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u l r g . r b b l o

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r i) . n o g b y r r

g l i l b o v o //

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Marathon 2015

Last Sunday I watched the London Marathon all the way through, on the television screen and from the comfort of my armchair. I had intended to do some other things with the time, but somehow seeing it on the screen made me hesitate, then hover, and finally sit down and watch. I have no interest at all in sports, but this is one that I do enjoy seeing, probably because people are not really in competition with each other, and are mostly wanting to improve their own performance, or maybe just get to the finish line regardless of the hours taken. I know the elite runners are competing, but I do feel that they are only using each other's presence in the race to boost their own performance, and are not setting themselves against anyone else.

Although I have seen it many times before, I am always amazed at how many people have made the bold and courageous decision to apply for a place, been accepted, done as much training as they can, and have turned up on the day, ready and willing to put their absolute best effort into running the 26.2 miles around London's roads. This year over 38,000 runners took part, starting in a Royal Park and ending up at a Royal Residence and a large percentage were running to raise money for charities. Whilst watching the elite runners, I admire their skill and endurance, as they are obviously not getting out of breath in the first mile as we armchair viewers would be likely to do! They settle into a consistent regular pace and it is interesting how some of them let another become the leader of the group and keep themselves behind for most of the route. The exciting part is when they start to break up in the last mile or so, and make their sprint towards the finish line, and that seems to be where the competitive aspect becomes more apparent.

I really look forward each year to seeing the imaginative ideas and costumes that some of the runners deck themselves out with. My favourite this year was the tyrannosaurus dinosaur, especially as it had its own legs, attached to the heels of the runner, so that it appeared to be walking on its own. Another favourite was the lady dressed as a painting of the Mona Lisa, with a hole in the framed canvas for her own head to go through. I am sure that even now people are thinking up ingenious get-ups and working out how to make them, so that they can run without being overburdened by the extra weight or getting overheated.

I admire the marathon frame of mind, pushing through and defeating any negative thoughts that try to hinder them, and the utter determination to finish, or at least go as far along the route as their leg muscles will take them. This is all about the "battlefield of the mind" where their original decision to persevere can be either swayed, toppled and defeated, or the challenge can cause it to be strengthened, toughened and reinforced. Being amongst so many other runners, as well as the cheering crowds, clearly provides the necessary encouragement, as strength or willpower threatens to fade, and even in the less popular areas along the route, there are groups of bystanders clapping and cheering the runners. I always wonder how the very last few people cope, as they have 38,000 people ahead of them, and they must have to cheer themselves on much more than those in the middle and front.

Marathon 2015

I am writing this on the Monday after, and I really feel for all those participants waking up this morning with their limbs and feet letting them know that they have pushed it as far as possible, something I only experience when I have overdone the gardening or furniture moving. I am sure they are relieved it is done and their goal is achieved, but also maybe sad that the exhilaration of the day has now begun to dissipate. Many will counter that by setting to work with a plan of action for further training in order to improve performance for next year's marathon.

Following a marathon is a really good opportunity to see inspirational examples of how to push through and this can be applied to your shorthand writing efforts, gritting your teeth under difficulties, and finally getting to the goal, and, after making some corrections, being ready to do it all again, with greater skill and better results. During the race they were talking about "my PB" meaning Personal Best and of course, these are the first two shorthand strokes we all learned. I hope your PB is improving regularly and rapidly each time you take on your own speed and endurance challenge.

(802 words)