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The Rock 'n' Roll Chicago Half Marathon: Rock on Chicago!





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Almost There

It's mile 11 and you're almost there. It's a little hot for 8 a.m. but the breeze from the buildings is cooling you off. Rest. All you can think about is resting, but you have to keep going. You're almost there. The bands along the course playing rock songs helped you pass the time, but now it's the final stretch. The final two miles then you can have water and be done.

As you approach the finish line, you see other people pass, you hear music and the announcers congratulating everyone who ran. Then you finally pass the big arch. You did it. You just ran a half marathon.

As a Spectator

Having never been to a race before, I thought the [Rock 'n' Roll Chicago Half Marathon](#) on Sunday, July 21 was a fun experience as a spectator. It was exciting to see people cheer the runners on or see people in funky clothes as well as hear bands along the route. There were plenty of refreshments and snacks for the runners during and after the race. Along the route there were water stations with drinking areas and people hosing runners as they ran past. At the end there were so many different snacks and drinks as well as a mist tent as soon as they passed the finish line. It was also right next to Buckingham fountain, giving a great view of the lake and the Loop.

The Details

The 13.1-route started in Grant Park on Columbus Drive then worked its way down Grand Ave toward State Street. It worked its way around the Loop then about halfway was on Michigan Avenue. Then at 31st Street it worked its way back toward Grant Park on the Lakefront on Fort Dearborn Drive and Lake Shore Drive. It finally ended up on Columbus Drive, about four blocks from the starting line.

There was also a mini marathon that was about a 5k, which made a curve around Millennium Park. It was a fun run and "encourage friends to do it and participate," said Kevin Buffalino, event coordinator of the [Rock 'n' Roll Marathon Series](#).

The Rock 'n' Roll Marathon Series is not only in Chicago but across the country in cities like Brooklyn, Dallas, Portland, Washington D.C. and even in other countries like Canada and Europe. The group hosts both half and full marathons.

Chicago's race benefited 18 charities and raised almost \$1 million. Buffalino said this year is the 5th annual Rock 'n' Roll half marathon in Chicago. "It's a great event with music and running," he said.

It's amazing that this event gives back to so many organizations making such a positive difference in our communities. One of the charities involved was [Snow City Arts](#) which provides one-on-one instruction in the visual arts, creative writing, music, theater, and film making to patients at Rush Children's Hospital, Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago, John H. Stroger, Jr. Hospital of Cook County, and Children's Hospital University of Illinois. Snow City Arts always gets a great team of runners/volunteers together to participate in this event. Running or volunteering with a non-profit is a great way for runners to both give back to the community while also receiving a lower registration cost. See additional charities that also participate in the Rock 'n' Roll Chicago Half Marathon here:

<http://runrocknroll.competitor.com/charities>.

The speedy runners beat the odds with unbelievable times. The men's winner, who is on the U.S. team, finished at one hour and 5 minutes. The women's winner was not far behind at one hour and 18 minutes.

The Post-Race Concert

The most fun part of the race was the celebration after. It was a reward for the runners hard work and was a good time on the hot summer day.

The post-race concert featured four bands: [Centerfold](#), [The Ivories](#), [The Student Body](#) and [Walk Off the Earth](#). Even only being able to see the last band, I thought Walk Off the Earth put on quite a show.

I had heard of the band before through YouTube because of their cover of "[Somebody That I Used to Know](#)" where each member of the band was all playing different parts of one guitar. The video has 152 million views and counting.

The band was able to keep the crowd energized with their fun lyrics and crazy antics. To start out the show, they hit snare drums with glitter flying off onto the floor. When they would finish a song, some members would throw their instrument up in the air and someone would miraculously catch it. I saw every member of the band use multiple different instruments, switching from keyboard, to guitar, to drums, even a ukulele.

It was a lively way to end the race and kept with the mood of the day: encouragement and endurance.

When I talked with one of the runners of the half marathon, she said she has participated in many races. I asked her why she continues to do it and she said, "I like to challenge myself."

These races are a great way to help runners to continue to do what they love with cheering and celebration. Buffalino put it well, "It's such a sense of accomplishment...it's good to see their faces at the end of the race."

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