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BOSTON BOMBINGS
SPECIAL ISSUE

After April 15, some Boston Marathon finishers taped their medals in sorrow and solidarity

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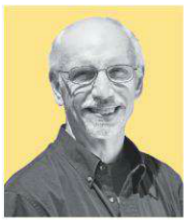

JOHN BRANT

After watching the 2013 Boston Marathon from a unique vantage point—the back of the elite women's press truck—Writer-at-Large Brant spent that afternoon on a six-hour flight back to Portland, Oregon, watching a video loop of marathoner Bill Iffrig falling down over and over again. Brant, who has covered the Boston Marathon since the early 1990s, discovered that Iffrig lives just two hours away from Portland, prompting him to get in touch with the runner, whose image became an iconic representation of the day. One week after the bombings, Brant met with the Everett, Washington, resident for the profile "Back on His Feet" (page 96). ***"In the TV interviews, Iffrig spoke in a calm, reassuring way, clearly a working guy. I remember thinking, 'Wow, he's really a cool figure.' He comes from an older generation. When everybody else was flustered and in a flurry, he took things as they came. Not that he trivialized it, but he seemed to respond to it in a more grounded way. We're all hyperconnected and crazy, but not Iffrig."***

AMBY BURFOOT

This year, Editor-at-Large Burfoot was running his 20th Boston Marathon to celebrate the 45th anniversary of his 1968 win. He was on pace for a 4:26 finish when he was among those stopped at mile 25.5. As a longtime journalist covering the running world, Burfoot's perspective on the sport is often sought out. In the days following the attack, he was interviewed by NPR, MSNBC, the *Washington Post,* and the *Boston Globe*, among other outlets. In "Just Imagine" (page 116), Burfoot describes his dream for the future of the Boston Marathon. His sister was also affected by this year's race. ***"She was in the grandstands across from bomb one. She saw everything. She's a below-the-knee amputee who went to nursing school in Boston, and her first job was counseling Vietnam vets. She can't stop thinking about the people whose legs were amputated—she feels a kinship with them. You just think, 'How unfair. Those innocent people were only at the finish so they could cheer for us runners.'"***

CHARLES BUTLER

Writer-at-Large Butler was in Boston to follow two marathoners he is profiling for the magazine. He had climbed up to the photographers' bridge that extends across Boylston Street, just beyond the finish line, at about 2 p.m. to wait for his story subjects, who were expected to cross around 3:15 p.m. Suddenly, his view went from ideal to horrific. Butler, who's run five marathons, spent that night and all of the following day reporting for runnersworld.com. For this issue, he interviewed marathoner Renae Tuffy ("4.15.13," page 70) and *Boston Globe* photographer John Tlumacki ("Photo Finish," page 100), who shot some of the most memorable images of the tragedy. ***"Until the bombs exploded, I had a perfect view of what makes the Boston Marathon so special. I watched while dozens and dozens of runners came in. Some were smiling, others needed a shoulder from a waiting volunteer. But no matter what condition they were in, they knew they had just completed the most famous race in the sport. The faces I saw said that. And then, in an instant, along with everyone else I later met and spoke with, that finish-line frame of reference was altered forever."***

CALEB DANILOFF

A freelance writer in Cambridge, Massachusetts, Daniloff was deeply connected to the Boston bombings: His daughter went to high school with Dzhokhar Tsarnaev. His wife works at MIT and worked on their online coverage of slain MIT police officer Sean Collier. The gas station where the bombers' carjacking victim escaped is at the end of his street. So he was extra invested in his work for this issue: writing about nonrunners who are now inspired to take up the sport ("Groundswell," page 95); and interviewing Frank Shorter, who won the 1972 Olympic Marathon five days after a terrorist attack ("I'm a Runner," page 136). ***"I felt privileged to contribute to the telling of the story. As a resident, yearly celebrant, and past finisher—Boston was my first marathon, and you never forget your first!—I felt affected. I was covering something that had impacted my community. Reporting also helped me find meaning in the story, not just be a passive observer."***

