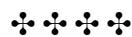


To Run or not to Run

by Reid Zieber

Running as a sport is awful. In order to run with any sense of speed, one must push their body beyond its usual limit. You get out there and you force your body to do something it doesn't want to do. Normally, if people run, there's something chasing them or a fear of death that's driving them forward. In running for sport, you are trying to replicate that with no actual fear of death. In summary, running is pain, suffering, and misery. That being said: I have been on the cross country team for the past six years.



Do you like running/coaching?

Nolan is one of the unique few that like running.

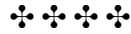
“I do like running because it gives me time to just focus on nothing at all and just run, clear my mind. It's not necessarily lonely because you have the team with you.” Nolan has six siblings and is the third oldest. He lives down south outside of LA on a mountain and has a welding degree.

Jeff has been a cross country coach for the past eleven years.

“Yes. Okay. I absolutely like coaching cross country. Why do I like to coach cross country? Well, I'm pretty process driven. I'm not so much of an outcome person, but I really like the process. And I think cross country is all about that, being able to watch our program grow and evolve and develop not only year to year, but also from early September to our CalPac race. Our philosophy has been that we basically have one race, and watching our team then have ten to twelve weeks to develop for that one race is, to me, very exciting.” Jeff is retired from the Army and has one son who is just starting cross country.

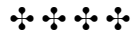
Reid is a cross country runner that doesn't like running.

“No, I hate it.” Reid also has six siblings, but is the second oldest. He has lived in Spain for three years and Italy for two.



Tell me why; Ain't nothin' but a heartache

The chatter stops instantly as the gun raises. Ninety-two feet suddenly fall still. The only sound is the wind blowing across the Sacramento soil and through the dry grass. The blank in the gun goes off and the crowd starts cheering as forty-six people suddenly leap into motion. There would be more dust in the air, but the gravelly path won't give it up. This is still early on in the race, and my legs are feeling great. The first hill before me poses no challenge. Harry doesn't seem to be moving all that fast compared to me; I'll try to stick with him. The sun is still pleasant on my skin, as I have just recently taken off my sweats. I have to fight the energy of the crowd and the start surging through my body to control my pace and not go all out in the first hundred yards. Harry and I catch up to some other runner wearing a white top and blue bottoms. He's not moving too much slower, but it's slow enough. Maybe he went too quickly at the start and gassed out. "I Want it That Way" starts playing in my head. It's my running song, though I only play the chorus and so I title it "Tell me Why". It seems a little early for it to start. The song usually waits until about halfway through the race.



What got you hooked into cross country?

“I decided to join because one of my friends told me that they could run 10 miles, and I couldn't do that, so I decided to start running. That's what got me into it in the first place, but then I stayed because I actually like running, and I liked getting faster.” Nolan works at Olive Garden and enjoys airsofting with his siblings.

“The outgoing president, right before he retired, increased our operation budget to include one sport. And we had a running club on campus that had about thirty people in it. It was pretty successful, so I thought cross country would be a logical addition... ..Now, I wasn't originally going to be the coach. We were going to hire a coach because as an athletic trainer, I didn't think I was going to have the time to coach the team. But, we didn't hire a coach right off the bat, so I was coaching the team in September, thinking, ‘okay, we're going to get a coach on board.’ And after a few weeks of coaching, I then said, ‘well, I kind of like this.’ And so I put my name in the

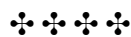
hat and got it. That was eleven years ago.” Jeff is getting into the DIY phase of his life and is currently working on a hydroponic system.

“I was in my junior year of high school and had just changed high schools and my mother told me, ‘Hey, you need to do a sport,’ and there were three sports to choose from: water polo, football, and cross country. I didn’t want to join water polo because they wore speedo’s. I didn’t want to join football because of concussions. So I was like, ‘Let’s try this other sport out.’ At the time it was like, ‘Oh look at this sport. Oh look, I’m not a couch potato. Oh look, I’m getting more fit,’ but now: yes, cross country has had its ups, and yes, I wouldn’t change it now that I have been a part of it, but if I could change cross country without actually knowing what cross country had to offer, I would. Running is not fun.” Reid works with a local pool guy when he goes home for the summer.



