

## Race report BMW Berlin Marathon

29<sup>th</sup> September 2019

First of all thank you very much for my company's initiative to select me for the Berlin Marathon and given this wonderful opportunity. It is a great initiative to cultivate the culture of sports n fitness throughout the organisation – across the globe.

I am thankful to Menon Fitness Systems (MFS) for the training, coaching and mentoring me from last 8 months. It was a great transformation in my life not only as a runner but also as a person.

I am very happy to complete the Marathon with PB (**04:46:31 h**)

My personal target was 4:45:00 but it was missed. Still I am happy with the results and I enjoyed the race and the electrifying atmosphere of Berlin streets.

### Race statistics:



### WHAT WENT WRONG? - 3 Mistakes I did in Berlin Marathon:

#### 1) No Sufficient Rest on pre-race day:

Even I was aware about the significance of the rest, I spend much time on charity run organised on Saturday. Had a late lunch and could not sleep at all on Saturday afternoon. Later attended a pasta party with other colleagues late evening and it last up to 10:30pm.

#### 2) Lot of Liquid & lot of que:

Due to fear of cramps & fatigue, I drunk water almost at every aid station, resulting for 5-6 time loo break. I should have understand the exact need of water for that environment.

#### 3) Wrong intakes of fluid:

I was absolutely not familiar with the fruit flavoured tea, still I took but didn't worked well for me. After the Km 36, I drink Red Bull drink which was served on aid station. After mare 500-600 meter I realised that was a mistake. I suffered suddenly with a feeling of queasiness and my right hamstring cramped. It took 3-4 minutes to make me normal.

## *Weeks leading to the Berlin marathon:*

Let's start with tapering. The tricky part with it is not to overdo it.

Yes, the body needs to rest before the race to absorb all the marathon training. However, too much rest can actually push the body to lose fitness.

It's a fine line, but the way I balance it is I reduce the overall volume gradually, while still keeping the intensity. This helps me to sustain the endurance and give the legs that 'light' feeling come race day. Coach has already explained the process 10 days before the race.

I followed the tapering plan & structured workouts thoroughly. Did my last long run (32Km) about 2 week before the event and did 21km 1 week before. Race week was quite relaxed and with easy to very easy workouts. Concentrated on recovery and tried to eat healthy. I was more concerned about few pain areas like my right knee & hip joints. Thanks to coach who has given me some strength exercise for hip and knee. Did my yoga sessions and tried to relax everywhere. Avoided travelling, driving and any intense activity. In short it was a just easy week. After a Wednesday small workout travelled to Mumbai to catch the flight. My wife Bharati was there with me to support me. We reached Berlin as per schedule (Thursday Morning). Checked-in in the hotel which was already booked by my company. Did some local sightseeing in Berlin that evening. Next morning my European colleagues joined & we followed the plan set by the event organiser – Born To Run (B2R).

Friday morning did a 5Km easy jog on streets of Berlin. We did a guided city tour in Berlin and collected our BIBs on Friday evening. Same day there was a team dinner at one of the nice resto. Saturday we have planned to participate in breakfast run organised by SCC event and did a 6km easy run till the Olympic stadium. Post run I was involved myself in some unnecessary activities and could not rest properly. (Mistake #1)





### *Berlin Marathon – Race Morning:*

I was excited. Standing on a starting line of Berlin Marathon was a dream which I was living since last 8 months. Dream was becoming true and I could not sleep well that night. Woke up early and finished breakfast at 6:30 – 07:00am. Had a balanced breakfast exactly as per the last race (as per coach instructions). Nothing fancy for breakfast. Some oatmeal, some bread with jam, Desi Ghee, egg omelette & a simple tea. Overall, 500-700 calories. Listened some favourite podcasts of Coach Sunil Menon. Prepared bulletproof coffee and took it in a Thermos.

### *Clothing:*

I prepared my kit the night before, so before breakfast I just put it on with some warmer clothes on top. I kept these clothes on until as late as possible before I had to hand off my bag to my wife before the marathon start area entry.

After learning my mistakes from my first AFMC marathon, I now try to dress as light as possible for the race & decided to carry minimum stuffs.

Tip: Apart from shoes, the single most important investment you can do is to buy a good quality running socks. Fairly thin with moisture-wicking fabric, possibly with a little compression. I bought Nike running socks, too expensive but worth it.

