

Bristol Half & Half Marathon Course Narrative Co-Course Designers - Natalie Whitlock, Hank Brown

2 states. 13.1 miles. 2 high schools. BRISTOL HALF & HALF!

Narrated by Natalie (accompanied by Hank on a bicycle)

The Start - Virginia High School

We start out by running a lap and a half on the Virginia High School Bearcat track. I feel like we've all got a cancer survivor in mind as we start out on the 13.1 mile journey. After all, the beneficiary of the Bristol Half & Half is the American Cancer Society. The track is nice. The track is flat. Enjoy it while we can, right?

We leave the track and head up Long Crescent it's a long gradual climb but, luckily we still have adrenalin from just starting out and of course on race day we'll be surrounded by several hundred runners at this point. Oh yes this is no biggie...bring on the hills we tell ourselves. Once at the top we feel like we've been thrown off a cliff with a nice long downhill. Enjoying this downhill! Pretending we are snowballs and rolling with it. Hmm...maybe beach balls. Let's not mention snow again. I keep thinking I bet I look fast then I remind myself I'm running downhill. Ever do that?

Solar Hill (Bristol's Oldest Neighborhood)

We turn onto Park and hit another hill but, it's a long gradual uphill and not bad. Once at the top of Park we are home free for a while and enter the historic Solar Hill District, one of our favorite parts of the course. It's flat and the houses are very cool. Most of the homes were built in the late 1800's and early 1900's. They have a great view of downtown Bristol. Local Bristol historian and writer Bud Phillips lives on Solar. Hi Bud! We see some residents out at



Figure 1 Fort Shelby Manor

Fort Shelby Manor and wave hello. They are always so friendly. Fort Shelby was previously a private residence built in 1910 and later a hospital before becoming an assisted living facility.

Turning off of Solar onto Cumberland we have a nice downhill to Commonwealth Avenue. From Commonwealth we'll turn onto State Street and

head up yet another hill as we enter Tennessee for the first time. We turn left onto 10th Street which has one of the steepest hills on the course. Thank goodness it's not very long, but it IS

steep, and I find myself thinking, oh calves don't cramp up. Head down and heels up! After we crest the hill, we turn onto Hill Street (how appropriate!), then to 9th and Wilson.

Holston Avenue

We turn onto Holston Avenue, and we are wide-eyed as this street has some of the most stately homes in Bristol. These homes were also built in the late 1800's and early 1900's by some notable Bristol residents. We notice the "tootsie roll" house on the left as we start up Holston... makes me want a tootsie roll! This house got its nickname because of the unique exterior. Holston Avenue is like a ribbon, rolling up and down, but the homes are so majestic we hardly notice the change in elevation. Then we cut over on 7th, but wait this isn't the first time we'll be on 7th, at least not this 7th. One thing we've learned about Bristol is that street names seem to repeat themselves in different areas of the city, or streets will magically change names. That's part of being in an older city, I guess, but I digress... 7th is a new addition to the Bristol Half & Half course and our first time running on this street. It also has some lovely old homes and is a very nice flat to rolling section of the course. Before we know it we are back on Holston getting ready to make our way to downtown Bristol.



Figure 2 Tootsie Roll House

Downtown Bristol

We cross over Volunteer Parkway, which of course has the highest traffic count in Bristol, so we appreciate the City of Bristol and allowing us to cross this very busy road, and for keeping us safe along the way. We turn on the Wes Davis Greenway and make our way toward downtown. We pass the historic EW King home on Anderson Street which is a lovely old mansion in need of some TLC. It was built in 1902 on a hill overlooking downtown Bristol. The house served as the principal home of one of the city's most influential and generous civic leaders. It's currently for sale if anyone is looking for a large place to call home. We can all dream, right? Does anyone else love Rehab Addict?



Back to the course...we head down 7th and, wait didn't we just run another 7th on the other side of the parkway? THIS 7th is a great flat shaded street. We notice on our left the Pointer Brand Overall Company. It has been headquartered in Bristol since 1913. Mental note to stop by and check out their gift shop sometime...doesn't everyone need a good pair of overalls? We cross State Street which means we have crossed back into Virginia and the street name changes to Piedmont. On our left is the historic Burger Bar. If you haven't eaten there we highly recommend it. Delicious burgers and a great staff! According to local legend, the Burger Bar is where Hank Williams could have eaten his last meal.

