

Legend of “The Fall” or how Becky got her groove back after mile 9...

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When I noticed the big “Mile 7” sign, as sweat was streaming down my face and burning my eyes, I thought, “Why in God's name am I trying to run a half marathon... again? What am I trying to prove? I've done this twice before! Geez, I've run a full marathon! So who is this for? Maybe Angel's right. Maybe all runners and late blooming athlete wannabes are insane. Then again, Angel also says this about people who cook from scratch, smile too much or hug strangers.”

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Up to mile 7 my time was not the greatest. I've never been a fast runner. No matter how hard I've trained, I can't beat a 10 minute mile. On this occasion, I was doing good to break an 11 minute mile. This was one reason I silently thought it might be time to hang up my running

shoes. Maybe I’m getting too old. Maybe I need to remove my “Runner Girl” bumper sticker on my minivan and replace it with “Running is stupid!”

Mile 9 was rapidly approaching. I started to feel like I could finish this thing. Suddenly, “BAM!” I tripped over a manhole. After wildly flailing my hands in an attempt to prevent a fall, I hit the ground. While two very nice strangers helped me up, I managed to pick my sunglasses, iPod and pride off the ground. I was shaken, a little embarrassed and scuffed up. But out of nowhere, I got my stride back. I hit the ground running careful to pick my feet up this time.

Everyone I trained with was by now at least a mile ahead of me. It didn’t matter. There would be plenty of ribbing about my time and fall by Brody and Bill, who had by now after all these weeks of running races together had started referring to me as, “one of the guys.” And while Heather would probably finish a good half hour before me, she would also offer up the encouragement a fractured ego would need to continue running.

When I crossed the finish line 2 hours and 29 minutes after the start, drenched with sweat and sporting pretty impressive wounds on my elbow, knee and hip, it occurred to me that it didn’t matter that my lack of coordination kept me from participating in sports in school. It didn’t matter because, I fell and busted it during a half marathon and kept on going. Now, I’m officially an athlete! I’ll continue to be “one of the boys” but I shall also be referred to as, “Tough and Edgy” or better yet, “Flo Jo.”

By dinner, the fall was getting more dramatic. At least my telling of it was. Every time someone new walked into the restaurant and made eye contact with me they would immediately ask about the fall. After telling the story, I would show the evidence of my tragic stumble; two band aids. My husband has now resorted to rolling eyes every time he hears me talking on the phone recreating the events that lead to my near brush with marathon death. “Yeah, my time was off. But I fell and still finished. I know, I know, just call me Flo Jo.”

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