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Hung finishes 36th consecutive Boston Marathon, tying women's record

By Jon Kingdon



From left: Son David, his cousin Nancy, Patty, grandson Gavin, son Erick Photo provided

There are two sure things in life - death and taxes. For the last 36 years, you could also add Patty Hung running the Boston Marathon. On April 19, the 76-year-old Orinda resident ran what she anticipates will be her penultimate race, pointing to next year's Boston Marathon which will give her the record for the most consecutive Boston Marathons completed by a woman (Bennett Beach owns the men's record of 54 consecutive Boston Marathons).

Following the bombing at the 2013 and the coronavirus, this year's Marathon finally had a feeling of normalcy. "Last year we had to verify vaccination records constantly," Hung said. "We did have to mail in our proof of vaccination but not when we came in for the race because they had it all on record and it was a bit more relaxed this year. At the expo, where you could buy running gear and souvenirs, masking there was still important."

With the weather in the high 50s and low 60s and the sun coming in and out, the conditions for the runners were ideal for the 25,314 runners. "Everyone was talking about how great the weather was," Hung added. "Running through Wellesley and Framingham and then coming into Boston right over the hill, the crowds were amazing. To have all of those people cheering us on, it's unlike any other marathon."

Hung finished the race with a time of 5:08.03 which was 26 minutes and 22 seconds faster than last year which surprised her when she saw the time. "I never looked at my watch and when I saw how I had improved over last year, I was really surprised," Hung said.

Hung's family was even more pleased than her with her time. "We were taking a plane out of Boston right after the marathon back to California," Hung said. "My family made it clear that I had to finish the race in under six hours, and they were jumping for joy when I came in just over five hours."

Rank does have its privilege in this marathon for those who are in the Quarter Century Club, all those who have run at least 25 Boston Marathons (approximately 50 runners). "It's been a real privilege to be in that club. We were allowed to get up to the front and start in Wave 2 which allowed us to start an hour and a half before the last wave was to start," Hung said. "It's a nice thing the directors do for our group."

Hung still believes that she can break five hours but that is not what is most important to her as she has approached each race: "I'm not trying to break any records. I just want to try and enjoy the race. Age creeps up on you and it does funny things sometimes and I just want to always remember how I've always enjoyed this race so much. The important goal is to enjoy my family and come back healthy the next year and that thinking has worked all the way. I just really want to enjoy the race and not to put any pressure on myself. As I get older, I think this run is going to be a good run in my head, not necessarily to run fast."

Hung, who is still working as a nurse, starts training hard for the race for about three months running 800's and it always careful to do what she can to avoid any injuries or illnesses. "I've been running for a long time, and I've been so fortunate because so many things can happen with your health," Hung said. "The last two weeks prior to the race, I was very careful when I went out and made sure I always had a mask on."

As a native Bostonian, the race also serves to have an annual reunion with any number of friends and relatives: "it was great to see everyone at mile 13 and then they all moved to the end of the race to see me finish."

Hung is already looking forward to next year's race: "I had a wonderful write-up in the Boston Athletic Magazine that acknowledged my tying the record this year. It will be more exciting next year."

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