

The 2013 Disneyland Half-Marathon and Dumbo Double Dare: runDisney Event Review

by Ed Falso, PassPorter Guest Contributor

Our 2013 Disneyland Half Marathon experience began with a Friday flight to the Orange County, California airport.

Though I was not in Disney attire, there were other passengers wearing Disney running event shirts, leading to friendly conversations and confirming that many were headed to the 2013 Disneyland Half-Marathon Weekend!

Once again, the Disneyland Half-Marathon was scheduled for Sunday of the US Labor Day Holiday weekend. This year, in addition to the 5K that was held in the past, there was also a brand new 10K event added to the Saturday schedule, and a new combination opportunity: the inaugural Dumbo Double Dare, for those enthused enough to run both the 10K and Half-Marathon.

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□ One notable point for those wishing to do the Dumbo Double Dare in the future... it proved to be very popular and sold out very quickly.

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□ No doubt the fact that it was the first Dumbo added some excitement and increased the demand. Plus, a 10k and Half Marathon spread over two days is easier than running a Marathon all at once, making the Dumbo a great "bridge" event for those looking to take a measured step up from a Half. So unless runDisney increases the size of the event, it's likely to require your attention to the opening date for registration if you want to participate in 2014.

The same is true for the new 10K, as it sold out nearly as quickly as the Dumbo.

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□ As in 2012, the Runner's Expo was held at the Disneyland Hotel. Picking up our race numbers and shirts was quick and efficient. But a challenge arose when we began to shop for event merchandise.

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□ Though we arrived at the Expo early afternoon on the first day, some items were already sold out. And then we found a ridiculously long line of people waiting to pay for purchases. All through the weekend runners were sharing stories and complaints about the long lines. A few people said they waited for two hours or more to pay for their purchases! Others said they gave up and left.

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□ One other less-visible shortcoming was the lack of staff or volunteers to assist at the computers where people signed-up for runner tracking messages. Without guidance for new participants (other than tips from those of us who had done it before) the overall process was slower than it should have been.

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□ There were different race bibs for the various events. Dumbo participants used the same Dumbo bib and number when running both the 10K and the Half.

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□ There were also different shirts for the 5K, 10K and Half Marathon, along with an inaugural Dumbo Double Dare shirt. Consequently, those of us participating in the Dumbo received three shirts. All had appealing designs. One family member who did not run said he would have participated in the 10K if he had known in advance how nice that shirt was!

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□ Those scheduled to complete a Coast-to-Coast received a red wrist band to identify them in anticipation of their completion of the Half. To attain a Coast-to-Coast award, a runner must finish a Marathon or Half Marathon in each of Disney World and Disneyland events in the same calendar year. I ran the Walt Disney World Marathon in January, so I left the Expo sporting one of those red wrist bands.

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□ The 5K run started on Saturday morning at 5:30 am. The same starting line was used for the 10K, scheduled to start at 6:15 am, so we had to wait for all the 5K runners to clear the starting corral areas before we could load for the 10K. That made for some crowding and delay on the way to the corrals.

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□ There was an Alice in Wonderland theme for the 10K focused on the Mad Hatter's tea party and the "unbirthday" celebration. The unbirthday song was playing at many spots along the race course.

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□ The 10K course was quite nice. After a brief run down Disneyland Drive, through Convention Way, and then back north along Harbor Drive, we swung into Disney California Adventure. The rest of the course included a bit of backstage area, but mostly theme park walkways, leading eventually to a last mile through Downtown Disney and a finish near the Disneyland Hotel. The 5K shared the same finish line.

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□ I relaxed, stopped for pictures, and took my time. Overall, it was a lot of fun.

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□ In addition to a 10K medal at the end, I was wrapped with another wrist band... this time a green band indicating that I had completed the 10K and was therefore eligible for a Dumbo medal if I completed the Half Marathon.

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□ Altogether, 7828 runners finished the 10k. The Half Marathon on Sunday morning had an another early start... 5:30 am. The crowd was noticeably larger, and we soon discovered that the corrals were jam-packed and in some cases overflowing. But the start proceeded smoothly enough and soon we were off and running.

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□ Unfortunately, I had gotten sick that morning. So I just took it slow and easy.

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□ The Half Marathon course followed essentially the same route as last year's Half. We ran along streets for a bit over a mile before entering Disney California Adventure Park. After California Adventure, the course took us across the Esplanade into Disneyland and, of course, a run through the castle. We finished our time in the parks shortly after 3.5 miles and headed back out onto the streets.

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□ After a few miles with occasional cheer squads, around miles 7 - 8 we ran down a stretch lined with classic cars, then past the Honda Center, along the dry Santa Ana River, with dust rising from the pathway, then through a parking lot and into Angels Stadium.

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□ The run into and around the stadium was a highlight. The cheer squads and family members in the stadium were loud and energizing! After a spin along the warning track from right field around the infield and to the left field corner, we were back out on the streets.

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□ Unlike the 10K, the Half Marathon course did not take us through Downtown Disney. Instead, we followed a backstage route to the roadway past the Disneyland Hotel and then to the finish line.

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□ I received three more medals... one each for the Half, the Dumbo, and the Coast-to-Coast. There were a total of 15,874 Half Marathon finishers, with 5,008 also earning a Double Dare medal.

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□ Hopefully, Disney will be better prepared for the crowd next year in order to avoid glitches such as the huge checkout line and rapidly sold-out merchandise at the Expo. An ability to pre-order a Dumbo magnet, for example, would have alleviated the concern I heard from some participants about the fact that the magnets sold out very early in the weekend.

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□ In addition, there may need to be an adjustment in the schedule, since utilizing the same starting area for both the 5K and 10K events on the same morning made for delay and crowding in the loading corrals for the 10K.

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□ As my wife and I began the walk to Downtown Disney with breakfast on our mind, we each had three medals clanging together. They contributed to a distinct noise, as lots of other runners with multiple awards were also making similar sounds of their own. It was a symphony of medals to round-out the events! The new 10K and Dumbo Double Dare are great additions to the runDisney calendar.

About The Author: Ed enjoys running and has been participating in various runDisney events for over two and half years. This was his second Disneyland Half Marathon Weekend and second Coast-to-Coast Year.

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