Tell me why; Ain't nothin' but a mistake

Staying with Harry is a pipe dream; it always has been. I try to stick to a more moderate pace, to be able to make it through the next four miles. My legs are starting to hurt, the kind of hurt that promises future pain and trouble, but not enough to slow me down. My breathing is starting to get quicker; my body finding the rhythm for distance. The sun is no longer comfortable, my activity having warmed me up. With it comes my sweat starting to perspire onto my skin. A second song tries to worm its way into my head. This second song is a kpop song that one of my friends showed me. It overplays itself onto my running tune. I forcibly reject the song. It remains untested. A set of feet start to pound the ground behind me, superseding my own quieter footsteps. The pressure of the second runner pushes me onwards. He stays there behind me, teasing me with his closeness. A gravel gets into my left shoe and has dedicated itself to rubbing the inside of my foot. It is rather distracting. The footfalls behind me get louder; it's the same runner from before, with the white top and blue bottoms. He slowly passes me. The scattering of supporters is mostly for other runners, though I still make the effort to smile and use their halfhearted encouragement.



I want to know your worst moment in cross country.

“Worst moment? I think it was this last semester when my knees were hurting a lot. Pretty much every time I ran, I was getting slower and my knees were hurting, and it was not fun. It's not very mind clearing or liberating.” Nolan forgot his bike at home this semester because he had been helping his younger brother sign up for classes the day he left for school.

“It happened this year, right? It's me stepping down as a coach. *My first thought was the pants story.* Yeah, me forgetting— me being so OCD about micromanaging, the minute details, because if you can't do the small things, how can you do the big things? I was so fixated on uniformity and really hammering out the small details that I forgot my luggage: I didn't have pants, I didn't have a toothbrush, I didn't have anything. So I had to run to Target and get all that stuff and I bought those skinny jeans by total accident in the moment. It was bad, but it worked itself out. Nobody knew.” Jeff keeps a board full of postcards from all over the world that were given to him by students.

“You know I was gonna mention something else, but I would say there is no specific worst moment. There is just a general feeling, and that is the worst moment. It's usually when you are in the middle of a run, and it's usually at the third or fourth mile, and you are way far from the beginning, and you have already been running for quite awhile, and you're just dying. You're suffering, but you are also not on your last mile. So you're nowhere near the end, and you've been running for quite some time, and you're just plodding along. You're on this random dogwood stretch of the race and there's no spectators. There's no other runners. It's just you and you have to keep going and it's awful!” Reid is one of the few people that genuinely enjoys math and codes whenever he can for his classes.



Tell me why; I never wanna hear you say

There is a different set of feet behind me now. It's Logan, another cross country runner from Cal Maritime. He stays behind me and anytime I have the breath and I turn around, I give him an extra word of encouragement; I can't have him falling behind. The sweat is beginning to

bead and is starting to roll down into my eyes. I desperately try to wipe away the sweat, but the heat of the day has made sure that everything is equally sweaty. The sweat starts to sting my eyes as it finally makes its way past my eyebrows and into my eyes. My mind begins to only be able to focus on one thing at a time. Most brain function shuts down in self defense against me forcing my body onwards. It switches between the rising heat of the sun, listening to the songs, keeping my legs moving, and the harshness of the air moving in and out of my lungs. It seems Logan has more energy than me. He passes me, much like the last guy: slowly but surely. I keep Logan closer to me, not letting him get too far ahead. The sun alternates between pounding against my back and searing my eyes as the lap loops around. Both songs are crying out in a discordant harmony, each trying to assert dominance over the other. My legs continue to hurt. My breath is rasping in my throat. I am a little apprehensive about this segment of the trip. If I ever were going to get lapped, it would be here. The strong temptation to stop and walk and just take a breather rises within me; there is no one around to judge me. After chasing Logan for some time, him slowly peeling away, a new, quicker set of footsteps approach behind me. These steps don't dawdle. It's the guy in first place; he passes me. At this point, just to keep myself going, I promise that the number of people to lap me will be able to be counted on one hand. There is a decent gap between the guy in first and the guy in second. The third and fourth guys are not too far behind. There is a lull in the noise: nobody behind me to push me, nobody in front of me to pull me along, no bystanders. Most of the crowd is currently at the finish, getting ready for that guy who is now so far away. My mind starts to wander and runs through the mental list again: the hot, hot sun, the warring battle between "Tell me Why" and "INVU", don't let the legs stop moving, keep breathing. I'm jerked out of my internal purgatory by the external stimulation of more steps from behind. This will be the fifth person to lap me, and hopefully the last. Pranked, the race has pranked me. The sixth place guy is running right next to the fifth place guy. Two people pass me and I happen to not be able to count to six on one hand: promise broken. On the upside I turn into my last lap.



