

Rob Rose - 4/17/07

Rte 128 Aboard the Wampanoag Bus - Twelve hours after the Wampanoag Road Runner bus departed for Hopkinton, it's on final approach for a 6:30 p.m. landing in North Attleboro and home. The sky is cloudy but the rain has abated. The air is cold but still. Runners luck came to the fore today as the wrath of the Nor'easter that was predicated never came to pass. What was to be a nightmare running experience turned out to be much better than anyone could have expected. Twelve hours earlier, it looked bleak

At 6:30 a.m. yesterday, the wind was pitching rain and the front of DB Sports in North Attleboro was deserted. On a dry Boston Marathon morning, the parking lot would be teeming with Wampanoag Road Runners, ready to board the bus to Hopkinton. Instead, fifty runners and their assembled entourages were ensconced inside the building as the rain blew sideways outside. The pre race mood was somber but all business. Norton's John Winters was stoic about his impending clash with the elements. "Rain doesn't bother me," he said. Plainville's Ron Farkash was heartened by the rise in temperature to the low 50's from the mid 30's. Race outerwear was a frequent topic. Wrentham's Don Jackson expounded on the merits of his compression shorts. Wrentham running twins Trish Moore and Patti Mullin were attired in identical white rain suits with matching blue tops. Strategies were exchanged. Mansfield's Mike Ferrari had turned Boston into a training run. Wrentham Roland Desrochers "just wanted to get through it." Seekonk's Ed Soares was harboring a suspect hamstring. The consensus feeling of the intrepid group was best expressed by Norfolk's John Curran. "Say a little prayer and go from there," he said. The faint of heart were hard to find. As the bus departed, there was only one no-show.

When the elite women embarked at 9:35, it was raining and 52 degrees in Hopkinton. Half an hour later it stopped but a head wind persisted. Kenyan women were conspicuously absent from the three woman pack that trampled the back end of the course. At mile 25, Russian Lidiya Grigoryeva threw a 5:10 mile at Latvia's Jelena Prokopcuka and Mexico's Madai Perez that iced her 2:29:18 triumph.

Kenyan dominance in the men's race continued unabated. Robert Cheruiyot made the 25 mile mark this year's Boston crucible, breaking away from fellow Kenyan James Kwambai to defend his title in 2:14:13 and become a Boston threepeat.

Just as the elite runners handled the weather with aplomb, so did area runners. Mansfield's Kit Wells turned in a stellar performance, finishing 56th overall in 2:31, his personal best. "It was a matter of hiding behind people," he said with a touch of humor. "Since I haven't done any speed work the only card I can play is to hide behind someone, preferably some one of six foot four linebacker size and wait and be as efficient as

possible. The wind was a huge factor, people were following each other around the road left and right. I probably wasn't doing my fair share of the work." Other local runners with notable performances were Attleboro's Matt Ditrollo (3:04:47) and Sean Hanley (3:09:04), Plainville's Farkash (3:10:13), Wrentham's Desrochers (3:10:19) and Mansfield's Ferrari (3:11:01).

Local women were led by North Attleboro's Lynn Johnson's outstanding 3:03:56 performance, which placed her as the 60th overall woman. Other local women with Memorable Marathon Mondays were Attleboro's Jennifer Richard (3:35:02), Wrentham's Mullin (3:40:01) and Amanda Ghostlaw (3:44:42) and Norfolk's Lynn McConnell (3:50:43) and Judy Beck (3:54:10).

"This is the best Boston I have run weather wise," said Attleboro's Pret Stevenson. "If I was in good shape, it would have been a good day for me." Conditions changed so much during the later morning hours that this year's Boston stood in favorable contrast to 2004 and 2005. High temperatures made those years difficult for all runners. "I was comfortable at the start and got cold at four miles," said Attleboro's John Martino. "It's still better than the heat." Perhaps the sign that the worst of the weather had passed was at the three mile mark when Wrentham's Jackson noted that jackets and gloves being discarded were "flying in the air like fireworks."

The Boston course did take its toll. Farkash felt that the "wind was a factor. Everybody looked like they had a slow day. The first ten miles I felt good. I's amazing how the course beats you up." Soares' hamstring held out but "I have calf and blister issues." Although Winters sneers at rain, "wind bothers me. My IT band tightened up." Running on her 52th birthday, Attleboro's Anita Hadlock felt that the course was "much harder than I thought." But in the same breath she said it was a "great way to celebrate a birthday. I highly recommend it."

But the day was about being there regardless of the outcome. "At the nine mile mark everything was hurting," said North Attleboro's Christine Bradley, who ran 4:30, disappointing for her first Boston. "I had to slow down and I got slower and slower. I was proud that I finished and I'm not going to knock myself that I walked and cried." Then the glimmer of Boston 2008 and redemption percolated to the surface. "Next year, I'll do better."