

Running from an Angel marathon
January 9th 2010 Lake Mead, Nevada
By Eric Glass

Have you ever wondered what a race would be like if the race director's sole purpose was NOT to make money? You might just get a long sleeve technical shirt that was not full of sponsors, or you might get an amazing finisher's medal, or maybe you would even experience a fun race where you didn't feel like a herd of cattle. If you choose the Angel Marathon you will get all three plus more.

I was looking for something different from the Rock and Roll marathons that I had previously done. I've done two in Arizona and one in Seattle and although they were fun I wanted something a little smaller. I found Calico Racing on the internet and I knew instantly that I just had to give one of their races a try.

I took the Friday before the race off and slept in, woke up, threw some cloths in my car and was off for the 4.5 hour drive from Phoenix to Lake Mead. The host hotel, although nothing special, had a deal of \$60 total for two nights. Now this is nothing like your typical Las Vegas mega resort, but it did have a casino (for those post race vices that some of us need) and besides, a warm bed and hot shower is all I really need. I checked in around 3 pm and just relaxed. After three minutes at packet pick up, I headed to bed early.

The alarm went off at 5am and I was ready to log some miles. There was a 50 mile race that started at 6am, but since the Marathon didn't start until 8am I had plenty of time to grab some food and play some slots before I left for the three mile drive to the start line. Another benefit to a smaller race is no traffic. I pulled into the parking lot and instantly started chatting my fellow racers up. I've come to know a little about the Marathon Maniacs club so when I saw two guys in yellow jerseys, I just had to ask a bunch of questions. It's an interesting group you might want to check out. We all milled around until three minutes before the race start when we were asked to get into the start corral. Yep, even though there were only seventy of us doing the marathon, there was a start corral. The race director took some time to introduce a couple of people. There was a gentleman running his 200th marathon and a husband and wife that were running their first marathon in remembrance of a grandmother who had passed away. Then a few last minute race instructions and off we went.

My three previous marathons have all gone the same way. The start gun goes off and I walk for six minutes with the mob to the start line while wishing others luck. Then I put my headphones in and run 26.2 miles. This would be a different race. Right out of the gate we were all so busy talking that it just seemed to be like a training day with some good friends. The rabbits took off and the rest of us seemed to just break up into four to six people groups just running along and having fun. I had some concerns about just running down the side of the road to the halfway point and turning around because I wasn't sure if I would get bored. As it turned out, the entire Angel Marathon is run through the Lake Mead recreational area and the views are spectacular so boredom was never a problem. I can say this defiantly is not a flat course. It's a rolling course with some pretty good hills. With rest stops every mile and a half you never had to worry about fuel. Since there was also an ultra marathon going on we got to enjoy some of their food as well. I've never been in a race that offered so many choices. Did I want a peanut butter and jelly sandwich or Gummy bears and brownies? You get the idea. The groups just kept chatting away and the next thing I knew we were at the turn around point.

We made the turnaround and off to the finish we went. At mile 16 a guy went flying past me and looked way to good to have been behind us. He was the first place runner from the 50 mile race who had started two hours earlier. I tried to do the math and all I could come up with was that in 4:45 he had covered 40 miles or so (he went on to win in 6:05 for 50 miles). For me, this was a training run for my first attempt at a 50 mile race in April so I had been taking it kind of easy. I knew it was now time to do some work so I put on the headphones (which had not been used up until this point) and started picking up the pace. I have yet to run an entire marathon without a walk break. We had taken two very short breaks and this allowed me to run the final ten miles. I made the final left turn and crossed the finish line. There were three volunteers clapping as they sat in chairs, cut my timing chip off and gave me my medal. The post race food included chili, cornbread, and apple strudel. After grabbing a quick bite I immediately took my camera out and headed out to get some pictures of my new friends as they crossed the finish line. The course record of 3:16 was smashed this year with the winner finishing in 2:55.

After everyone had finished we all hugged and wished each other luck in future races. Three of the people in our group had just finished their first marathon. They were sore but smiling from ear to ear. Although the course isn't flat, and many would say not an ideal for a first marathon, you defiantly will not get this kind of one on one support at any of the major marathons. I plan to do three more Calicos races this year: Running with the Devil, which is the same course but in the middle of the day in June where the average temp is 110. Red Rocks Marathon in May, which is just going to be beautiful. And I'm most excited about the ET Full Moon Midnight Marathon that is run along the Extraterrestrial Highway near area 51. Each of these races is far cheaper than the "big Marathons" yet don't lack in style points or amenities. I made more friends in those 26.2 miles than I have on all of my other races combined. To me this is what our sport is all about.