I want to know your best moment in cross country.

“Best moment in cross country: I really enjoy the race. One thing that I really like is holding a constant pace and slowly increasing, catching the people that pass you at the start of the race.”

Nolan owns a pair of Willy Wonka glasses that he wears proudly.

“Oh, gosh, I don't know. There's a million of them, right? I think without trying to get emotional, I think there's a bunch of moments. Our first race we ran against UC Merced, we didn't have uniforms, but you had to be uniform, and so I found some old Turkey Trot t-shirts that the

intermural program had I was willing to donate. And so the night before this race, we got some pizzas and we carved up these t-shirts, and we were just such a motley crew. But that was the beginning of what I think has developed into a really strong program. So that's one of my favorite moments. Another very positive moment for me was the CalPac Championships. Our women's team finished absolutely deadlast – by a significant margin actually. And so why is that one of my favorite moments? Because every single girl on the team set a personal record and you would have thought we'd won the national championships. It was absolutely spectacular. And then another favorite moment for me, and it's not really a single moment, but a moment that we've had now, well, for the last eleven years. It's bittersweet because going to graduation and seeing people graduate and having people say that cross country was a highlight for them in their college– that's to me– that's to me a best moment. And thankfully, fortunately, I get to hear that pretty regularly.” Jeff makes pens for each senior at the end of every season.

“My best moment in cross country was junior year of college, the last race, the CalPac championship. It was a good race. I ran. I mean I was slower that year, but the best part was at the end of that race, it was the first time that I had thrown up at any of my cross country races. Throwing up, yeah it’s a bad thing and all, but it shows I put in effort for that race and it was really nice because I really miss the seniors that were there that year, so I’m glad I put in a good amount of effort for them in that race.” Reid maintains an unofficial hug schedule with select individuals, Nolan included.



Tell me why... Oh wait

There is only one lap: the current lap.

Logan is getting further and further away.

My lips start to chap.

The sun is burning, the songs are fighting, the legs are moving, the lungs are bellowing.

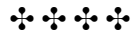
The course is dry and desolate.

There is nobody here anymore,

not even those in charge of making sure no one faints on the course.

The sun is burning, the songs are fighting, the legs are moving, the lungs are bellowing.

*“This is the last time I’ll have to go up this hill,” I keep telling myself,
“The last time I’ll have to go up this hill, just don’t stop.”
The sun is burning, the songs are fighting, the legs are moving, the lungs are bellowing.
Finally, the slope curves downhill, as it curved up at the start.
The end is in sight.*



Why do you keep running?

“Not quitting. Never quit.” Nolan is always quick with a joke and a smile.

“You don't want it to be easy. I actually like the challenge. I like it to be difficult. If it was easy, anybody can do it. I don't think low hanging fruit tastes as sweet as the stuff that you have to get at. What drives me is the challenge and always trying to get outside your comfort zone, because that's where the growth is. So that's what motivates me to do things that are difficult. At the end of the day, I can say that I did that. The pain and suffering, that's absolutely true. I don't love to run, personally. I love the feeling I get when I stop. And that's hard to explain to someone that doesn't necessarily run. It's like, ‘Well, just don't run at all,’ but you don't get that feeling. You don't get that sense of accomplishment and that kind of euphoric, runners high, if you will. It's not really a runner's high for me. It's just this ‘I feel good.’ I feel good about myself. I feel good about— you know— I just feel I'm in a better place, so my mood is better. Everything is better. And being sore is the trophy of that, right? It's the souvenir of the hard work that you did. And so I actually don't dislike the pain. I actually will enjoy it as long as it's not pain-pain, but the more sore you are, then you just know the harder you work.” Every year, on the night before the last race, Jeff will get emotional talking about the team.

