

The race started at 9am on Sunday morning under the gaze of clear blue skies and uninterrupted sunshine. Even before the start it was warm. In fact I was perspiring just walking from the baggage drop off area to the start line! For me, heat and running do not go well together. It's either one or the other, so being this warm already was a big concern for me, so I made sure I'd be carrying sufficient gel packs to supplement the drinks I would take onboard around the course.

The start was on the main boulevard street west of the Brandenburg Gate. The finish would entail passing through the Brandenburg gate from the east finishing just short of the start, so in effect a single one lap course of Berlin, taking a few of the sights en route of course. Considering the number of people taking part the marathon started pretty much on time without any serious hiccups, though for the first few kilometres, things were a little crowded.

People were clearly sharing my concern for the heat as each drink station en route received a lot of attention, to the point that they became bottle necks as people stopped to take onboard fluids in the form of either water or the marathon official sports drink. Bananas, apples and tea were also on offer. There were also some showers erected which you could run under, and if that wasn't enough some of the local fire brigade turned up with their water hoses to spray runners as they ran past.

So in all, things looked ok. I certainly felt comfortable with my consistent sub 5min/km pace, but around 19km, 2km short of the halfway mark things changed. I suddenly lost all sense of any energy and I struggled to even keep a 6min 30 sec pace over the next few kilometres. I've been in situations before where my pace has dropped off for various reasons, but this sudden change came as a bit of shock to me. I assumed it was down to acute heat exhaustion and so made sure that I took on enough fluid at each drink station, stopping if necessary to ensure I took on enough and also tried to keep to the shady areas where possible. Berlin's landscape includes many tall office buildings of which surprisingly many were good at casting large shadows on the roads below, thus offering some respite from the sun.

This seemed to work as by 30km I was feeling a little bit renewed. However, I wasn't planning to quicken my pace much in case I hit problems again and also due to the fact that I had more marathons to run in the coming weeks. Interestingly, many people around me were faring much worse as the numbers of people walking increased as the kilometres edged by, though other runners seemed unaffected by the heat as they passed me.

By 40km I was longing for the finish. I could see the Brandenburg Gate in the distance and just had to run along the main straight boulevard. Eventually the finish came and after collecting my medal I made a beeline for some shade amongst the trees of Berlin's Tiergarten. On previous occasions beer was served at the finish. This year, beer was also served but it was alcohol-free, what a disappointment!

I stayed around the finish for a while watching some of the other runners finish before heading back to the hotel for a well earned shower and sleep. In the evening I went to the official post-race party, but didn't stay for long as I was still tired, and I wasn't alone as quite a few people left early too.

Unlike the horror stories reported about previous editions of the London Marathon where they ran out of water for slower runners. No such incidents at Berlin going by the conversations on the flight back home on Monday. In fact people seem quite complementary on the organisation, except for the finish where there was

some confusion as to where you had to go to pick up your left baggage, medal engraving, etc.