

# The Pure Joy of Finally Finishing a Marathon

4 February 2016



by [Kyle Raiche](#)

There were miles I didn't think I would finish. Miles where embarrassment and fatigue crawled into my joints and my blisters, telling me "better luck next time." It was during these miles I put on the original Broadway cast recording of *Wicked* for the second and third time and reminded myself who I was. I was the person who decided he would run his first marathon, and ran it.

As a sophomore on the Saugus High School track team I was recruited to throw shot—an event for big kids who don't move fast. Not particularly passionate about palming a heavy metal ball a dozen or so feet, I would pine after the sprinters or the relay racers: the real runners, athletes who were likened to gazelles. I was often likened to the Stay Puff Marshmallow Man or the Pillsbury Doughboy because girls thought it was cute to poke my tummy and see if I'd giggle. Prone to giggling, it always worked. For years, I was no help to myself.

Later in life, after college, I moved to New York, thinking the adventure of the city would solve the inevitable postgraduate crisis. This was foolish of me. I was three years out of school, living in a city where I felt unbelievably lonely, miserable about making a living instead of a life, and just plain lost. I turned to running. I didn't know what running would do, but I did know I needed to feel proud of myself again. This is when I decided to check "running a marathon" off my bucket list. This was not foolish of me. My thought was a simple one: "one good thing will just have to lead to another." It just had to.



When I started training, I became *that* person. I told everyone about my upcoming marathon. For those of you listened, thank you and I'm sorry. It was as if with every person I talked with I was signing a contract holding me responsible for finishing the race.

The morning of the marathon, the cliché about "making it this far is an accomplishment" rumbled around my head. The better half of me knew that this was a lie. Greatness means finishing the race. At a certain point, success can't be defined as trying your best, but rather being your best. I knew I had to finish.

Below is a series of thoughts I had while running that first marathon, recounted here in no particular order:

“Maybe I’ll listen to an audio book.”

“All these people are so slow.”

“Look at his calf muscles.”

“I should have worn better socks...”

“”Don’t push too hard—you want to be able to run again someday.”

“Burger, cheeseburger, bacon cheeseburger!”

“My running shoes are the coolest running shoes.”

“Why would anyone ever listen to an audio book?”

“I’m not going to win this race, so they shouldn’t refer to it as a race.”

“She has to be 70 years old and she is passing me.”

“What does it mean if I don’t finish?”

“Audio books are the worst invention.”

It was around mile 20 when my body started to fail me. My knee ached in a way I hadn’t felt before. Pain that you can’t associate with pain you’ve already encountered is scary. The meanest blister you can imagine, the Hulk Hogan of blisters, was pinning me to the concrete. I had trained for eight months, but nothing had prepared me for the last six miles.

People say if you run 20 miles in training you can run 26 during your marathon. Those people have never run 26 miles and are liars: mean, mean liars. It’s during those last six miles that you have to force yourself to remember why you started running in the first place. To push yourself during those final hours, you must remember the time you spent longing to be a gazelle, and the loneliest nights you spent living New York, and remind yourself how far you’ve come.

During my eight months of training, things had started to change for me. I applied for a job at WeWork, I found love, I snagged that job at WeWork, I decided to get healthy, and I started to doing something that I loved. There were sprained ankles and there were lost toenails, yes, but now I was the city-dwelling gazelle who wasn't so lonely anymore.

The thing I remember most about crossing the finish line was that I finished. I had truly surprised myself. Unabashedly and with pure joy, I cried. As my family found me in a crowd of runners covered in tinfoil, I had disguised the tears as sweat and saved this moment for myself.

The emotion came partly because I had accomplished a lifetime goal, partly because of that bad blister, and partly because I wrongly thought I could listen to Tim Curry's audio book version of "Journey to the Center of the Earth" for four hours and forty-four minutes. But regardless, my one good thing led to so many other good things. It just had to.

*Submitted by: Ruth Edge – Cardinia Shire Council*