CHRISTINE FENNESSY

Articles Editor Christine Fennessy was at a car wash in Pennsylvania on April 15 when she received a phone call from a friend: "Have you seen the news?" Fennessy, a former competitive cyclist who is training for her first marathon, watched more TV that afternoon and evening than she had collectively in the past year. Back in the office, she led the intensive effort to compile an oral history of the events as they unfolded ("4.15.13," page 70), overseeing the reporting of a dozen writers and editors who interviewed over 50 witnesses, including marathoners, spectators, medical-tent personnel, and first responders, all of whom shared raw accounts of their experiences. She interviewed eight of them. ***"My hope is not only that the runners in this issue help others understand what happened, but that they found some peace in telling their own stories. I'm inspired by how they were so willing to trust us. They laid themselves bare. I hope we did them justice."***

CINDY KUZMA

On April 15, Chicago freelance writer Cindy Kuzma finished her second Boston (her 13th marathon overall) in 3:51. Unlike many of the runners she interviewed for "Wins and Losses" (page 106) who clocked PRs, Kuzma didn't have her best race. Her time was well off the 3:29 she'd run in October. But none of that mattered once tragedy struck. Kuzma, who also writes for *Men's Health* and *Women's Health*, was making her way back to her hotel when she heard the explosions. ***"Meb Keflezighi was on my flight home Tuesday morning. Though he was standing near the finish line himself until shortly before the blast and must have been coping with his own set of emotions, he was kind and gracious to all of us runners who approached him for a chat and a photo in the terminal. The first question he asked me was how my race was, and when I told him it wasn't what I'd hoped, he told me to hold my head high anyway, that I should be proud of my accomplishments. He shared the story of how 'something' just told him it was time to move on from the finish line. Though the whole Boston experience had been incredibly emotional, that was the first time I cried."***

WINS AND LOSSES

For many runners, April 15 was a day of triumphant achievement—until it wasn't. And dealing with that dissonance isn't easy

By
CINDY KUZMA

WHEN THE SUN ROSE over Hopkinton, Massachusetts, on April 15, you could almost hear a sigh of relief. Unlike last year, when temperatures eventually reached the high 80s, runners waiting in the Athletes' Village before the Boston Marathon felt no frenzy over the weather report. "It was a perfect day," says Cindra Kamphoff, Ph.D., a runner, sports psychology consultant, and professor at Minnesota State University. "Everyone was calm and happy. I knew I was going to have a good race."

She was right—the 37-year-old finished in 3:05, matching the time she ran to win the Omaha Marathon in September. She was far from the only one celebrating. With cool temperatures, light headwinds, and the energy of an entire major metropolitan area on their side, many runners achieved their goals, some setting personal records and requalifying. In fact, 59.1 percent of the finishers requalified, which is higher than the average rate of 40 percent. (However, this number is likely skewed since 5,756 runners didn't finish.)

In any year, the history and lore of the country's oldest marathon adds weight to these achievements. "Boston is one of the biggest events in our sport, so my goal was to win that race and make my name like other famous Ethiopian distance runners," says 23-year-old Lelisa Desisa. He succeeded, claiming the title with a 2:10:22.

Many runners also carry personal reasons for running the celebrated course. Five years ago, Tracy Lokken's father passed away the week before the race, but not before making his son promise to make the trip anyway. "That's the reason I go back," says Lokken, of Marquette, Michigan, choking back tears. This year, the 47-year-old YMCA wellness facilitator finished his seventh Boston in 2:22 and placed first in his age group.

Jason Bull, 34, the assistant manager at Bryn Mawr Running Company in Pennsylvania who was making his Boston debut, recalls race-day camaraderie like none he's ever experienced. Somewhere along the way, he crossed closer to the right to make sure he could slap hands with one little girl who didn't seem to be getting her fair share of high-fives. He went on to run a five-and-half-minute personal best of 2:37.