“So I have alluded to this a lot before, but it’s the team dynamic. Running is an awful sport, I don’t stay on the team because of that. There are some people on the cross country team that actually enjoy running; they’re mad men, most of them, and they are also the faster ones on the team. But, I will say that the team dynamic— there is something about a group of people who suffer together through this awful sport and— it’s just everyone is so nice to each other: there is no reason to be mean. How well somebody else runs doesn’t affect how you run, so there is a lot

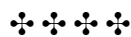
of cross team love. So in my last race that I had, the entire Cal Maritime cross country team was cheering everyone on at the finish. It was just two random people. And there was this one race I did this past year where this dude and I were running and right at the end I beat him. But at the end of the race, we gave each other a hug because running is such that when you do it together it really binds everyone together and it's such a nice team dynamic." Reid can be goofy when the situation dictates it, and even goofier when the situation does not call for it.



I want it that way

There are a couple of Cal Maritime people cheering me on, hanging out near the start. The race officials are telling me to stay to the right as the women's race is about to begin. I pass by the start line as the women are doing their last prerace warm up. There is no one else to cheer me on after this point, though I don't need it. The end draws ever nearer. One curve, two curve, red curve, blue curve, now it's the last straight away. I pick up the pace. "Tell me Why" has won the battle: it triumphantly blares in my head. I pick up the pace. Through the sparse trees I see the orange arch that marks the finish line. I pick up the pace. Faster run is faster done. There is meager cheering in these last hundred yards, though it is enough to keep me going at my sprint. I maintain my stride up until after I cross both of the sensing lines. The race is finally done...

...I want it that way.



To a layman, cross country may seem to be a sport full of crazed, masochistic maniacs, brought together by their shared desire to punish their bodies in a natural act turned unnatural. This is true, yes, but it is not the full story. The true essence of cross country lies within the coming together of disparate groups by the shared misery of running. It doesn't matter where you came from, or who you are: everyone suffers together. The biggest regret of many people on the team is not joining sooner. Another common thing on the cross country team is a lot of people will say, "I wasn't going to run this year, but I'm really glad I did..."

References

Interview with Nolan B. Nov 30, 2022. Voice Recording.

Interview with Jeff W. Nov 30, 2022. Voice Recording.

Interview with Reid Z. Nov 21, 2022. Voice Recording.

Appendix

Nolan's Interview

Hello, Mr. Bronstrup. I have a few questions for you about cross country.

Okay. All right. Sounds good.

Do you like running cross country, and if so, why?

I do like running cross country because it gives me time to just focus on nothing thing at all and just run, clear my mind.

So, why did you decide to join a sport that is really anti spectator and isn't that lonely?

No, it's not necessarily lonely because you have the team with you. But I decided to join because one of my friends told me that they could run 10 miles, and I couldn't do that, so I decided to start running.

Okay, this next question is very similar. So, you said you decided to join cross country because you had a friend that could run 10 miles. Is that what got you hooked into cross country in the first place?

Yeah, that's what got me into it in the first place, but then I stayed because I actually like running, and I liked getting faster.

I want to know your best moment in cross country so far.

Best moment in cross country, I really enjoy the race. One thing that I really like is holding a constant pace and slowly increasing, catching the people that pass you at the start of the race.

All right, now, on the flip side, I want to know your worst moment in cross country.

Worst moment? I think probably this last semester when my knees were hurting a lot, and pretty much every time I ran, I was getting slower and my knees were hurting, and it was not fun. It's not very mind clearing or liberating.

What is your drive to start a run or a race? Like, what gets you started?

I think those are the times when I relax.

What do you mean?

It's like my free time, so it gets me started just wanting to run. I don't have to psych myself up for that.

