

Marathon running with age

Rotella, Carlo . Boston Globe ; Boston, Mass. [Boston, Mass]19 Apr 2010: A.11.

[ProQuest document link](#)

ABSTRACT

Running's nowhere near as much fun as basketball, but you can run on your own time, including at late-night and predawn hours when you'd never be able to rustle up a game, and you can control most of the variables - other than the occasional fatheaded driver or incompetent dog owner. [...] you can listen to audiobooks while you run, unbeatably combining exercise and reading.

FULL TEXT

WHEN THE runners pass Wellesley and Boston College today, thousands of young people, many of them having worked up a respectable Saturday night buzz on a Monday morning, will watch thousands of people who used to be young derive satisfaction from laboring through a difficult and not particularly exciting ordeal. That, to me, is the essence of the event. The spectators who are college seniors, a few short weeks away from leaving campus and figuratively joining the trudging flow, ought to be paying special attention.

Young men and women do, of course, run marathons, and some of them run them at astonishing speeds. As a group, they're overrepresented among the faster runners. But the average age of official entrants is 41, and I'm surprised it isn't higher. When I look around at the starting line of a marathon, I see a lot of people who, like me, are somewhere between post-young and pre-old. That impression is even stronger at the finish line. Even the youngest runners look older at the finish line.

The virtues on display in a marathon are the virtues of middle age: endurance, persistence, self-knowledge, an ability to see a task whole and pace yourself through it, an acute awareness of capability and limits.

I used to play basketball, but I've mostly given it up. I can't hang out at a playground all afternoon to play pick-up. It's too complicated to orchestrate a regular game, and there are too many people trying to do things they saw on TV, which leads to too many sprained ankles, pokes in the eye, and other small disasters that put an ever-less-rapidly-healing body out of commission. Running's nowhere near as much fun as basketball, but you can run on your own time, including at late-night and predawn hours when you'd never be able to rustle up a game, and you can control most of the variables - other than the occasional fatheaded driver or incompetent dog owner. And you can listen to audiobooks while you run, unbeatably combining exercise and reading.

I wouldn't describe the running I do year-round as training for a marathon, exactly, but I've done a lot of cross-training, broadly defined. When my daughters were younger, I would take them for a bike ride and come home carrying at least one girl and at least one bike. When I had a lot of work to do, I couldn't think of a way to get out of it that wouldn't be humiliating, so I did it. There was a hard time that I couldn't see the end of, and I didn't really see that I had much of a choice in dealing with it, so all I could do was to attend to the business in front of me until things got better. I got older and I lost whatever quickness I'd had when I was young, but I got stronger.

I realize that all the foregoing will acquire a certain ironic quality if around mile 22 I start clutching my chest and staggering around, or if I develop some terrible boo-boo that prevents me from finishing. But if all goes according to plan and to precedent, I will go through the course at a pace that's slow-and-steady enough to be sustainable but fast enough to qualify me to do it all over again next time. You don't have to be middle-aged to recognize that outcome as sweet victory, but it helps.

Carlo

Rotella is director of

American Studies at Boston College .

rotella2.ART

Illustration

Caption: istock photo

DETAILS

Subject:	Track &field
Company / organization:	Name: Boston College; NAICS: 611310
Publication title:	Boston Globe; Boston, Mass.
Pages:	A.11
Publication year:	2010
Publication date:	Apr 19, 2010
Section:	Opinion
Publisher:	Boston Globe Media Partners, LLC
Place of publication:	Boston, Mass.
Country of publication:	United States, Boston, Mass.
Publication subject:	General Interest Periodicals--United States
ISSN:	07431791
Source type:	Newspapers
Language of publication:	English
Document type:	News

ProQuest document ID: 404746676

Document URL: <https://proxy.bc.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fsearch.proquest.com%2Fdocview%2F404746676%3Faccountid%3D9673>

Copyright: (c) The Boston Globe Apr 19, 2010

Last updated: 2017-11-10

Database: Boston Globe

LINKS

[Linking Service](#)

Database copyright © 2018 ProQuest LLC. All rights reserved.

[Terms and Conditions](#) [Contact ProQuest](#)