



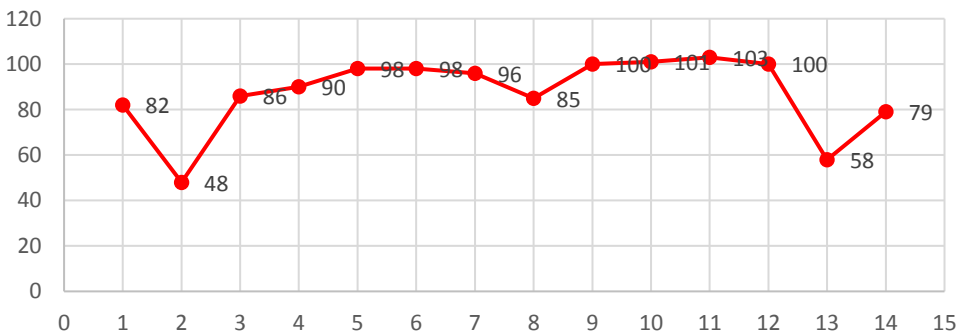
Foreword

I am not the poster child for successful marathons – in fact, you could say that my success at marathon distance has been clearly missing for someone who has trained so hard in the last few years. My marathon debut in 2012 with very little/no training was 4:31 at the Houston Marathon. 2 years later, I did 3:45 in New York, and my previous PBs were 3:35 in Melbourne in 2015 and 3:19 in Chicago in 2016. In between and including the above mentioned, I have run 15 marathons (before this one) (including Boston) and many have ended in tears, ‘what-if’s’, WTF’s and ‘never again’. So you now know that going into this marathon with a 3:10 to 3:15 goal had a probability of success around 25%. (if you ever want to read my Seville marathon race report, let me know)

Training Objectives

My training for the Houston Marathon consisted of a 10 week training block (see Appendix 1) followed by a 2 week taper. In general, my plan was focused on some of the staple easy runs, weekend long runs and 2 sessions/workouts a week. I also supplemented this with 30 mins of strength training once or twice a week in the middle of the training block which was primarily to gain core strength. My plan though typical in its form (4 weeks @ 100KM) was nothing short of ambitious, as I looked through it. The aim of the plan was to get me comfortable with running 4:25 to 4:30 per KM (~7:10 mile) pace over longer interval distances and increased MP during long runs. I only met one of those objectives – the former.

Figure 1: Houston Marathon Build Up - KMs per week



It wasn't that I couldn't do the pace over long distances, but I always seemed to not feel my best when it came to doing a long run. The weather in Houston is challenging over the summer months (which lasts until November) and what I thought was fatigue with the weather conditions, or just general lack of ability/talent to execute the long run, it turned out that my nutrition was failing me on all fronts.

Nutrition

2 years ago, I met with a sports dietician in Melbourne (when I first started experiencing a lot of GI issues as well as a black out at the Seville Marathon) who upon reviewing my history of food issues, and other nutritional history, suggested that I maybe had a FODMAP intolerance. I was not going to go into all of this in this report, but I feel like nutrition is not looked at closely enough during marathon training, and in fact, so few people talk about it, that I thought I was the only one who was slowly poisoning myself!

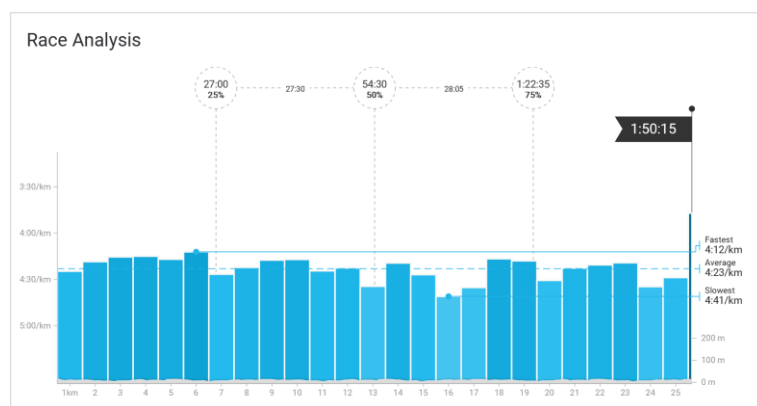
My intolerances to food included all fructose's – apples, dates, honey, onion, garlic, wheat and many other food staples. Once I started fixing my diet (which was never bad – just a regular balanced diet of vegetables, fruit, grain, dairy & carbohydrate), I slowly started feeling better and noticed an improvement in my ability to stay the distance in a long run or not have to stop multiple times after a bad stomach ache (usually 6 miles into a run).