Well, once you've started running, what's your drive to keep running and keep running at a pace.

Not quitting.

You don't want to be a quitter?

No, never quit.

Okay. How do you feel after a race?

Tired, sometimes accomplished.

Tired and accomplished?

Yeah.

That's a short, sweet answer. Would you say you put in the work for cross country?

Yes, as much as I can. As much as I can.

What drives you to keep running, to stay on the team and to keep going to the face of pain and suffering that is running?

I think, being a part of the team, but also just how much fun running is and how much fun it is to get faster.

So, this is the question, tailored to you. What keeps you on the team more the fact that you get to run for the team? What's the interplay between those two things?

I think if I wasn't on the team, I would still run, and I do just by myself. But I think what keeps me on the team is the team because running with people who push you to get better is more fun. And there's that community aspect of it.

Misery does love company.

Yes.

This has been Nolan Bronstrup, one of the weirdos who actually enjoys running, beep.

Jeff's Interview

Okay. All right. This is an interview with Coach Jeff. So do you like running or do you like coaching cross country and why?

Yes. Okay. I absolutely like coaching cross country. Why do I like to coach cross country? Well, I'm pretty process driven. I'm not so much of an outcome process or an outcome person, but I really like the process. And I think cross country is all about that, being able to watch our program grow and evolve and develop not only year to year, but also from early September to our CalPac race. Our philosophy has been that we, basically we have one race, and watching our team then have ten to twelve weeks to develop for that one race is, to me, very exciting.

What got you hooked into cross country in the first place?

So, funny story. Maybe not that fun. The outgoing president, President Eisenhardt, right before he retired, increased our operation budget to include, to add one sport. And we had a running club on campus that had about 30 people in it. It was pretty successful. So I thought cross country would be a logical addition. It's a CalPac sport, so we'd have easy competition. And so I lobbied. I wrote up a proposal to the old athletic director saying, let's add not one sport, but we could add two sports. And that proposal was accepted and we did it. Now, I wasn't originally going to be the coach. We were going to hire a coach because as an athletic trainer, I didn't think I was going to have the time to coach the team. But, we didn't hire a coach right off the bat. So I was coaching the team in September, thinking, "okay, we're going to get a coach on board." And after a few weeks of coaching, I then said, "Well, I kind of like this." And so I put my name in the hat and got it. That was eleven years ago. Yeah.

Why did you decide to join a sport that is really anti spectator? Isn't it lonely?

It is lonely, but that's where you get to do a lot of world problem solving. I think for me, when I go for a run, I like to just run inside my head and I could be stressed out of my skull, and ten minutes into a run, I don't have a worry in the world. So I think that's the thing that I really like. And cross country is a spectator sport. Right. There's lots of people on the sidelines and they're all cheering you on. That's the thing that I love about cross country is it's such a supportive sport because I think everybody understands the pain and suffering that we're all going through when we do it, and they recognize the challenge and support that.

I want to know your best moment in cross country.

Oh, gosh, I don't know. There's a million of them, right? I think without trying to get emotional. I think there's a bunch of moments. The first race we ever ran was up there. I can't give you a single best. Our first race we ran against UC Merced, or uniforms— we didn't have uniforms, but you had to be uniform, and so I found some old Turkey Trot t-shirts that the intermural program had I was willing to donate. And so the night before this race, we got some pizzas and we carved up these t-shirts and we were just such a motley crew. But that was the beginning of what I think has developed into a really strong program. So that's one of my favorite moments. Another very positive moment for me was the CalPac Championships. Our women's team finished absolutely deadlast by a significant margin actually. And so why is that one of my favorite moments? Because every single girl on the team PRed and you would have thought we'd won the national championships. It was absolutely spectacular. And then another favorite moment for me, and it's

not really a single moment, but a moment that we've had now, well, for the last eleven years. And it's bittersweet because going to graduation and seeing people graduate and having people say that cross country was a highlight for them in their college, that's to me, that's to me a best moment. And thankfully, fortunately I get to hear that pretty regularly.

Yeah, about once every year.

About.