Then, of course, there's the last quarter-mile down Boylston Street. There, the cheers of the crowd carry runners to the finish line. "If you were a performer, if you were an artist, I would imagine the satisfaction you get coming down the home stretch is pretty close to the same feeling you get when you're on stage," says Jason Hartmann, 32, who finished fourth as the top American in

BITTERSWEET VICTORIES The 17,580 runners who finished the marathon felt pride and joy one minute—and fear, guilt, and heartbreak the next.

Photograph by Eric Thayer/*The New York Times*/Redux


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BOSTON ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION
117TH BOSTON MARATHON
2013

2:12:12. "Whether you win or finish 27,000th, you are going to have a great experience in Boston."

These runners had only hours—or in some cases, minutes—to celebrate their accomplishments before two explosions transformed the finish line into a crime scene. Fear, anxiety, and remorse gripped athletes who'd felt euphoric moments before. "Right then, my race performance didn't matter—it just seemed so meaningless," Kamphoff says.

Elites whose times typically dominate headlines quickly faded into the background of the unfolding drama. In the immediate aftermath, practical concerns reigned. "I just wanted to account for everyone and make sure everyone there was okay," says Paralympic gold medalist Tatyana McFadden, 24, who claimed the women's wheelchair title with a 1:45:24. "It wasn't about who won the race anymore." Two days later, men's winner Desisa returned to Ethiopia to muted fanfare. "I am sure that the celebration for my victory would have been grand, but it was not a concern at that time," he says. "My concern was only to find out the latest news for the tragedy in Boston."

Michelle San Antonio, 41, ran her first Boston in a personal-best 3:30 and says surges of sadness and loss struck quickly. She thinks of those who tried for years to qualify or raised thousands of dollars for charity yet couldn't cross the finish line. "So many stories, so much hard work, so much love, and so much goodness—all taken away in an instant," says the mom of three from Wakefield, Rhode Island.

Annabelle Winters, 31, was initially elated to slice six minutes off her best time (she finished in 3:17). But her joy was short-lived. "I felt foolish," says the Chicago behavior analyst. "I was embarrassed that I had crossed the finish line before anything happened, and that I spend so much of my life and my energy and my time in the pursuit of something completely selfish." A blogger who normally rushes to post her race analysis, Winters found herself unable to so much as open her Garmin data weeks later.

FEELINGS OF "survivor guilt" often strike people who escape disaster unscathed, says Toronto sports psychologist Kate Hays, Ph.D. For those who ran Boston well, the sharp contrast between triumph and tragedy creates uncomfortable dissonance. Recognizing the root cause may offer some relief. "In general, guilt should be the result of doing something to deliberately harm someone and then feeling remorse," says Jeff Brown, Psy.D., a psychologist and Harvard Medical School psychiatry professor who was working in the finish-line medical tent when the blasts occurred. "Runners need to remember that they did nothing to harm anyone and the confusing guilt they may feel is a by-product of terrorism. Terrorism attacks your heart as much as it does your country."

"This wasn't any other Boston," one finisher says. "It will always have that mix of triumph and sadness."

Indeed, both those who crossed the finish line and those who were halted before reaching Boylston Street have shared with Brown a confusing swirl of sentiments, including anger, frustration, disappointment, and a sense that the bombers cheated them of something they'd worked hard for or ruined their picture-perfect race day. These feelings, though potentially unsettling, arise naturally from the unnatural juxtaposi-

(continued on page 110)

