

## OLYMPIC TRIALS MARATHON BLOG

By Rick Arciniaga

### The Night Before

Here I am in New York City on the night before the biggest race I'll have ever witnessed my son Nicholas compete in to date. I have been waiting for over a year for this day to come and now I lie awake, waiting for our time to leave the apartment. The anticipation and excitement is simply overwhelming, so as they say "When in Rome, Do What the Romans Do" and since New York is known for the "City That Never Sleeps", well you get the picture.



### **Mom and Dad with Nick and his Coaches Keith and Kevin Hanson**

Usually I am a very mellow kind a guy, but not this evening. I gave our group an edict (the group was made up my family; Sandy, Jenny, Mike, Sam, and my sister in law Margie, my niece Breanna, and friends Ashley and James) "We are leaving before 6am, therefore, there will be no lollygagging, no dilly-dallying, no put zing around, so if you snooze, you lose!" But just incase, I let them all know the plan for tomorrow and showed them the course map of where I'll be and told them "just listen to the sound of the cowbells to find me."

I have to admit that waking up at 5am to see your child compete on a Saturday can be quite a chore, however, arising at 5am to see your son compete in the **OLYMPIC TRIALS MARATHON** in **NEW YORK CITY** is such a euphoric feeling and I am really glad that **I DIDN'T OVER SLEEP.**

## Placards and T-Shirts

In the morning, although it sure felt and looked like night time to me, the plan was to walk 8 blocks to Central Park, find the Hanson Brooks Fan Zone, and look for someone to provide us with Hanson Brooks T-Shirts and a unique Placard Cutouts that resemble Nick. They told us to meet at 6:30am to get our supplies. Now, initially, I wasn't too happy about this because I wanted to be at the start line at 6:30am in front of the Rockefeller Center. That was about a mile away. But then, I really thought the Placard Cutouts would be cool and nice memento for my office. So we left the apartment early to avoid the potential lines, grab our mementos and scurry back as close to the start line as possible. In the dark, this was going to be a challenge. As we wandered right in front of the finish line stands I noticed that they were empty and I thought to myself, "Front Row Seats at the Finish Line, hmmm." Then I snapped back to reality when a woman named Mary asked:

"Are you from Michigan?" (It must have been my cool hat I was wearing")

I responded, "No, but my son Nicholas, runs for Hanson Brooks out of Michigan and we are looking for the Hanson Brooks Fan Zone to pick up some fan support supplies."

"You found the right person" and we were off to pick up our supplies. Alright, What Luck!

While she was opening boxes looking for our supplies, a reporter for the Detroit Free Press noticed our unique T-Shirts and signs that Sandy made (Picture of Nick on the back, an 1 individual letter of our last name on the front) and interviewed Sandy and me. Hey, we are going to be famous!

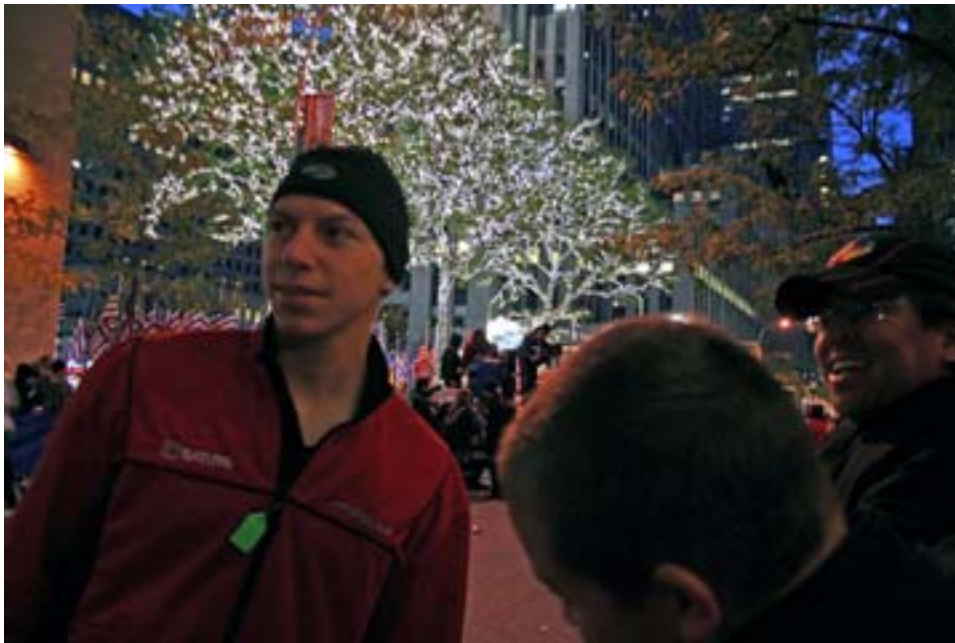


**Central Park at Dawn**

During the interview, Mary was still looking for the Placard Cutouts; she was now getting help from her assistants. Time was a wasting! The guys were tearing the truck upside down, opening box after box. Finally, they got to the biggest box, and wouldn't you know it, there were no Placard Cutouts made of Nick. Mary apologized emphatically for their blunder. I said its okay, but we got to go! What I really thought was: "Apology Accepted" "Crunch, Crunch". There are times I really wish I had Darth Vader Force Powers!

