
Colonial Half Marathon by Marty Sheil

How many of you have signed up for that late winter or early spring race telling yourself that you will indeed run each and every day through our long winter months to insure a respectable finishing time? Year after year I tell myself, "Don't do it!" Yet again, I fell into this trap, having signed up for the Colonial Half Marathon held in the last weekend of February each year on the beautiful campus of The College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia. While I was nowhere near as prepared for this race as I should have been, I truly enjoyed this run and recommend it to all Striders who might find themselves in this part of the country. Over the past few years I have dragged my wife, Carol, and family down to Virginia to escape the our final days of winter and to get a feel for the temperatures that the New England spring will soon bring. Building a short vacation around a run like this really can be pleasant. It never is a big challenge convincing Carol as I can always drop the line, "Of course you will get to spend some time with your girl friend (she just happens to live nearby)." We have previously flown but due to my procrastination, I found airfares not to my wallet's liking so we trundled down I-95 in our Honda. We actually left from work on a Friday, drove to just this side on New York, and finished the trip the following day; just a bit over 10 hours. This run is always held on a Sunday and is sponsored by William and Mary Men's and Women's Track and Cross Coun-

try teams with the generous support of Anheiser Bush and other local businesses. This run is a very well organized and a runner friendly race. Packet pick up is made in the field house on campus and there is plenty locker room space to change and prepare for the run. The field house is large and will accommodate all runners prior to race start which is convenient should it rain as it did last year. This year temperatures were in the 60's and the skies were clear. It was a great runner's day for sure! The start of the race is always a treat. The Drum and Fife Corps from Colonial Williamsburg lead the runners to the start line. Colonial Williamsburg is literally across the street from the campus, and should your legs be up to the walk, taking the time to visit this fantastic part of our history is worth the time spent. Now, I have



never ran the Derry Prep course, but I am often told of the killer hills found on this challenging course. As with the Derry Prep, the Colonial half marathon is a challenge in this regard. The course is a hilly "lolly pop" course (out and back), with only the first five miles

repeated. Miles six to eight are spent on the loop and then you retrace your steps. A majority of the course is run on rolling hard top road through very scenic woods and on some hard packed trails. Spectator support on this course is very limited given that much of the run is through wooded area away from the town of Williamsburg. I actually recall seeing more deer on this course than spectators. Well, maybe not as many, but I thought it was neat to come across some deer that actually looked pretty spooked at the 1600 of us running through their "neighborhood". An aspect of this race that I like is that you finish right in the field house. While spectators do line the streets leading to the field house, many simply sit in the stands to wait for their road warriors to cross the finish line. There are plenty of refreshments awaiting runners (to include kegs of ale provided by the sponsors). Admittedly, our winter has been mild to say the least. I did manage to run most days, but in no way put in the mileage I should have to run a respectable time. Given my conditioning, I figure the course was three miles too long! Hills! Boy they hurt! I busted the tape at just under 1:45 (not very good given my previous time on the course) but importantly, I had legs left to golf with my son during the rest of my vacation. Should you think that this is the race for you, hop on Cool Running for next year's race information. The race does close around early January as organizers hold half marathon applicants to 1600. There is a 5K race held just after the start of the half marathon.