//

New Mexico Blog: 12-18-10 Lucky No. 13?

Since I was a little tyke I have always liked the number 13 - from my soccer jersey in kindergarten to my volleyball jersey in high school I have repeatedly chosen what some consider to be an unlucky number. So, would our 13th state half marathon prove to be lucky or unlucky?

Shortly before Christmas Kristin and I ventured down to Las Cruces, New Mexico with hopes of placing a nice green check mark next to another Southwestern state (our goal of completing 50in100 – running a half marathon in all 50 states in under 100 total hours). Fueled by some amazingly good green chili infused southwest fare we readied ourselves for a race which had provided relatively few details. Rather than dwelling on the lack of a race website, course map or expo we simply attributed the lack of information to the growing pains of an inaugural race. While we are used to running in larger races (20,000+ runners) this race was very intimate with about as many people running as we are used to seeing volunteer at water stations. Don't get me wrong we like small races too, but sometimes the logistics have a few more kinks.

The first 2 miles were fairly flat and very scenic with mountains on both sides of the road. Through mile 5 everything was going well and we were on pace to break our two hour goal. However, just past the 6 mile marker we turned on to a dirt trail (uneven and rocky) and the true challenge of the race began. Due to the lack of race information neither of us was aware that any of the race was on a trail so we figured that the race coordinator had decided to use the trail to cut off some mileage in order to get the race back on to a parallel road. We were dead wrong. 1 mile on the trail, 2 miles, 3 miles. Kristin began to struggle a bit as her unlucky decision to wear road shoes, which provide minimal protection off road, was beginning to take a pounding toll on her feet. As I looked at Kristin's worried face I reassured her that last 5k had to be on the road. Unfortunately, I was wrong and it looked like our luck might be running out. 4 miles on the trail, 5 miles, 6 miles. Turn after turn the trail continued. After 6 miles of running in loose dirt, which felt more like running in place than running forward, our legs were tired, our feet were sore and our minds were seriously wondering if our 13th state would prove unlucky.

As we ran past the 12 mile marker I glanced at my watch, calculated our pace, and said to Kristin “we’ve come too far and run too long not to break 2 hours today.” With a head nod and no verbal exchanges in the final mile we breathed a sigh of relief as the dirt trail transformed into pavement and we sprinted the final 0.5 mile to the finish. Worried that we might not meet our time goal we ran the final stretch hard and smiled emphatically as we crossed the finish line in just under 1:57.

After running 13.1 miles in our 13th state I now firmly believe that the number 13 continues to be my lucky number.