

Miami Marathon
Miami, FL
Sunday, 2 February 2014
6:15 AM

Kamiar Kouzekanani

I began running on a regular basis in 1980 when I was a graduate student at the University of California at Davis. As of February 2014, I had participated in 392 races and must have run a total of at least 90,000 miles.

I ran my first marathon on 5.9.1982 in a Columbus, OH suburb in the time of 4:48:46. On 1.5.1992, I ran the second marathon in Miami, FL in the time of 3:37:40. In between, I had participated in a large number of races of various distances. I consider Miami as the starting point of my marathon running career. Between 1992 and 2002, I ran a total of 13 marathons. In 2003, I began running several marathons a year. In 2005, I made running at least one marathon in each of the 50 states as my running goal, and the mission was accomplished on 11.1.2009, when I ran the Marshall University Marathon in Huntington, WV. The finish times ranged from 3:19:19 to 4:37:00, with the average time of 3:59:33.

Running 17 marathons and 1 ultra-marathon in consecutive months between October 2003 and March 2005, back-to-back marathons on October 4 (New Hampshire Marathon) and 5 (Peak Performance Maine Marathon) 2008, and 4 marathons in 4 weeks on October 2011 (West Texas Crossroads Marathon, The Tyler Rose Marathon, Marathon to Marathon, and Frankenthon Monster Marathon) are my “craziest” running adventures! Completing Pike’s Peak Marathon on 8.21.2005 (ascending to 14,115 feet and back), Leadville Trail Marathon on 7.5.2003 (ascending to 13,185 feet and back), crossing the Grand Canyon from South Rim to North Rim on 10.6.2001, and running the Sunmart 50K ultra marathon on 12.9.2000 in the time of 4:53:57 (9:28 pace) are my other more adventurous endeavors. I ran the Bataan Memorial Death March Marathon on 3.21.2010 in White Sands Missile Range, NM, and consider it the most meaningful marathon I have ever run. The Death Valley Trail Marathon on 2.6.2010 created plenty of curiosity as I wasn’t sure what to expect. I felt the tears in my eyes at the start of the 4.25.2004 Oklahoma City Memorial Marathon when we observed 168

seconds of silence, honoring the 168 lives lost in the April 19, 1995 bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building. And I had the most fun running the Goofy's Challenge (half marathon on 1.12.2013 and full marathon on 1.13.2013) in Disney World! I ran the 2.20.2000 Motorola Marathon in Austin in 3:19:19, qualified for Boston Marathon, and consider it my most significant running accomplishment.

My running résumé also includes one DNF (did not finish)! On 5.28.2006 Mad City Marathon in Madison, WI, I collapsed at mile 23 due to extreme heat and was taken to the medical tent where I spent nearly 2 hours before feeling well enough to walk to my nearby hotel; it was a humbling experience, indeed! I returned to Wisconsin and ran the Milwaukee's Lakefront Marathon on 10.1.2006 and recorded it as a sweet revenge! And how can I ever forget the 10.9.2011 Tyler Rose Marathon in Tyler, TX? About 15 minutes after crossing the finish line, I fainted and ended up in an emergency room for nearly 4 hours before I was cleared to leave. The ambulance and hospital bills made it a very expensive marathon!

On 4.11.2013, I was diagnosed with 1) patellofemoral subluxation and chondromalacia, 2) torn lateral meniscus, and 3) iliotibial band tendonosis. I told my orthopedic surgeon that I wanted to end my marathon running career in Miami and he gave me the permission to take it easy and run the 4 remaining marathons that I had already planned (Big Sur, Reykjavik, Athens, and Miami).

