

## One Foot in Front of the Other by Stella Haynes

I was ten when I first learned that running was a sport. After learning that, I was determined to one day try it. And now here I am about to run my first 100 meter race. It was a cloudy day and you could only see a slice of the sun starting to peek out of the horizon. I was in heat two and I had many thoughts rolling in my head. I was thinking “What if I fall?” or “Will I just get last?”

I stood and watched the first heat run and it only made me more nervous. As I got in my lane for my race, I noticed a guy next to me holding a gun. All I heard him say was “Runners take your mark, get set” as the gun loudly went off. Those few seconds that I was sprinting was all a blur. I could only hear my heavy breath panting and the audience screaming as I reached the finish.

I was shocked when someone came over and gave me a first place ribbon. I just wanted to scream with joy! I then saw a blurry figure come running up to me. It was my dad who came over to congratulate me. He swooped in and gave me a huge hug.

“I’m so proud of you!” he said. “Thanks dad,” I said with a big smile on my face.

After that race, I decided that I want to continue running as a sport. But with running, I felt like I had several obstacles to get through. First, my friends were surprised when I told them I wanted to do track, and that made me feel different from everyone else. A second obstacle was that I live in a neighborhood with boys. I felt like I was always outnumbered by them and at the same time I played sports with them all the time. Playing sports with boys always felt like winning was very important. Doubly so because I was a girl and was never expected to win anything. Lastly, running itself can be hard! I have a hard time overcoming the fear of being under peer pressure knowing it was always up to me. I had to mentally discipline myself.

Our team had finally made it to districts and it has been 6 years since our team won a championship. I was determined to bring home a medal today. I then heard an announcement go over the speakers saying “400 meters, time for the starting line-ups.” I was in heat one, lane five this time and I started to run over to the starting line. I felt my stomach drop and I noticed my palms getting sweaty. I looked around me to see the competition.

I heard the announcer speak over the microphone and he said “Runners time to get set up.” I then crouched down to the ground where I got in a starting stance. This race was a 400 meter one that I have been training for awhile. Then the announcer on my right shot the gun and we were off. I had to keep repeating the phrase, “You are stronger than you think.” Then a few seconds went by and I was able to spot the finish line coming up in front of me.

So I had to give it all I had. I had to leave it all here on the track at this very moment. I heard the audience cheering as I reached the finish. It was such a good feeling as my foot touched the finish line. I felt so alive. I was so proud of myself. I then saw the last runner making it up to the finish line. And the race was over. I sat on the track for a bit to try and catch

my breath. I looked and all I could think about was savoring this very moment. Through all of these experiences, I feel that I have way more confidence to go out there and take risks, try new things, and be ok if I fail along the way.