
Illinois Marathon: Herron making a statement

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CHAMPAIGN — Taking a long chug of fruit punch Gatorade from her 12-ounce bottle, Camille Herron needed a moment.

Understandably so.

The Oklahoma native from Warr Acres, just outside Oklahoma City, was fresh off finishing with the top women's time in the fifth annual Christie Clinic Illinois Marathon on Saturday.

"I just tried to run steady and hold on to the win," Herron said. "My goal was actually to get the course record, but I just never really felt that good."

Herron came through the finish line with a time of 2 hours, 45 minutes, 48 seconds.

Last year's top female finisher, Jackie Pirtle-Hall, still holds the course record of 2:43:52.

"I'm kind of disappointed I didn't get the course record, but I've ran a lot of races this year, and you can't complain about winning a marathon," Herron said. "A win's a win. I knew I just needed to maintain (the pace) and go for the win."

For the 31-year-old Herron, Saturday's victory crossed another item off her marathon bucket list: win a marathon in every single state. In less than 2 hours, 50 minutes.

She has accomplished the feat in six states in the last three years. The race in Champaign-Urbana adds to her total of winning marathons in Texas (the Dallas White Rock Marathon

in 2010 and The Woodlands Marathon in 2012), Alabama (the Mercedes Marathon in Birmingham in 2011 and 2013), California (Napa Valley Marathon in 2011), Oklahoma (the Oklahoma City Memorial Marathon in 2012 and the Route 66 Marathon in 2012) and North Dakota (Fargo Marathon in 2011).

Saturday's race was Herron's fourth marathon of 2013, which is on top of the 34.8-mile ultra-marathon she ran April 1 in South Africa.

And she won't stop running anytime soon. Herron has plans to compete in another marathon next Sunday in Lincoln, Neb.

For one day, however, Herron's travels landed her in Champaign-Urbana. It was her first Illinois Marathon, and she came away impressed with the event.

"I felt that this was my best shot to win Illinois, and I thought it could definitely be pretty fast," she said. "I felt like the whole course had a good variety to it. It kind of reminded me of the Fargo Marathon because it's pretty flat and has a lot of turns. The crowd support for a mid-sized city is pretty good."

Herron had a distinguished prep running career in Oklahoma before garnering a scholarship to Tulsa. But injuries derailed her collegiate career before she became seriously invested in marathons. She had wanted to run the Illinois Marathon for some time after living for four years in West Lafayette, Ind., but had never managed to. She made her first one worthwhile.

Herron ran the Boston Marathon in 2012 but was not at the event this year.

"I knew the emotional stress at Boston was probably taking a toll on how I felt," she said about the bombings April 15. "My heart goes out to those in Boston and those that were impacted

by it. It was pretty emotional.”

The two-time Olympic qualifier in the marathon doesn't plan on slowing down her rigorous running schedule anytime soon.

“With us women, we're good until about 45 or 50 years old,” Herron said. “If I can be running a sub 2:50 at the age of 45, that's pretty good.”

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