On the flip side, I want to know your worst moment in cross country.

There's not a lot of worst moments. I'm just thinking worst moment. I'm thinking the fire that we had—

But that was also a best moment.

That wasn't a worst moment that was like one of my best moments. Right. It happened this year, right? It's me stepping down as a coach.

My first thought was the pants story.

Yeah, we need to talk about that. Yeah, that's probably okay. I'm going to put that on there. Yeah. Me forgetting— me being so OCD about the micromanaging, you know, the minute details. Because if you can't do the small things, right? How can you do the big things? So fixated on uniformity and really hammering out the small details. And before the CalPac Championship, down in Weekend, down in Fresno, I forgot my luggage, I didn't have pants, I didn't have a toothbrush, I didn't have anything. So I had to run to Target and get all that stuff and I bought those skinny jeans on total accident in the moment. It was bad, but it worked itself out. Nobody did.

How do you feel after a race?

I feel like I ran the race— as a coach— I feel like I ran the race. It's exhausting. I love it. I think it's awesome. You know, the reality is it doesn't matter. Again, cross country is one of the reasons why I love this board, is that you don't have to finish first. I mean, there's races all within the race and so watching people challenge each other, competitors, opponents for first place or for second to last place, that is equally exhilarating to me. In fact, maybe more so. Right. Because those folks that are not trying to finish at the back of the pack aren't necessarily scoring for their teams, they're just doing it for the pride. And to think that they aren't working as hard as the person that wins the race or consistently comes up in the front of the pack, the effort is equal. That's the neat thing about it. Just the outcome is different. That's why we focus on effort over outcome. I love

it. I think at the end of the race, everyone's smiling and joking and having a good time. I think the dynamic that we were able to cultivate with our program, it's a great experience. I love it. There's nowhere else I'd rather be.

This is the last one, the one that's a little funky. What drives you to keep running? I guess you can say. What drives you to keep coaching, previously, to stay on the team, to keep going in the face of pain and suffering?

So I think what I tried to tell Coach, our athletes in the past has been you don't want it to be easy. I actually like the challenge. I like it to be difficult. If it was easy, anybody can do it. I don't think low hanging fruit tastes as sweet as the stuff that you have to get at. I think that for me personally, that personally drives me the challenge and always trying to get outside your comfort zone, because that's where the growth is. So that's what motivates me to do things that are difficult. At the end of the day, I can say that I did that. The pain and suffering, that's absolutely true. I don't love to run, personally. I love the feeling I get when I stop. And that's hard to explain to someone that doesn't run necessarily. It's like, well, just don't run at all. But you don't get that feeling. You don't get that sense of accomplishment and that kind of euphoric, runners high, if you will. It's not really a runner's high for me. It's just this I feel good. I feel good about myself. I feel good about you know, I just feel I'm in a better place. So my mood is better. Everything is better. And being sore is the trophy of that, right? It's the souvenir of the hard work that you did. And so I actually don't dislike the pain. I actually will enjoy it as long as it's not pain. Pain, but soreness is one thing, of course. But the more sore you are, then you just know the harder you work. So I don't know if that answers the question.

It did.

Okay.

That's all I have. Thank you, Coach.

Thank you.

Reid's Interview

Welcome Reid, I heard you run cross country, is that true?

Sometimes

First off, do you like running cross country?

No, I hate it.

Why do you hate it?

Running is an awful sport. You get out there and you force your body to do something it doesn't want to do. Normally when people run, there's something chasing them or a fear of death that's driving them forward. In cross country, you are trying to replicate that with no actual fear of death. Running is awful.

I'd like to ask why did you decide to join a sport that so anti-spectator and do you get lonely out there?

Well, I'll get into the reasons I joined later, but yes, it's a sport that anti-spectator and yes, it's lonely, but when you are out there in a race, spectators don't even matter. The only time they do is right at the end of a race when you have that final push. It's really internal and you just focus on keeping your body moving. So yes, it's nice when there is spectators there that keep you going, but it doesn't feel lonely. It's really you versus you out there.

What got you hooked into cross country in the first place?