TRIUMPH BEFORE TRAGEDY

Top performances of the 2013 Boston Marathon

MEN'S WINNER
Lelisa Desisa
23, Ethiopia, 2:10:22

WOMEN'S WINNER
Rita Jeptoo
32, Kenya, 2:26:25

TOP AMERICAN MAN (4TH PLACE)
Jason Hartmann
32, Boulder, Colorado, 2:12:12

TOP AMERICAN WOMAN (4TH PLACE)
Shalane Flanagan
31, Portland, Oregon, 2:27:08

MEN'S WHEELCHAIR WINNER
Hiroyuki Yamamoto
46, Japan, 1:25:32

WOMEN'S WHEELCHAIR WINNER
Tatyana McFadden
24, Baltimore, 1:45:24

TOP AMERICAN MAN, MASTERS DIVISION
Ulrich Steidl
41, Seattle, 2:22:05

TOP AMERICAN WOMAN, MASTERS DIVISION
Sheri Piers
41, Falmouth, Maine, 2:39:25

NEW RECORD
Joan Benoit Samuelson
55, Freeport, Maine, fastest marathon by a woman age 55 or older, 2:50:29

Photographs by Victor Sailer/PhotoRun (Desisa, Jeptoo, Hartmann, Flanagan, Yamamoto, McFadden, Piers); Marathonfoto (Steidl); Stew Milne/AP/Corbis (Samuelson)

MONDAY MOURNING
Grief-stricken runners struggled with their emotions following the Boston blasts. Experts say talking about the experience with friends and family can be therapeutic.

tion of sport and war, experts say. "Nobody likes those feelings, but they're more than appropriate," says Eddie O'Connor, Ph.D., a sports psychologist in Michigan. What's more, they don't cancel out sadness and empathy for those who were harmed, he says.

Still, such emotions can be difficult to deal with, especially when compounded by the fact that runners feel reluctant to share them lest they come off as selfish or insensitive. But experts say bottling up negativity can end up harming you both psychologically and physically, triggering depression, pain, and headaches. "Find a support system so you can talk about the emotions," says Indianapolis-based sports psychologist Chris Carr, Ph.D. "Talking about it allows the healing process to keep going." For those who can't find their voice, journaling also offers an outlet, he says.

Here's where the running community, galvanized in Boston's aftermath, can truly take care of its own. Runners who weren't there can support those who were by lending a listening ear, O'Connor says. For instance, say: "I'm proud of you for all you achieved, and I'm so sorry that you're having to go through this. If you want to talk about it, I'd love to hear your story." You'll validate their experience in all its complexity and offer acceptance without suggesting there's a right or wrong way to react, he says.

Whether in a group or solo, returning to the road can also provide relief, Kamphoff says. Of course, others may need a break from running, which could trigger painful memories. Some downtime is fine, but runners having trouble returning to training or the rest of their normal routine after a couple of months might want to seek help from a professional with an expertise in trauma care, sports psychology, or both, Carr says.

JUST AS THERE'S no correct response to an event that defies explanation, runners now forge ahead on a path with no clear course map. Bull has processed the events almost like two separate days. Psychologists say such compartmentalizing is a healthy tactic. "It wasn't a zero-sum day," Hays says. "You can see it as separate truths: 'What happened was terrible, and I also did very well.'"

Others have vowed to infuse their running and work with new meaning. Kamphoff plans to compile new research on runners' experiences and reactions. Winters already sent advice to a family member newly inspired to run Boston and plans to raise money through her own training. Lokken hopes to nurture the running talent he sees in his 16-year-old daughter. And, like most others who were there, they all plan to run Boston again next year.

Runners' recommitment to their sport despite adversity demonstrates resilience, which is essential to athletes, Carr says. "Runners by breed can embrace emotional pain, use it to empower themselves, to motivate themselves, to honor others, and to dig deeper when they feel physical pain," he says.

Moving on, though, doesn't mean forgetting or completely resolving conflicting feelings. Those who eventually reclaim their postrace pride will likely find their memories tinged with grief. "My performance will always be linked to this event, and I think that everybody that ran the race would probably say the same thing," Hartmann says. Even as San Antonio aims to separate the two events, she recognizes she may never completely succeed. "This wasn't any other Boston Marathon," she says. "It was Boston 2013, and it will always have that mix of triumph and sadness. I don't know that there's any other way one could possibly remember it." RW

"Runners can embrace emotional pain and use it to empower and motivate themselves and to honor others."

Photographs by JOSHUA SIMPSON (top); AP (bottom)