

# Update: Scenes from the marathon course

By Malavika Jagannathan and Patti Zarling [Emjaganna@greenbaypressgazette.com](mailto:Emjaganna@greenbaypressgazette.com) and [pzarling@greenbaypressgazette.com](mailto:pzarling@greenbaypressgazette.com) May 18, 2008

Motivated by a slew of personal desires but undaunted by the biting wind, runners, walkers and supporters turned out in the thousands for Sunday's Cellcom Green Bay Marathon.

Temperatures were in the mid-40s at race time with north winds of about 9 miles an hour and rose to about 50 two hours later, although the winds picked up, too.

Here are a few of the stories from the 8,000-plus participants and the few thousand supporters who lined area streets from the Fox River Trail to the west side of Green Bay:

## Far and wide

Although the marathon has a local flavor — after all, it is called "Touch the Tundra" and prominently features Lambeau Field — it attracts runners from outside the area.

Andy Thomson of Matteson, Ill., near Chicago, decided to enter the marathon because he's gotten good feedback from other runners about the race on various Web sites.

"The race has a reputation of being very well run," said Thomson who has run in two Chicago Marathons. "I think the facility (Lambeau Field) is what makes it work."

Thomson finished the 26.2-mile race in 4 hours, 3 minutes, 9 seconds.

Likewise, 15-year-olds Sarah Ketz and Allie Ekkebus from Naperville, Ill. were attracted by the premise of running through Lambeau Field.

"My family are all Packers fans," Ekkebus said. "Running through the stadium is just fun. We hope it warms up, though."

They finished the 5-kilometer (3.1-mile) race in 36:40.

## In Matthew's memory

Seventeen members of Matthew McKay's family ranging from 18 months to 64 years donned his favorite color — orange — and took part in the 5K and half-marathon in his memory.

McKay, 5, was killed by a drunk driver in January when he was sledding on a hill in front of his home in Arcadia in western Wisconsin. His parents Mark and Sue McKay, along with the rest of his family, decided to dedicate the race to Matthew, many of them taking part in their first run or walk.

“The support we’ve gotten from across the state has been incredible,” said Mark McKay, who took part in the 5K. “I don’t run. I don’t walk. It was my first time ever.”

Mark McKay, 39, finished the 5K in 54:40.

### **The 10K mark**

The 6.2-mile mark at the corner of Ninth Street and West Point Road west of U.S. 41 was full of raucous spectators by the start of the race, said Kris Vollner, who lives on corner of Ninth and Wood Court.

“It’s kind of a ritual for us,” Vollner said. “It’s hard to ignore the noise out there.”

Though they’re usually still in their pajamas, Vollner and the rest of her family have made a tradition of watching race leaders speed past.

About 200 people were gathered nearby at First Baptist Church, 2421 West Point Road, which was one of several stations on the route providing water and other aid to runners.

Brien Kumbalek of Appleton was one of many supporters gathered at this corner as he waited with his 7-year-old son and his 9-year-old daughter, holding encouraging signs for wife Christy, 38, who was running the 13.1-mile half-marathon.

“They’re up a little earlier than usual,” Kumbalek said. “But they’re excited to see their mom run past.”

She finished in 1:55:28.

Other spectators held up signs and shouted encouraging words to runners as they turned the corner from Ninth Street onto Wood Lane.

### **Like father, like daughter**

For father and daughter Gary Ostrowski, 49, and Joanne Telfer, 26, the support at the 10K mark at Ninth Street and West Point Road was a highlight of their half-marathon run.

“The fans were just great,” Ostrowski said. “Running through the nice residential streets just made it a nice run.” He’s run two other half marathons before in Appleton and Ashland, but was particularly overwhelmed by the fan support on Sunday.

For Telfer, who ran her first half-marathon, hearing the cheers from passersby helped her focus on the goal ahead of her.

Ostrowski, of Rosholt, finished in 2:07:34. Telfer, of Fremont, finished in 2:15:37.

## Here for the party

Dave Schmidt, 30, of Black River Falls, who completed his first half-marathon, said his goal simply was to not walk during any part of the event.