### *Berlin Marathon race execution:*



My Wave was last wave and it was expected to flag off at 10:10. So I was expected to consume bulletproof coffee at 09:10. We reached marathon place at 08:30. I and my wife were

together, she wished me good luck and we departed as only marathon runners are allowed to enter on the main road. I have enough time. There was enormous crowd & everybody was a marathon runner. For me it was a shivering cold so took one plastic cover from volunteer and sat on road side divider waiting for my wave announcement.

This time I took bare minimum stuff in my pockets - Gels, Pink Salt, Ginger, Amino tabs, 5-6 dates & Electoral powder.

I had a very vague strategy in my head for the race. But, knowing that fatigue will not kick in until at least 2:30 hours in I was mentally prepared to let it go.

My plan was Run-Walk-Run 02:00min / 30Sec. @ pace 06:20 for run & 09-09:30 for walk  
HM – 2:20:00 & Finish in 04:45:00

### *Berlin Marathon Start first 5K:*

As soon as flag-off, I started running along with thousands of other runners. They all are unknown to each other but with a common goal. The streets are full of crowd and lot of enthusiasm across the city. At the beginning I was not able to slowdown for walk as there was huge crowd. I adopt 3 min X 1 Min at beginning and later after 5-6 km changed to original plan (2min X 30 Sec). I was trying to maintain my form always and tried to be lighter on my foot. HR was faster than expectation. Was set an alarm for zone 4 USL. First 5 K completed in 31 min.

### *Backing off – 5K to 16K:*

I decided to adopt a steady pace and stopped my HR alarm during the race itself. Chanting running mantra in mind. Enjoying the race and beautiful weather. Just going forward as per the plan. Everything was well, no pain – I was feeling fresh. Rain came in and give some trouble as shoes get wet. But not a major issue.

### *The build-up – 16K to 30K*

Up to half marathon I was well within the plan and I was enjoying the race except some time losses due to excessive loo brakes. Surprisingly 4:30 bus was around me. I started dreaming finish at 4:30, but that was just an illusion.

I realize later that I consumed too much of water than expectation (Mistake #2)

Tip: don't drink Tea, fruit juices unless you tried it before the race during your practice long runs. Even though there was an alarm in watch 20min/40min for drink and eat, I ate and drink whatever I found on the course. I stopped at each and every aid station, as I wanted to have fuel tank full always.

### *35 – 37 Obstruction:*

Coaches says that your actual marathon start at Km 35. Mine was started little early this time. Everything was going well and I was expected to adopt the same strategy till Km 35-37. But at Km 32 I started pushing myself little more but suddenly after few Km I had a pitching sensation for hamstring cramp. I slowed down. At Km 36 I took Red bull (Mistake #3) and that was a frightening situation for me. For one moment I felt that I could not complete the race. I will never have Red bull again during the race. Later I just target to put one step at a time & stay calm. Not pushed anymore and stayed to the basics. I know cramp has to cured, adopt all cramp removing strategies (Ginger, Salt & Electrol powder). I told myself that no cramp will restrict me.

### *The Kick – Last 5K:*

To be very honest, I was struggling to maintain pace. Even though my body was giving some astonishing signals, my mind was very strong. It has been already decided to cross the finish line anyhow. My mind was becoming stronger than my body step by step. My cue for the finish push was Potsdamer Platz – a large square after which it was only 2K to go. After 37K I really stopped paying attention what kilometer it was. So, once I saw that large buildings I just went for it.

“This is what you are training for last many months, nothing will go wrong, you can do it!!!”  
I was telling myself loudly.

People from side barricades were cheering. Finish line was just 1.5 Km away & I could feel that energy. **Brandenburg Gate** was just few meters ahead and I was able to see the success with my eyes. I always visualise that gate after my every workout, even a 5K recovery runs...I was very happy that I could see the Berlin finish line. The actual finish line is few meters ahead of the Brandenburg Gate. As soon as I passed through that historical gate, I literally cried loudly. I was proud of myself. All the emotions gathered together and crossed the finish line with cheer ups & a big satisfaction on my face.

### *The Berlin Marathon Result:*

My net time was 04:46:31 that means I took more time in second half than first half. IInd half pace was slower by 37 seconds than the first one. Need to work on. Lot more to improve. This is just a beginning.



My verdict?

The race was great! The course is flat and fast, the organization is seamless and the support is absolutely amazing. I can really see why Berlin marathon is part of the world majors – highly recommended.

Thanks & Regards,

Nilesh Gholve  
7875586333