### The Today Show

Well we had to hustle if we were going to get anywhere near the starting line by 7am over at Rockefeller Center. Surprisingly for a city that never sleeps, it was not nearly as crowded as I anticipated at the starting line. Granted it was only 40 degrees and slightly breezy conditions, but I would have expected a much larger crowd.



**Nick, Sam, and myself at start-line in front of Rockefeller Center**

At the start-line, our group now included Mike Gavino, Alex and Bill Blanning, and my cousin Mike Alcalá. Now we were ready to blow the roof off this joint. This was going to be our best chance to get on the Today Show!! With our snazzy shirts and cool Nick Signs (Who needs Placards anyways) and with our large Cowbells, we were primed and ready. Guess What!!! I was interviewed Again!! Did you see me?? I was all over TV1. I am on the Today Show!!!! Now, I am going to be Celebrity Famous!! (Note: at the after-party Nicholas broke it to me that TV1 is cable channel that is mostly a blue-screen). **What does he know, I was on the Today Show in New York!!!**

## The Starting Line

Today, this Morning, Right Now, I am at the greatest, most exciting and thrilling competition that I have ever attended. Just thinking about it gives me goose-bumps. This spectacle begins in front of NBC Studios (Home of Conan OOOOBBBBRRRIIEEN), St. Patrick's Cathedral and a R2D2 Mailbox (Okay, I am a Star Wars Geek, I even bought a Miniature Obi-Wan Kenobi Light Saber at Times Square) and just down the block is Radio City Music Hall – Home of the Rockettes, and to share this event with my family and friends and to have my son in the competition healthy and ready to go, this is the best 50<sup>th</sup> Birthday present I'll ever get – (Thanks Nick!!!). The last words I said to him were, "Have Fun Out There" and I gave him a sendoff hug, and Sandy gave him a hug and kiss, and now he was ready!!! Boy, were we ready, we were all pumped, and everyone out there was pumped. There was so much energy out there, it was electrifying. We could have lit up all of Manhattan!!!



**Sam and I with R2D2 Mailbox – Night after Race**

## The Field of Runners

This was touted as the best field ever assembled for US Olympic Marathon since the 1984 trials. For those, who don't know, it was the who's who of US Distance Running.

The field included the former World Record Holder in the marathon, (Khannouchi), An Olympic Silver Medalist (Meb for short), 3 Olympians from the 2004 Olympics (Ritzenhein, Browne, Culpepper), the American Record Holder in the Half Marathon (Hall), the 2007 American Champion in the 10,000 meters (Abdi for short), the 2006 USA Champion in the Marathon (Hussein), the Hanson Brooks Team including Brian Sell (2007 US 25K Champion) and of course my son Nick (9<sup>th</sup> Place at 2007 US 25K Championships)..

We all stopped and sang the Star Spangled Banner, and then afterwards the runners got into the ready position; the tension was so thick you could cut it with a knife, the crowd, paused in anticipation, I was ready to burst!! This race was going to start!! There Off!!!! Woohooooooooo! This is going to be fun! My cowbell was clanging and clanging, my voice was shouting as was every one else and we were off to the races. Literally!!



**Waiting for the Race to Begin. Nick in 3<sup>rd</sup> row on the left.**

### Personal Highlights

I rarely ever get up to run around Fountain Valley at 7:30 in the morning, and yet here I am running down 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue toward Central Park (about 1 mile and a quarter away) to head to our first spot to see Nick fly by. When I think about it, it is 4:30am in California, and not even Barry Migliorini, one of Nick's former coaches in high school would make his kids run that early! Man I love this sport!!! All the way down, you could hear our cowbells clanging as we raced to the first spot. Can you hear it? Clang, Clang, Clang, Clang, Clang.

We started on 50<sup>th</sup> street and 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue and headed to 72nd street to turn into the Park, and then we eagerly awaited the runners to come by. We would run across the park via the 72<sup>nd</sup> Street Transverse 4 more times before this race was over.



**Bethesda Fountain on the 72<sup>nd</sup> Street Transverse**

While we waited for the runners to come by, the crowd was quickly swelling. New York City was Awake!!