On 11.10.2013, I ran marathon #100 in Athens, Greece. In 1896, Athens organized the first Modern Olympic Games. Spyros Louis ran the distance of 42.185 kilometers from Marathon to Panathenaic Stadium in Athens in 2:58:50 and won the first ever marathon race. Athens Classic Marathon follows the same course and I enjoyed it a lot. A talented Alissa Mejia made the poster:



I flew into Miami, via Atlanta, on 1.30.2014. Due to flight cancelations and delays, I was stuck in the airport from 11 AM to 8:30 PM! To make a long story short, I finally arrived at Miami at 10:30 PM, picked up the rental car, and drove into Miami's suburb of West Kendall. During the 4 night visit, I stayed with my dear friends – Gary, Tere, and Elena, and very much appreciated their hospitality.



On Friday, 1.31.2014, I visited University of Miami, where I obtained my second PhD in 1988 and worked as research assistant professor from 1988 to 1992. The campus looked more beautiful than it did when I was there.



I had lunch with my long-time friends, Elisah and Mrs. Lewis, at the university's food court.



After lunch, I met my good friends, Dr. Joe and Diane, for coffee and a nice conversation.



Cuban food dinner with Gary and Tere ended the first day of the stay, which was fun-filled and meaningful.



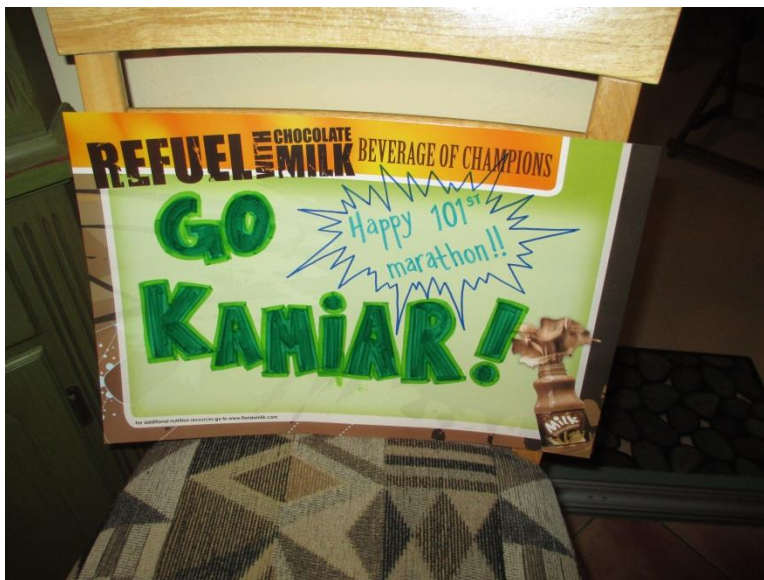
On Saturday, 2.1.2014, I met Maria for breakfast. She taught me quantitative research methodology and also supervised my doctoral dissertation at the University of Miami from 1985 to 1988. We have remained good friends ever since. We talked a lot and enjoyed the get-together.



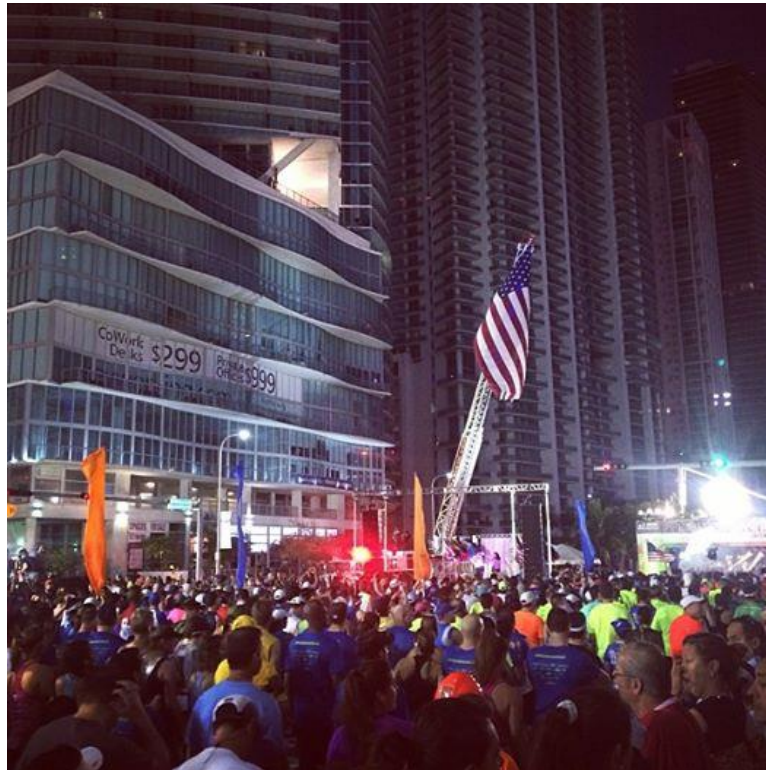
After the breakfast, I went to Miami Beach for the packet pickup and expo at the Convention Center. The packet pickup was very efficient and did not take more than 10 minutes. Getting to Miami Beach and back was a different story and took me more than 4 hours due to heavy traffic and road constructions.