However, the effectiveness of this diet was slowly diminishing during this training cycle and my symptoms were coming back in a bigger way despite no changes to my diet, almost 2 years after my diagnosis of FODMAP intolerance!

I contemplated on many occasions about dropping out. There was no way I was going to be able to do the marathon feeling like this, but kept pushing myself because I had started seeing really good results on my short workouts – track sessions, as well as my long interval runs.

Despite how down I was feeling about my long run progress, I signed up for a race in Houston as part of the 'marathon race series' which was a 25KM race which consisted of 3 times on a 5 mile loop in the city of Houston. At the same time, I had just seen a local sports nutritionist in Houston (who is also an accomplished marathon runner & triathlete), and so I was confident that she would be able to understand what I was going through. I immediately started a new diet (no caffeine, sugar, starches, meat, chocolate, – very low glycemic diet) but I only had a couple of days to start this before the start of the race and needless to say it was too early for this to take effect. During the race (which I wanted to do at MP), I had a major GI incident (aka the Paula Radcliffe 🍌 event) after 2 laps of the course, and had to face doing the last lap not only with major cramps & nausea, but with the shame of brown legs! Needless to say, I was mortified, upset, crying and thought my marathon plans were over. But upon finishing the race and hearing about my qualification (age group award) to be a 'local sub elite' at the Houston Marathon, I knew I had to focus all my energy in getting sorted out. I continued with the diet and it was yielding more and more positive effects week by week and by the time I got to the taper week I was fully confident that I was going to be able to do this race.

Figure 2: Houston 25KM race and qualifier for 'local elite' status @ masters level.



The "Work-outs"

My confidence in executing the long sessions really grew over the training period. I typically woke up on Thursday mornings at 4 AM to go to memorial park dreading the session. After looking at my results I was always surprised that, I generally met the prescribed paces! I also noticed that my plan was more

focused on longer intervals like 3x3KM or 4x4KM or a 70 min tempo instead of what I had become more accustomed to like the 6x3mins (still my favorite travel workout).

The track workouts during the session with Houston Harriers (my new club!) were pivotal in getting me race ready as well. Most of the sessions focused on 1,000s or 1600's, but 2 in particular have to be called out as the hardest of the training block.

Michigan Miles: The Michigan was developed in 1979 by modifying one of Oregon track coach Bill Dillinger's workouts. 1 mile on the track (@10KM pace, 1 mile at tempo pace off the track, 1200M on the track, 1mile at tempo off the track, 800 M on the track, 1 mile at tempo off the track, 400M on the track (all out). Cool down.

The Gut Buster: Developed by Jim McClathchie (former Harrier & Founder): Warm up, 2x1600, 2x800m, 2x400 – REPEAT, cool down. 3 mins rest between part 1 and part 2. 1 min rests between intervals.

Last but not least, the biggest workout of the block was

Bevo's Badness: developed by Simon Bevege of the Melbourne Midday Milers. Warm up, 4KM MP, 2 KM ½ MP – repeat 3 times, cool down. This looks easy on paper, but it's very hard to get to half mara pace after the mara pace. I did this session in Ireland with the help of 2 amazing pacers from the Dooneen Athletic Club. Joe Chawke and Declan Kearns. Both accomplished marathon runners, I later found out that Joe Chawke (Malvern Harrier Alumni) did his best marathon (~2:30) in Melbourne on the old Frankston to Melbourne race route! It felt very serendipitous that all my running history was coming full circle and that the greatest coaching and influences had collided.

