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News

Marathon Racers Run for Charity

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When Molly R. Siegel '10 tried running the Boston Marathon last year, she collapsed at mile 22 out of 26.2 and ended up in the hospital with a bad case of heat stroke.

But yesterday, despite that unfortunate experience, Siegel finished this year's Boston Marathon as one of the participants in the Harvard College Marathon Challenge, a fundraising effort that began in 2005 to raise money for the Phillips Brooks House Association and Project HEALTH, an undergraduate organization that provides social services to low-income families.

"It was amazingly moving," she said. "It's the quintessential Boston event."

Running a marathon has always been one of Siegel's personal goals, leading her to decide to try the Boston Marathon—the world's oldest annual marathon—which takes place on Patriots' Day and draws about 20,000 competitors from around the world each year.

Though most race participants need to submit qualifying times for the competition, HCMC participants receive invitation entries on the basis of their charity fundraising. Each student sets a goal of raising \$2000.

The HCMC runners started in rural Hopkinton at 10:30 a.m. and continued through Framingham, Wellesley, and Cleveland Circle, breaking the 26.2 mile-finish line in Boston's Copley Square.

Many of the Harvard faculty, staff, and students who ran cited the bell-ringing and cheering crowd as the most exciting part of the race.

Siegel raced with her name inscribed on her Harvard goldenrod jersey, and heard complete strangers along the sidelines screaming "Go Molly" and "Go Harvard!"

"At one point at Heartbreak Hill, one guy yelled 'You must be wicked smart!'" Siegel said.

Other runners described a similar feeling of overwhelming support yesterday.

"You feel like a movie star because there's a line of people waiting to give you high fives." Bronwen B. O'Herin '12 said. "The kids [on the sidelines] are adorable—they hand out orange slices."

"One even gave me a Twizzler," she said.

Samuel T. Moulton '01, a Teaching Fellow in Psychology and a tutor in Dunster House, said that the crowd made the race "a pure experience of joy."

"It was a really nice side of humanity that you never see," he said.

When asked about the halfway point of the race at Wellesley College—its cheering crowd is called the "Scream Tunnel"—Moulton said that he could hear their roar from pretty far back in the distance.

"[It's] a crazy tunnel of crazy college girls holding signs, and you kiss them—that's something else that I've never experienced before," he said.

Several of the runners said that they had very little competitive running experience before participating in the HCMC.

Moulton said that he had not set foot in the Malkin Athletic Center before training for this year's marathon. But because his personal interests lay in running and public service, HCMC presented a perfect opportunity. He added that the money he raised this year will be given to a PBHA prison tutoring program for which he volunteered as an undergraduate.

Brett P. Thomas '10 said that he had never raced competitively before either, but that he was "thrilled about how it turned out."

"You only go to college in Boston once," he said. "Why not try to run the Boston Marathon?"

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