Gary and Tere had organized a pre-marathon pasta dinner party at their home which was very nice. I was the guest of honor!



Sunday, 2.2.2014, was the big day. Gary, Tere, Elena, and I took the Metrorail and Metromover to the start line in downtown Miami. There were approximately 25,000 marathoners and half marathoners, mostly half marathoners, at the start line. Temperature ranged from low 70s to mid 80s. There was a wave start. There were pace groups. Traffic control was very good. A large number of volunteers staffed the 24 aid stations. The mile markers were easily visible and the elapsed gun time was digitally displayed at every mile.



The mainly flat course was scenic and I liked it. It was still dark when the marathoners and half marathoners started the race and in spite of the wave start, it was a bit congested for a while and I wished the aid stations were on both sides of the route for the first 13 miles. We ran into Miami Beach via MacArthur Causeway. We then ran through the city via Ocean Drive (South Beach) and Washington Avenue, crossed Rio Alto Island, Di Lido Island, San Marino Island, and Biscayne Island, via Venetian Causeway, before returning to Miami. I made several stops to take photos. And I must say that the portion of the run on South Beach brought back some fun-filled memories!



At mile 13, the marathoners and half marathoners diverged and the course became far less crowded.



We ran through downtown Miami and reached Coconut Grove at mile 18. It rained for several minutes, which was actually helpful as it had already become quite warm.



I was in no rush to finish my last marathon run and end an amazing journey. Considering the bum knees, the right one in particular, I couldn't run at a faster pace even if I wanted. At mile 23, where the following photo was taken beneath the Rickenbacker Causeway, a marathoner should look tired and I looked as if I had been walking in a park!



As expected, the right knee hurt a lot throughout the run and enduring the pain was all mental. I kept my head up, was smiling, and looked as if I were dancing as I was approaching the finish line!



There were 3,529 (2,307 male, 1,222 female) finishers in the average finish time of 4:43:42. The winning times were 2:19:45 (male) and 2:49:27 (female). There were 15,453 half marathon finishers. I took it easy and reflected on my history of marathon running, which I must say was not disappointing. I crossed the finish line in 5:04:32 (11:37 pace). The finisher medallion was very nice. Gary, Tere, and Elena greeted me at the finish line, which was icing on the cake.



I will not be running any more marathons; however, daily runs to which I owe my physical and mental health will hopefully continue for a long time to come. It will be neither pretty nor fast but I will run. And I continue enjoying the friendship of my fellow runners whose support and encouragement have meant a lot to me for a very long time. They know who they are and I love and respect them forever. In my opinion, running is a simple sport which requires discipline and dedication. I am mindful of the fact that not everyone can run and firmly believe those who can, must never take it for granted.

My father, who was a sprint runner in his youth, used to tell us (his children) to enjoy chewing while we still have teeth! He was a wise man. My mother didn't know a thing about marathon running but rather anxiously followed my progress for years. I used to send her a map of the country with the location of the marathon marked on it. I am willing to bet that she had learned plenty about the geography of the United States! I dedicated the last marathon run to them. May God bless their souls.

