



LIFE & TIMES

A VOICE IN THE CROWD

Let us pause a moment while a spectator has her say.

BY CHERYL LOCK

As I stood at the 24-mile marker, the third and final point from where I would be watching my then-fiancé run in the Berlin Marathon, it struck me: *I'm a damn good marathon spectator.*

I'd gotten up at 6 a.m., despite jet lag that begged me to do otherwise. I'd stood for hours in the cold, gotten lost on streets that all sounded the same, and taken the U-Bahn in the wrong direction—twice. It was now 11:40, and as I watched runners pass before me, I held my breath. Thirty seconds passed before I saw him. He looked tired.

"Keep going, Connor!" I started worrying—*Am I loud enough?*—until he gave a weary nod. And then he was gone. I glanced down at the course map in my hand. If I was going to see him cross the finish—a crucial viewing point—I'd have to run fast. *Damn.*

You see, runners aren't the only ones at races participating in a fast-paced, anxiety-inducing activity. The spectators—at least those of us assigned designated points of contact for optimal energy-boosting effectiveness—are equally stressed. Maybe more.

In New York City, I braced against onlookers grumbling they were "here first!" In Boston, I broke speed limits to make vantage points. In Chicago, I sprinted in 80-degree heat to make the finish line. I've pushed kids out of my way (not proud of that), spent \$100 for last-minute garage

parking (bad sense of direction), gone into debt on travel expenses (who needs savings when you can have London?), and screamed "You can do it, Connor!" (Chris's last name) so loud I went hoarse.

Frequent thoughts cross my mind as I race from A to B to C, the course map with Chris's time-specific checkpoints clutched in my hand:


If he doesn't see me, is it my fault if he runs badly?

That high-five added seconds to his time!

And if he's not where he's supposed to be, I assume he's passed out. In a ditch.

All my worrying is worth it when a spectator turns to me, as someone always does, and says, "You know someone who runs that fast?" I smile cockily, as if Chris's athleticism (and his, ahem, 2:49 PR) has anything to do with me, and say, "Yeah, that's my guy." When I walk away, there's a swagger in my step—and then I'm motoring to the next spot.

Yes, as a dedicated non-runner, I've perfected the art of spectating, having walked, run, driven, and taken the subway from point to point to point in five of the six World Marathon Majors.

I'm proud of him, sure, but I'm proud of myself, too—the unsung hero who has been loyally sprinting by his side for five years, racing as fast as my short (untoned) legs will take me. 

Cheryl Lock will cheer on her husband at the last of the Majors in 2016—in Tokyo.

The Pulse

NECESSARY ACCESSORIES

According to Running USA's 2013 National Runner Survey, nearly 96 percent of runners wear something beyond the staples (shirt, shorts, shoes). Here, the five items runners tote the most:

AUDIO PLAYER

52%

GPS DEVICE

50%

SUNGLASSES

47%

HAT/VISOR

44%

SPORTSWATCH

43%

Runnerspeak

PARASHORTS

Running shorts so cartoonishly long and baggy that they more closely resemble a parachute than functional athletic apparel.



ASK MILES

He's been around the block a few times—and he's got answers.

Is it okay to race with headphones? I don't want to look out of place at my first 5-K.

—Guille H., North Bergen, NJ

I'll assume the race permits them. (If not, there you go.) So: Will you look out of place? Will other runners point and laugh? Will you want to dig a shame hole and hide in it? No, no, and no. Half of the field will probably also be wearing headphones. So go ahead. Just keep the volume low so you can be aware of others. Rock on.



I hate running with my husband. His footstrikes are loud, and he doesn't like to talk. What should I do when he asks me to run?

—Jess C., Great Falls, MT

Have you considered headphones? I'm serious: Your husband gets company, you get entertainment, and you both get a workout. If he's offended, explain that he never wants to chat. That may be what it takes to get him talking. Topic one: Loud footstrikes.

Can I run in bike lanes? I encountered an angry ninja biker today.

—@Jason_elia

In the interest of furthering cyclist/runner harmony, I vote "no."

Have a question for Miles? E-mail him at askmiles@runnersworld.com and follow @askmiles on Twitter.