Coaching and Clubs

I am still forever thankful to my Melbourne Running Club – the Melbourne Midday Milers for setting me on this path to being a better runner. I had no idea what it would take to improve until I started running with them. They also instilled in me a 'routine' which I keep to this day on how I structure my running weeks. With a very accurate and considerate marathon plan from Simon Bevege, and advice/support from the whole Miler community I am reminded that it takes a village to get this done! Some of the newer lady milers whom I have never met cheered me along the whole time and the sage advice was always there from the miler community.

I also had the benefit of meeting Doug Story at the high school track a year ago when I was training for Chicago, and between us and some others in the running community we managed to resurrect a local Houston running club called the Houston Harriers. With the return of the Harriers, we had a great competitive running community with similar fast goals and objectives. I also had the benefit of great running friends every day including my fast running partner Kirsten Stefan who ran a lot of the hard workouts with me.

I also had the personal coaching of my family during the time – reminding me not to take it all too seriously (which I did) and my family in Ireland who put up with my running routine during my trip home at Christmas. My husband Rod puts up with a lot – my running obsession mainly, but I couldn't do it without his love & support.

Racing

Races also prepared me for getting in some race pace, as I had typically had not done very well in my long runs (see above) of getting any race pace in during a typical 30KM outing. I had 3 races on my schedule throughout the 10 week period. (& a bonus race in Ireland)

Race 1: Houston 10KM. Ideal conditions but at the very start of my training block, I was not confident of getting sub 40 mins. I did 40:21 which was a 10KM PB for me, but I still felt that I was capable of more but somehow couldn't keep the pace. I reflected back to less than 18 months earlier when I did my last 10KM in Melbourne in 42:16, so a decent PB, but breaking that 40 mins is still a goal somewhere soon I hope!

Race 2: Houston 25KM - 1:50:15. First Age Group (and qualifier for Houston marathon local sub elite status)

Race 3: Half Marathon – 1:28:54. First Place. Not a great run or a PB, but as first place/winner on the course, I have realized that I need a pack of competition around me to do well at this distance, and having no one to chase gave me a sub-optimal time.

Race 4: 10KM – 40:45: First Masters. Big Hills / cross country road race in Ireland. Great training run in terrible running conditions (cold, rain and big winds) – but a great confidence builder for the big day.

I learned from the best, that doing some targeted racing in the middle of a marathon training block is such good practice and is the only way to really test yourself in all racing conditions.

Race Day:

After a great weekend of being treated like running royalty and meeting all the true elite runners who had come into Houston to race that weekend, I was very energized waking up on race day. The day before was no different to my ‘new’ diet of oatmeal, rice, fish, nuts, more rice, more fish and more nuts – washed down with plenty of hot water. I went to bed at 8PM, laid out my kit and my alarm went off at 3:15 AM. I had ordered an Uber to take me down to the start line hotel where we had an opportunity to stay in a hospitality suite with the other elite athletes and I arrived at 4AM. It was already a bustle of activity and I could feel my nerves building. The weather was hovering below freezing at that point and it was not supposed to warm up much more than that until about 10am. Perfect I thought - I do way better in colder weather! I stuck to my plan of arm warmers, ear warmers and gloves and felt that I would feel fine during the race. I also had 5 hammer gels on me and my plan was every 7KM gel and every 2KM water on the course (no Gatorade for me). We finally boarded the bus for a short 5 minute ride to the start line with the REAL elite athletes and it was surreal to be in a warming tent near the start line with the best of World’s marathon and half marathon runners, USA’s finest women – Molly Huddle, Jordan Hasay, Deena Kastor and many others. I was still awe struck!

It was 6AM and time to warm up, and we had a dedicated ‘cattle pen’ comprising of a 1KM loop to warm up in. As soon as I saw the Africans head out, I followed, and no sooner had they gathered to start and I jumped in beside them. They welcomed me and what can only be described as one of the best highlights of my day, I quickly ran loops around the warm up area, drafting in the middle of the pack of some of the best runners in the world!! It was clearly a slow jog for them, but the pace felt quick for me ☺. But I now put that down to being one of the keys to my success on race day (a quicker warm up)...whether it was true or not.