“It wasn’t as bad as I thought it would be,” he said. “And I beat my practice time by 25 minutes.”

He finished in 2:22:34.

Heading into the Lambeau Field bowl for the final lap was “an adrenalin” rush, Schmidt said. And as the beer and brats served after the race?

“That’s why we chose this one,” he joked.

Joan Blair-Dick, 50, of Bettendorf, Iowa, traveled with friends to participate in the half-marathon. After completing their run ó Blair-Dick finished in 2:08:06 -- they stood near the finish line, enthusiastically cheering even as the final marathoners trickled through.

“It really helps for runners to hear that cheering and words of encouragement,” she said. “It helps them make that last push.”

She intends a return visit to the marathon.

“This is a great run, very well organized and executed,” she said, then admitted, “And I did touch your tundra.”

“I’ve enjoyed cheering the Packers and watching Brett Favre play, so I had to.”

## Almost there

“I’m dying,” Marcie Harris, 33, of De Pere said at the 25-mile point of her first marathon. “But I’m almost there.”

She’d done two half-marathons before, but said her “crazy friends” in her running club encouraged her to do the full marathon. She finished in 4:12:01.

And she said she’d do it again.

Susan Orr of Rockford, Ill., stood at the 25-mile mark, waiting with camera in hand for Tina Lake, her boyfriend’s daughter, to turn the corner.

“We left at 3 a.m. to drive up here,” she said. “I give Tina a lot of credit for doing this.” Lake, 35, finished in 4:13:13.

Debbie Hirvela of the Green Bay Parrothead club helped as a volunteer at the water station at the 25-mile mark. Jimmy Buffett music came from speakers, and volunteers sported tropical shirts

and leis.

“I think it’s great,” she said. “Even the walkers. They all are doing great.”

“This is the mile stretch and we try to pep them up and keep them going by telling them it’s not too much further.”

### Hitting “the wall”

Marathoners hit the 20-mile point near St. Francis Park in Allouez along the Fox River Trail. There, members of Spring Lake Church, many wearing “Go the distance” T-shirts, stood with cups of water, cookies and fruit for weary, but determined runners.

An inflatable arch marked the runners’ “wall,” and music kept the atmosphere lively. Nine-year-old Sammy Wilger stood on the edge of the trail with cookies and fruit as runners passed by.

“I think they like the oranges I hand out because I’m careful to take only the best ones with no spots,” Wilger said.

As the competitors ran by, they “looked tired,” he said. “We say things like ‘Good job.’”

Wilger said he’d “probably” like to run a marathon someday.

That’s something his dad, Dennis, said he’d like to follow up on.

“We’ve been talking about maybe doing something like that,” he said. “Starting with something smaller.”

Sunday was the first time the family had been involved with the marathon, he said.

“You see some people just smiling,” Dennis Wilger said. “I think it’s great.”

Jessica Francar, 17, of De Pere ran the half-marathon, then came to the 20-mile mark to cheer on other runners.

“It was really good,” she said of the half-marathon. “It was pretty easy.”

She finished in 2:17:17.

She’ll consider running a full marathon in the future, she said, and wanted to support those who did.

## Keeping young

Don Kloehn, 65, of Hortonville, power-walked the half-marathon. He's done the Cellcom Green Bay 5K a few times, but Sunday was his first go at the half-marathon. He's done four of five other half-marathons, he estimated, and many 10Ks.

"I enjoy doing it," said Kloehn, who cheered for marathoners at the finish line late into the race. He finished in 3:40:50.

He has a number of other walk/runs to complete in coming weeks.

"Then I'm going to take a break from this and enjoy my bicycle," he said.

"I've had a ball today," Kloehn said. "The runners are an inspiration to me. And events like this keep me young."

## They let him in Lambeau?

One look at Scott Moran and you'd have to wonder whether he was rubbing it in.

Moran, 28, of Hoboken, N.J., wore a New York Giants cap and shirt as he ran the marathon.

The Giants, of course, defeated the Green Bay Packers in the NFC championship game at Lambeau Field in January.

Moran finished in 3:30:45.

-- Jeff Ash/Press-Gazette