Continuing on the still flat section of Piedmont we see the popular Blackbird Bakery on our left. Have we mentioned BB is open 24 hours Monday-Saturday? Got a late night craving...head to downtown Bristol. We hear they get busy at 2am. Continuing on Piedmont we start a long gradual uphill. We've had it pretty flat for a couple miles...should have known it wouldn't last. Don't worry...we aren't going all the way to Euclid, we turn onto Mary just before Virginia Middle School. We can't celebrate just yet because there's more climbing but...the end is in sight. We can see the top of the hill.

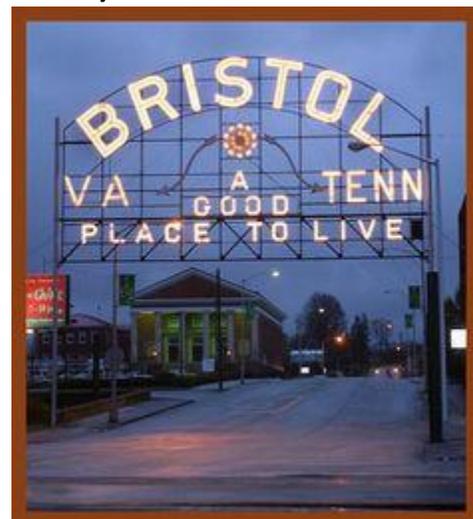
Hot Dog, We Made It This Far!

Once we reach the top we have a nice long gradual downhill as we pass over the Mary Street Bridge and the Bristol train tracks. On the right we pass another historic Bristol eatery...the Corner Doghouse. The Corner Dog House is Bristol Oldest Hot Dog Stand and they've served over 9 million hot dogs. WOW!!! I think Hank Brown has eaten about 8 million himself! Hank recommends the Dixie Dog.

As we continue down Mary we'll make a right onto Norfolk and notice our presenting race sponsor, Electro-Mechanical, on the left. Thanks Electro for all you do for Bristol!!!! We'll then make a right onto Williams and oh, have we mentioned another flat stretch? We really tried to flatten out the course this year...as much as we could with the Bristol terrain. Then we make a left onto Goodson and on our left we notice the EMC Corporate Headquarters.

Bristol, Virginia-Tenn. A Good Place To Live (and Run)

Before we know it we are back onto State Street and heading back into Tennessee. Guess what's right in front of us at this point? The historic Bristol Sign and mile 7. We take a peek to our right and see the beautiful Bristol Train Station just as we cross under the sign. The Bristol sign is the most identifiable landmark of the twin cities of Bristol, TN & VA. The sign was originally erected in 1910 on top of the VA/TN Hardware Company and later moved to its current location in 1915. Bristol really is a good place



to live and run! This is also the location for the relay exchange. If you see someone next to you drop off don't worry they haven't given up...they're just done with their leg of the relay. We make a block and are back on State heading the other direction toward Pennsylvania Avenue.

Historic Fairmount Neighborhood

We are only on Pennsylvania for a short time when we turn onto Taylor St. and enter the historic Fairmount Neighborhood. Did we mention hills? You didn't think we were past the hills did you? Taylor has an uphill just before we turn onto beautiful Maryland Ave. The Fairmount neighborhood also has lots of historic homes built in the late 1800s and early 1900s. The house on the corner of Taylor and Maryland has a ballroom on the 3rd floor. Anyone up for dancing? Once on Maryland we enjoy a downhill...much earned after the climb on Taylor. We are going to "zig-zag" through Fairmount in order to 1. Avoid some major hills, and 2. Check out some of Bristol's most historic homes.



Figure 3 Fairmount Estate

We make a left on Poplar then head right on Georgia Avenue. Two of my favorite dogs (guess who?) bark as we run by. Left on Spruce (oh and it's flat again) then a right on Florida. Notice the beautiful and magnificent First Presbyterian Church on your left...it was organized in 1858. Just beyond the church is the King University campus. Go Tornado's! Only on Florida for a short while we'll turn right onto Cypress. Back to Georgia again...is Georgia on your mind? Heading down

Georgia we make a right onto Maple and then a right onto Maryland once again. The Fairmount Estate is on our left. You can't miss it! It's one of the biggest homes in Bristol and is currently being restored. We love seeing the restoration.