At 7AM, the gun went off, and I waited for the 3:10 pace group to surge forward (I did not want to go off with the elites). As soon as I saw them, I settled in, and made it my goal at that time to stay with that group but to have a B goal of the 3:15 group in case anything went wrong. I stayed with the 3:10 pace group for about 6KM and realized that I was more comfortable being slightly ahead of them – my natural pace was just kicking into gear and I thought as long as I felt ok, then I wasn’t going to change it. The cold weather was working out well for me and with plenty of people to chat to on the way around, I can’t say that I made any changes to my race plan until mile 19.

Through the course, Rod and the girls came out and just being there gave me so much comfort that I was going to have a good day. As soon as I got to mile 19, I spotted another member from our Harriers Club, and after running with him for a mile or so, we were passed by 2 girls who had picked up the pace and started heading for a fast 10KM finish (which is what I thought). By watching them, my race adrenaline kicked in and I was suddenly trying to match their pace. It gave me a huge boost and just focusing on them got me to mile 22/23. I didn’t know I was getting faster, but I was passing people at every moment by that stage of the race. I was ecstatic...it was almost over and I was still feeling good. I passed some

more Harriers (who were all aiming for Sub 3) on the last stretch and although I knew something was wrong if I was passing them – I gave them my best shout out, and continued running at pace down Allen Parkway. The Harriers coach Doug Storey and his wife Karen Storey gave me a huge shout out that I knew something must be going well... The crowds had been building (including all the Harrier Half Marathoners who were running back up to the course to get their team mates to the end!) the whole of the last 10KM, and I had so many people cheering for me and calling my name, that I could not have been happier at that time. I saw the clock in front of me, quickly looked at my garmin and realized that with the last push in the final 100 M I was going to make it as a 3:05 marathoner. And I did – 3:05:51

The finish line

I saw my husband & children briefly as I sprinted to the finish and I was pulled aside into the local hospitality to warm up and receive my medal. I couldn't have been happier. It's true what they say...the marathon can be kind and cruel, but on this day, I experienced the kindness of the 26.2 miles distance and gained more strength and confidence in my ability than at any other time before this.

I waited for 15 marathons for this moment and I will cherish this achievement forever.

What's Next

I don't know if I can do better than this, but I think I owe it to myself to give it a try – next step, sub 3:05....

Pamela & Kirsten chatting with Jared Ward!



Some final words of wisdom from Meb



Those last hills at mile 24



Tears of joy with my fellow talented Harriers – Flora Lai & Cristy Moreno



The last 50 meters – wanted to pass that dude.

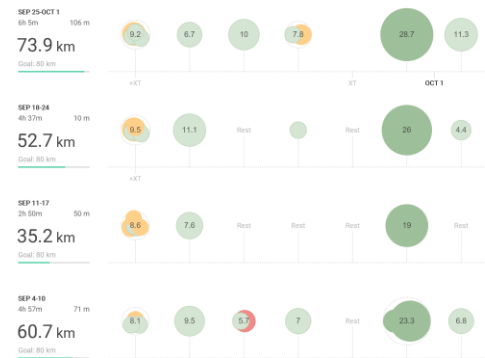


My Husband & Chief Supporter Rod

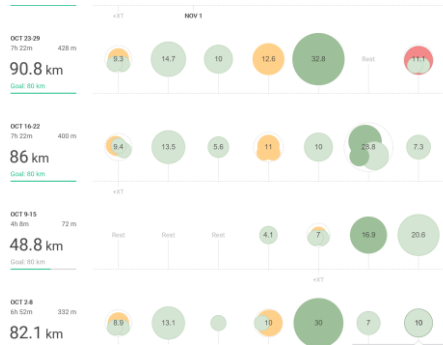


Appendix 1 – Mileage, Workouts and schedule

● Run ● Long Run ● Workout ● Race
Foundation
Month 1 – September



Settling In
Month 2 – October:



Month 3 – Stability



Month 4 – Peak



Appendix 1a: Thursday Sessions – Summary

WK 1	1 HR Tempo	1 HR @ 4:30 pace
WK 2	45 Min progressive	15 Min @ 4:40, 4:30, 4:20
WK 3	3X3Km with 3 min floats	Each 3KM is 2KM @ 4:30, 1KM @ 4:10
WK 4	75 Min Tempo	4:25 to 4:30 pace
WK 5	45 Min progressive	15 Min @ 4:45, 4:30, 4:15

Race Report: Houston Marathon: Pamela Kearney Skaufel

WK6	45 Min Run and Half Marathon Time Trial at the weekend	Targeting 1:26
WK7	5,4,3,2,1	5km @ 4:30/km, 4km @ 4:25/km, 3km @ 4:20/km, 2km @ 4:15/km, 1km @ 4:10/km - 3min floats
Wk8	20 MP / 3x1km HMP / 20 MP	20mins @ 4:25/km, 3min float, then 3x1km @ 4:10/km with 2min floats, then 20min @ 4:25/km
WK 9	4x4KM	MP Reps (4:25)
Wk 10	Bevos Badness	3x6km with 1km floats. Each 6km is 4km @ 4:25/km and 2km @ 4:10/km. Floats at 5:00/km.

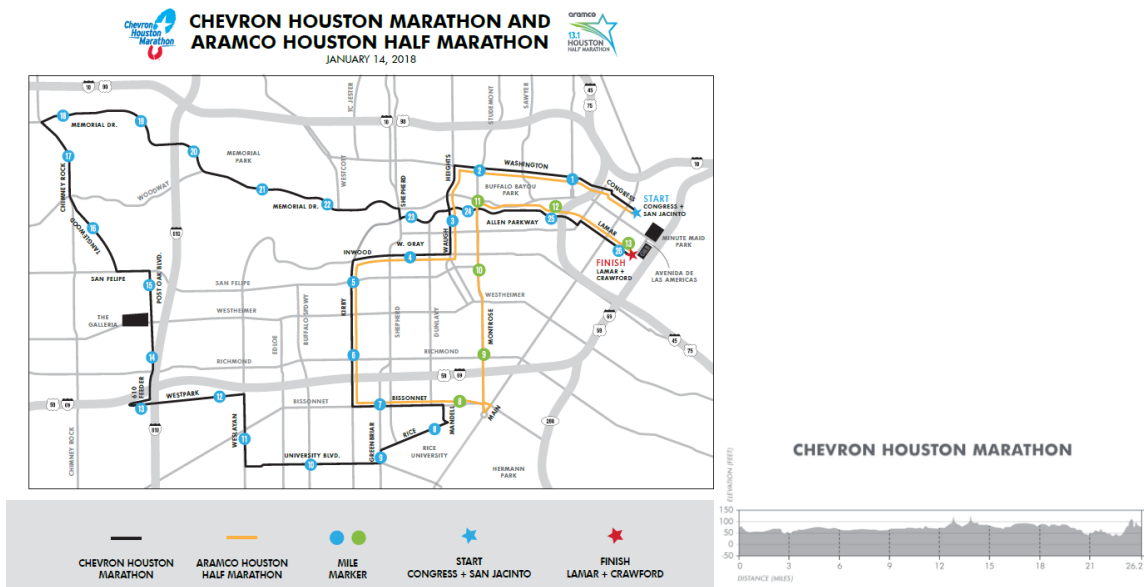
Appendix 1B – Most Memorable Long Runs

Dec 4	36 KM with HH Dan Barron in the Snow.	3:29 AM start in the Heights. 3hours on our feet in the snow blizzard !
Nov 13	34 KM HH LR	Walking on Allen Parkway I met Flora who went over her ankle, and Michelle Narat who was also taking it easy. I was dying of cramps and barely made it back.
Dec 23	36 KM	Home in Ireland, miserable weather and solo run before Christmas – just got it done.
Oct 2	30KM	4:39 AM start - solo run. Had to stop at Starbucks for a chocolate milk on the way back to get some energy ! The walk of shame !
Oct 29	33 KM	In Austin before SWE conference. Another 5:30 AM start before a full day at work !
Jan 6		Taper Long Run – Last of the season with all of the Harriers running around the Memorial Park. The best ever !

