



First ultramarathon experience

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Endurance Day Hamme 50 km 4:05:31

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It all began some 9 years ago. Occasionally I put on my running shoes to start running in circles up to 10 kilometer. At one time a girlfriend asked if I didn't want to run the 10 miles of Antwerp. Six kilometers extra? I've never ran it but it seemed a challenge to me. It was a nice experience but as many runners after the race, you wanted to do a "better time" next year. After a second and a third entry I needed a new challenge. The size of the event made it less pleasant for me.

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Why not a marathon? My friends were thinking it was a crazy idea. For years I entered the Dodentocht and the first kilometers I run to stay ahead of the crowd. Why not use this experience to run a first marathon? I did a stress test and found a feasible 20-weeks training scheme. April 2011, it was here. Enthusiastically I started my first marathon in Antwerp... Maybe a bit over enthusiastic. I started too fast and after 33 km I met the man with the hammer. Stretching both calves on the Singel of Antwerp, it's something different. It took me 3 hours and 30 minutes to finish at the Great Market Square. Proud but I also had mixed feelings because I didn't fully "run" my first marathon.

Begin 2013 I enter the marathon of Mallorca so my girlfriend and I can combine sport with pleasure. I respected the training scheme much better, quitted indoor football and didn't drink alcohol a month before the marathon... The result was positive. 3 hours 24 minutes thanks to a good race breakdown.

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I noticed during the preparations that I really enjoyed the long distance trainings. After the marathon of Ostend in 2014 (4h), Sint-Petersburg in 2015 (3h38), Great Breweries Marathon (3h17) and Lanzarote (3h19) in 2016 I had it with training to reach the finish in a certain time. I wanted to enjoy more the race and it's area.

Hamme, hell yeah!

After some searching on the website of Ultraned I found the 50 km Endurance Day Hamme. Not far from the home front and my first ultrarun in my running career. I didn't want to take any chances and I made plans to have accompanying cyclist who can provide me with supplies during the race. It would be a shame if I couldn't finish my first ultrarun, after all the preparations, because of different food habits. My goal for Hamme was just finishing. Running and enjoying the race. Before we started I noticed that almost all of my colleague runners knew each other apparently. A very relaxed atmosphere. The start signal was given and I allowed myself to get carried away by some runners. There was some fiddling with names and times and I really enjoyed the moment. It became clear that I ended up in a select public that already had many running mileage on it. I knew the "Spartathlon" but it was always something remote. If someone then tells you that that runner and that female runner finished the Spartathlon (for me the most mythical race of ultrarunning), it comes close. The will to ask them questions is big but unfortunately it's not the right time. I must first finish this race.

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The pace was a lot faster as expected. After some kilometers after the start my companion joined me and we had a little chat. As long as I could do this, I was able to keep this pace. It was great weather and the loops of the race track allowed you to come across the runners, to cheer and secretly look up to all those experienced old hands. After 35 kilometers everything was still OK and I decided to kick it up a notch. I kept it up till 45 kilometers. My heart rate monitor thinks he has had it and I decided to really enjoy the last kilometers of the race and lowered my pace.

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After finishing I had a great feeling. My first try was immediately a good effort. During my whole running career I never ran a negative split, until now in Hamme. A few days later I saw the race result and I became sixth out of 28 runners. It's not important since my main goal was to finish, but secretly I am proud of it. The race at Hamme has probably ensured that I got bitten by the ultrarunning bug now. In April I run the 60 km of Texel on my plate and I forged small plans for the Dodentocht in August.

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