,000-person lightning target on the highest point in that part of the city, and two, we knew we would be warmer once we started running. Your working muscles keep you warm. Eventually the gun sounded, the race started and the rain just became part of the scenery, like today.

May 7

6 miles (Bellin route); 61 degrees, overcast, E wind 5 mph

My 6-mile route followed the traditional Bellin Run 10K: Webster south to the double hills on Greene to Green Isle Park, River Drive, then St. Joseph, Libal, into the neighborhood streets of east Green Bay past Astor Park, and on to the hospitals. The run is a mix of sidewalks and streets and one really, really big downhill sprint. Traffic was busy this morning, but as usual this is a pleasant route.

The Bellin Run was the beginning of my running career. I had done phy-ed running in high school but no track or cross country so when the Bellin Run was initiated many years ago, I ran a couple of times with minimal training and was sore for weeks after. Then for 25 years I watched from the sideline.

About six years ago the Fox River Trail was opened and I began running again with the goal of completing Bellin Run. I reasoned if you trained a little for the 10K then you would be in reasonably good shape for summer fun.

I am still training with a race in mind (11 days to go!), it's just the distances have gotten a little longer, but as I think of it, if it wasn't for the Bellin, I may not have started to run at all.

May 9

8 miles (Fox River Trail); 48 degrees, overcast/mist, N wind 5 mph

Today's route was entirely on the Fox River Trail, which is a switch for me this year. In past years I had trained almost exclusively on the trail.

There are a lot of advantages for a runner: no cars to dodge, soft asphalt surface, no hills, distance marks every ½ mile and restrooms every other mile, river bank scenery (flora and fauna) with the occasional boat or kayak, and lots of fellow runners, walkers, skaters and bikers. But after my first marathon, I thought the trail might have been a little too mellow and did not prepare me for a 26.2 mile street course.

So this year, I have run very few miles on the trail and instead have explored streets and other park pathways around the city. Weekly runs have included hills, bridges and all kinds of neighborhoods since January, including much of the Cellcom course that I will be running in 9 days. I think the ups and downs of driveways and street curbs, starting and slowing for traffic, and especially the miles on concrete rather than asphalt have made me a stronger runner this year. Judging by my mile times this morning, it has certainly made me a faster runner than 2 years ago.

May 11

4 miles (Cass Street Trail); 48 degrees, overcast & light rain, N wind 5-10 mph

Today was another rain test. If it is raining for the race in one week (and I hope not!), I now know what to wear. This seven-day forecast this morning only extended to Saturday, so Sunday the 18th is still a mystery. I am hoping for a 50-degree start, clear skies and a light breeze from the south.

I would allow the temperatures to increase to about 60 by noon. That could be near ideal conditions and after the last couple of years the race organizers, volunteers and runners deserve a break from Mother Nature.

By the end of the week, I will be on first name basis with all the Weather Channel personalities and will probably be able to repeat expected barometric pressure readings as well as detail the path of the jet stream for race day. One reason for a marathon runner's obsession over weather is that is one of the final unknowns before the start of the race. Everything else has been trained for or planned out. I know what to wear, how much to drink, what to eat and how I am going to feel at various miles marks.

Another reason for the obsession is everyone is on a taper schedule (which means runners have drastically cut down weekly mileage) so we have a lot more time on our hands. We talk to family

members we haven't seen since January, begin work on the summer Honey-Do list, put in some extra time on the job, and think about running 26.2-miles in just one week. It's going to be a busy week ó but it can't go fast enough for me.

May 14

4 miles (Fox River Trail); 50 degrees, overcast & light rain, NE wind 10 mph

Well, that's done. I completed the final training run and have made it through the January-May marathon training schedule without a major injury or setback. There's not much between me and the starting line on Sunday, though I did have a running nightmare where I saw the post at the end of today's training run and then suddenly twist/sprain an ankle and miss the race trying to avoid a gold and green woodchuck that tried to tackle me.

There have been many ups and downs during the training this winter and what little spring we had, and more than a few rainy days, but that is all past.

A friend asked if I was nervous about the race this weekend. I said not yet because I have been busy, but as the weekend draws closer and you see more signs of race preparation then butterflies will probably start. I see that mile markers have been sprayed on the trail at the 20 and 21 mile points and it looks like set-up work is starting in the Lambeau Field parking lot. And the Press-Gazette is highlighting a local runner each day who is also completing his or her training for the race.

Months of preparation by the runners, organizers and volunteers is building toward that opening gun. We runners have it easy. Our work is done and all that's left is a lot of fun on the weekend. Look for us at the starting line. We'll be the ones with the big smiles on our faces.