We were located near the 6 mile mark and the runners starting coming by at around 30 minutes. Okay!!! Now where is Nick? 30 seconds later, there he is in about 30<sup>th</sup> position!! Pretty Good! Now everyone is hollering, shouting, screaming, yelling, and our cowbells, (Jenny, Sam's, and mine) are clanging and clanging and I am yelling **Gooooooo Niiciiickkkkk!** As he is passing me by Nick has the presence of mind to peer my way and he did something I will never forget!!!

**He Winked at Me!!!**

**Yeah, that's right, My Son, Winked at Me!!! Now I am in Cloud Nine!!!!  
Goooo Niiciiicceckkkkkkkk! Clang, Clang, Clang, Clang.**



**Nick in 30<sup>th</sup> Position near the end of the first loop on 72<sup>nd</sup> Street Transverse**

Prior to the race I had no expectation of what Nick would do. I only hoped he ran well, and was happy just to be here and so far he looked pretty good.

Meanwhile as we waited...



**Our Personal Nick Sign**

## The Finish Line

As the race unfolded Nick continued to move up in position as runners who went out to hard crashed and died and just didn't finish. It is not so much that Nick was moving faster than the guys in front of him; he said it was more like they slowed down.

All in All, this race was just a blast. I was thrilled to see Ryan Hall pumping his arms, displaying his emotions all the way down the last 400 meters. What a bold race he ran. That guy is Phenomenal! Seeing him cruise down the finish line, hand slapping and celebrating and urging the crowd to join him in his ecstasy, now that was a sight to behold!



**Ryan Hall (Champion) raising his fingers to God as he nears the finish line.**

I was at the 26 mile mark cheering with the Bryan Sell Family and Friends when the word on the street was that he was in 3<sup>rd</sup> place. Wow, Nick's teammate is going to the Olympics. Alright!!! Go Brian!!!!



**Olympian Brian Sell with 100 meters to go to the finish**

Now the runners were starting to come in multitudes. I was counting them off, Khannouchi – 4, Lehmkuhle – 5, Browne – 6, Jenkins – 7, Meb K – 8, Rohatinsky – 9, Hartmann – 10, Gonzales – 11, Nicks Teammate Mike Morgan – 12, Bizuneh – 13.

I had not seen Nick since mile 21, and since this is a Marathon, anything can happen. Then, around the bend, heading for the last 400 meters, was Carney – followed closely by Sundell, Raabe, and my boy Nicholas. At that moment I was so proud, he was going to finish in the top 20. What a remarkable race and under a more difficult course than in Chicago. From my vantage point as I saw Nick running up the finish I noticed his stride begin to wobble with about a 100 meters to go. He said his legs nearly gave out at that point. That would have been terrible, in front of his mother too. (Sandy covered a lot of territory to get to the stands, she could have easily had front row seats, if we stayed there this morning, but with help from Bill Blanning (he said: let her in, her boy is in the race, she was able to get to the front of stands to get his picture).



**Nick heading to the finish with 100 meters to go**



**Nick Crossing the Line at the US Olympic Trials in 17<sup>th</sup> Position – 2:17:08**

Post Race Pictures



**Nick with Family and Friends**



**Nick with fellow teammates – Desiree and Yolanda**



**Nick with Family at Post Race Party – Mike, Jen, Sandy, Sam, Nick and Me**

### Looking Forward

The race is now over, but, the Olympic Dream burns more brightly than ever. Nick will now be training with an Olympian named Brian Sell. What the Hanson's have accomplished is a validation that their system works and that bodes well for Nick. At age 24 and combined with his awesome performance here in New York his star is on the rise. At the 2004 US Olympic Marathon Trials, Bryan Sell running only his second marathon finished in 13<sup>th</sup> position in a time 2:17.21. Now 4 years later and training with the Hansons, he is an Olympian. Can history repeat itself in 2012? Here is Bryan Sell's response when asked about Nick's chances for 2008 earlier this October.

**There are a couple of newer guys on your team we've heard a bit about; they ran well in that Simulator. One is Mike Reneau and the other is Nick Arciniaga. What have your impressions been of those two guys so far?**

**BS:** I think Reneau is probably one of the toughest and smartest guys I've ever run with in my life. He's an older guy. He's my age, and he wrestled in college and just kind of took up running after college. Every workout, he's been real smart about going out at pace and then just picks it up at the end. He was running faster than I was the last four or five miles of that Simulator. He's definitely one who's going to be probably in 75th place at halfway and possibly finish top ten, even top five. If the course is as tough as people think it is, that's a definite possibility for him. Nick is kind of a newer guy. He hammers every day. He has his ups and downs. He's had a couple of great workouts and a couple that were less than great. He's a real young guy, and for the marathon and being as young as he is, he's doing really well. He's definitely somebody to look for this year, maybe, but I'd say definitely in four years, if he sticks with it.

In 2012, Sandy and I will be celebrating our 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, and the Olympic Games will be held in London, so Nick if you are listening, you know what I want.