Appendix 2: Race Splits from Strava



Appendix 3: Course Map:



Appendix 4: Local Elite Qualifiers

2017 Chevron Houston Marathon	Men	Women
Open	Austin Roth	Mary Davies
40	Peter Lawrence	Catherine Kruppa
50	Wilmer Bustillos	Barbara Stoll
60	Jerry Hammervold	Carole Uttecht
70	-	-
Other Local Invited Runners	Men	Women
Most Houston Marathon Finishes	Jack Lippincott	Maria Camacho
2003 Houston Marathon Men's Open Winner	Sean Wade	
2002 Houston Marathon Men's Open Winner	Drew Prisner	
2017 Space City 10 Miler	Men	Women
Open	Todd Van Velson	Madison Brown
40	Luis Armenteros	Stacy Holden
50	Sherman Everett	Lynn Malloy
60	Miguel Lopez	Sabra Harvey
70	Ben Harvie	-
2017 Houston Half Marathon Presented by Houston Striders	Men	Women
Open	Calum Neff	Lauren Smith
40	Vaughn Gibbs	Kirsten Stefan
50	Andrew Kenworthy	Allyson Serrao
60	Joe Melanson	Billie Kay Melanson
70	-	Kathy McWilliams
2017 HMSA Classical 25K	Men	Women
Open	Joshua Jones	Flora Lai
40	Michael Defee	Pamela Skaufel
50	Garrett Rychlik	Cristy Moreno
60	Rich Fredrich	Rhonda Emerson

Who is a Local Elite?

To be considered eligible as a "local" for the Local Elite Program, you must be able to prove permanent residence in one of the following 19 counties from the period beginning January 15, 2017 through race day January 14, 2018: Austin; Brazoria; Chambers; Fort Bend; Galveston; Grimes; Hardin; Harris; Jefferson; Liberty; Matagorda; Montgomery; Orange; Polk; San Jacinto; Walker; Waller; Washington; and Wharton.

Minimum Times Standard for Local Elite Qualifying Races

First finisher in each category must run the minimum time standard indicated in the table.

Qualifying Races	Chevron Houston Marathon	Space City 10 Miler	Houston Half Marathon Presented by Houston Striders	HMSA Classical 25K	Fort Bend Kia 30K
2017 Dates	01/15/2017	10/08/2017	10/29/2017	11/12/2017	12/10/2017
Female Open	3:05:30	1:08:04	1:30:11	1:47:35	2:10:03
F40	3:15:25	1:10:19	1:33:10	1:51:30	2:15:23
F50	3:40:19	1:17:06	1:41:09	2:03:16	2:30:51
F60	4:13:05	1:27:57	1:56:33	2:20:51	2:52:40
F70	4:57:17	1:42:22	2:15:40	2:44:18	3:21:54
Male Open	2:44:22	0:58:24	1:17:55	1:33:23	1:53:34
M40	2:48:25	1:01:12	1:21:10	1:36:56	1:57:21
M50	3:03:31	1:06:19	1:28:06	1:45:18	2:07:38
M60	3:21:33	1:12:22	1:36:19	1:55:14	2:19:52
M70	3:43:32	1:19:42	1:46:15	2:07:18	2:34:42

[Click here to visit the warm-up series race page and learn more about these events.](#)

2018 Local Elite Prize Money

Local Elite Prize Money awards are given to top local finishers in the following categories for both the Chevron Houston Marathon and Aramco Houston Half Marathon. Prize Money is generally mailed 6 – 8 weeks following the events to the registered address on file for the respective winners.

Marathon

Place	Men's & Women's Prize Money
1	\$500
2	\$350
3	\$150
Top Masters	Men's & Women's Prize Money
40-49	\$250 

Race Report: Houston Marathon: Pamela Kearney Skaufel

Place	Men's & Women's Prize Money
50-59	\$125
60-69	\$125
70-79	\$125