Fairmount Park and Fairmount Hotel

We make a left on Spruce and head toward Fairmount Park. It's a great place for dogs to play according to Cornbread. At the park we notice a mansion on the left and the right. The home on the left overlooking the park was once the site of the Hotel Fairmount, which was built in 1889 by Colonel James M. Barker and Major A.D. Reynolds (of the Reynolds tobacco fame family). From the outset, guests came from all over the country to stay in the "Queen of Them All." The 125 rooms in this three story and attic hotel were splendidly furnished. The building was in a wooded area and had its own lake. There was boating in the summer and ice skating in the winter. Other facilities included tennis courts, stables of fine riding horses, and bowling alleys. Fred Hayes installed the bathtubs, the first seen in Bristol. They were wooden boxes lined with smooth copper. A private railroad, station, "The Hotel Fairmount," was erected near the Ash Street bridge. Horse drawn trolleys carried the passengers. A boardwalk led to the hotel, and alongside it were tramways, which carried luggage of the guests to the hotel. Sadly, the Hotel Fairmount burned in September 1901. I'm thinking if the Hotel

Fairmount were still standing it could be our host hotel. The Fairmount Neighborhood is proud to have 3 of the 5 designated mansions in Bristol, TN, and we passed all 3 on our journey.

Downtown Bristol (Can't Get Enough Of It!)

As we head out of Fairmount we make a right on Kentucky and a left on Ash. We cross the Ash Street Bridge (again crossing over railroad tracks below) and head down (literally downhill) to Alabama. Yes, we like state names in Bristol. States and trees. We make a right on Alabama (did you just start singing Sweet Home Alabama?) and after a very small climb head downhill again to Martin Luther King Blvd. We are making our way back to Bristol's most famous street, State Street in downtown Bristol, where we will once again skirt the states of Tennessee and Virginia. Once on State, we look down and notice bronze markers literally in the middle of the road, designating the TN/VA sides of the street. We pass the Paramount Center for the Arts. It was built in 1931 and restored in 1991. I remember watching cartoons there as a child on Saturday mornings. If you've never been inside be sure to check it out sometime. It's lovely. State Street also has tons of great places to eat and shop. The Southern Churn recently opened the ice cream shop and fudgery. You've earned a treat after 13.1 miles so go for it!

Melrose – Get Over It!

From State we'll turn back onto 7th and head back toward Anderson. We've been here before but now we're going the other direction! Looks familiar "oh hey Pointer Brand." At this point during the race we may see some faster and slower runners crossing paths. If you do, be sure to give an encouraging word. We make our way back to the greenway, and a nice long flat stretch. We've been on a relatively flat stretch for the past 1.5 miles, but we know when we get to the end of the greenway, which is approximately mile 11, all good things must come to an end. We turn onto Melrose and there it is. THE hill! What? Another Hill. Ok, let's get up this bad boy, and we are almost home free. We put our heads down, grumble a little, and churn up the Melrose Hill. We reach the top, pat ourselves on the back, and turn onto Edgemont.

The Finish – Tennessee High School and Stone Castle

Once on Edgemont we notice Tennessee High School and Stone Castle is on our right, which as we all know is the finish line. On race day we'll hear music playing, and want to detour, but we still have about 1.5 miles to go. We make a left onto Courtland (oh Stone Castle you were so close!), and then right onto Tremont and the castle disappears behind us. Tremont is a great rolling mostly downhill stretch. We see mile 12 and know we've almost made it. We now make a right on Duncan, cross over Edgemont, make a right



Figure 4 Stone Castle, Tennessee High School

onto Phelps Way, and cut over to Southside. Almost there!!

One more small incline and Tennessee High and the Stone Castle re-appear in our line of vision. In my mind I'm like Scarlett when the moon shines on Tara after she makes the tough journey home. Please tell me you've seen "Gone with the Wind?" If you've got any energy left this is the time to use it. We turn right onto Weaver Pike and are home free. We've run around the historic Stone Castle and now we are heading inside for the finale!

Work on the Stone Castle began in 1934 and was completed in 1936 at a cost of \$34,000 shared between the federal government and the city of Bristol during the era of the New Deal and the WPA. Last year the Stone Castle was carpeted with brand new turf and we are excited to be running across the turf this year. We enter the Castle. We made it! 2 states and 13.1 miles for cancer survivors everywhere. We head toward the end zone feeling like our favorite football player running for a touchdown on a Saturday afternoon in the South. We do a little dance to celebrate in the end zone...there are no penalties for excessive celebration in road racing.

We just did 13.1 miles. Now let's hit the Burger Bar and then Southern Churn! See you April 11, 2015!

Course Map

Click here for the full [course map](#).