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iRun

iRun to be free and enjoy our beautiful country – Cheryl Carter, Clearwater, BC

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Endorphin Junkie

Let's hear it for 2:45!

June 1st, 2011

So what's it like to be a Pace Bunny? In a word: amazing.

Small children looked at the adults in the ears with everything from admiration to amusement to scepticism. Runners covered the whole range too, from appreciation to complete objectification. I met so many cool people. There were a lot of first-time half-marathoners, and I consider it a great honour to have been part of their day.

Sure, it was challenging to maintain an even pace – over the first couple of kilometres I banked a minute, but after that was able to settle in and stay at almost exactly that pace for the rest of the race, checking my watch often to make adjustments as required. I finished in 2:44:20, 40 seconds off my promised 2:45:00 – not too shabby for a first timer!

But as far as I'm concerned, I had the easy job. I just had to hold steady as the kilometres ticked by. People came and went – they took off or dropped back (which, I will add, is the hard part) – new people joined me and either stayed or didn't. When I could see that people around me were struggling, I made little comments or told dumb stories to provide a distraction. I babbled little tips here and there, from "use your arms," on the uphill to "don't eat that," at the petroleum jelly stations. I thanked volunteers and police officers and medics and spectators. I called out walk breaks, even giving a few seconds warning when I happened to notice it was close. When spectators had funny signs, I made a point of reading them out loud. I egged on the crowd to cheer for my group, and they were always very obliging.



Walk break!

In fact, that was probably the easiest part – like a two-year-old, I learned very quickly that attention-getting behaviour really works when you're wearing ears, so I did lots of it. Waving, chatting, calling out for cheers – that way, the people running with me were constantly met with crowd support that was, if you can believe this, even more enthusiastic than average. Seriously, if you like noise, run with a Pace Bunny.

When we hit the 16K mark, I told everyone – and no one – that if they were planning to pick it up over the last 5K, now was the time. As the final stretch ticked by, I noticed that there was no clump of runners around me – they were all running their own race by then. One woman sort of drifted back to me, and when she saw me she was a little horrified – she said she was trying to stay ahead. I told her not to worry, that if she was trying to avoid blowing up, she could hang around just a little while longer and I would tell her when to get the heck outta there.

Over the final kilometre I could hear plenty of spectators behind me calling "catch that bunny! Don't let her get away," and I was thrilled. I managed to scoop up some people here, saying "come with me, we're almost there," and you could tell they'd been giving all they had.

And then I crossed the finish line. A couple of people who had managed to get away over the final stretch were waiting for me – I got soaking wet hugs (did I mention it was raining? We were soaked to the skin) and shared a few tears of joy with people who were happy with their time or just glad to be finished. People told me they were glad I was there and that they actually appreciated hearing dumb stories during the quiet stretches. Much later, as I walked back to the car wrapped tightly in a space-blanket but still clutching my sign, a woman stepped directly into my path and said, "You!" I didn't know what to make of it at first, until she continued, "I managed to stay with you until 14K, then I lost you on that hill. I can't have been far behind you though, because I made 2:45. Thank you so much!" I told her that next year, I would be eating her dust.

Being a Pace Bunny? It was a challenge and an honour. It was humbling.

And it was amazing.

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