I was in my junior year of high school and had just changed high schools and my mother told me 'hey you need to do a sport' and there were three sports to choose from: water polo, football, and cross country. I didn't want to join water polo because they wore speedo's. I didn't want to join football because of concussions. So I was like let's try this other sport out.

Sounds like a good decision

It was not. *laughs*

So once you started running cross country, were you happy with that decision?

You know at the time it was like oh look at this sport. Oh look, I'm not a couch potato. Oh look, I'm getting more fit, but then, yes, cross country has had it's ups and yes I wouldn't change it now that i have been apart of it, but if I could like change cross country without actually knowing what cross country had to offer, I would. Running is not fun.

I want to know your best moment in cross country.

My best moment in cross country was junior of college, the last race, the CalPac championship. It was a good race. I ran. I mean I was slower that year, but the best part was at the end of that race. It was the first time that I had thrown up at any of my cross country races and throwing up, yeah it's a bad thing and all, but it shows I put in effort to that race and it was really nice because I really missed the seniors that were there that year. So I'm glad I put in a good amount of effort for them.

I'm glad you threw up. So now that you have shared your best moment, I want to know what your worst moment in cross country is.

You know I was gonna mention something else, but I would say there is no specific worst moment. There is just a general feeling and that is the worst moment. It's usually when you are in the middle of a run and it's usually at the third or fourth mile and you are way far from the beginning and you have already been running for quite awhile and you're just dying. You're suffering, but you are also not on your last mile. So you're no where near the end and you've been running for quite some time and you're just sitting there. You're on this random dog wood stretch of the race and there's spectators. There's no other runners. It's just you and you have to keep going and it's awful!

That sounds terrible. So what would you say is your drive to even start a run?

So, one of the qualifications for being a part of the cross country team is well, you know, doing the races. So I start my races with a mixture of, 'hey I still wanna be apart of this team. Everybody's so cool' and the other half of that is having to juke myself out. I have to lie to myself and say 'this isn't going to be that bad.' You know the sooner you start, the sooner you're done. So I lie to myself 'oh this is going to be fine.' It's a mixture of lying and for the team.

Wonderful, so once you have started running, what keeps you going then?

Embarrassment. If i were to stop a race in the middle just because I didn't want to do it, oh that would be so embarrassing. I mean there's also a little bit of, yes it's nice to say, 'keep running for the teammates', but once you're out there, once you're going, once you're at it, there's really just embarrassment and will power. There's no pride when you're running.

Describe to me how you feel after a race?

I feel so good because I'm done running. I've just exerted my body a lot so it's like the good kind of tired. It's like the honest kind of tired and I've finished I don't have to do anything else for the rest of the day. I can just sorta slump, eat some food, go back to my room eventually and hangout out knowing that this horrendous activity is behind me.

Would you say you put in the work for cross country?

Yes and no. For the most part, when I am at the cross country practices I will put in the appropriate amount of work and if I were to cheat a workout, the only person I would be cheating is myself. Nobody else on the team is going to be detrimented if I don't put in my 100 percent into a workout. But I will be, I won't be getting the fullest experience I can out of that

workout. But, if I don't have a cross country practice, or I have to miss it for whatever reason, I put in the work to make it up because running is miserable and misery loves company so I'm not going to run by myself.

What drives you to keep running, to stay on the team, to keep going in the face of the pain and suffering that is running?

So I have alluded to this a lot before, but it's the team dynamic. Running is an awful sport, I don't stay on the team because of that. There are some people on the cross country team that actually enjoy running. They're mad men, most of them and they are also the faster ones on the team. But, I will say that the team dynamic. There is something about a group of people who suffer together through this awful sport and it's just everyone is so nice to each other. There is no reason to be mean. How well somebody else runs doesn't affect how you run so there is a lot of cross team love. So in my last race that I had the entire Cal Maritime cross country team was cheering everyone else on at the finish. It was just two random people. And there was this one race I did this last year and this dude and I were running and right at the end I beat him. But at the end of the race, we gave each other a hug because running is such an awful sport that when you do it together it really binds everyone together and it's such a nice team dynamic.

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