5 Beyond Boston and Kathrine Switzer

Women's participation in distance running

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On April 19, 1967, runner #261 lined up along with 741 other runners at the start of the Boston Marathon (Switzer, 2009). The temperature that historic morning hovered around 40 degrees Fahrenheit with snow, sleet, and bitterly cold wind. Many of the runners took refuge near the starting line in the high school gymnasium where the pre-race physicals were being conducted. K. V. Switzer, #261, started the race with the hood of her sweatshirt up, trying to keep warm and relaxed. She was disappointed she had to wear warm clothes over the pretty running outfit she had picked out, but she didn't want to perform poorly on this important day. As she moved along the course, Switzer removed the hood of her sweatshirt and ran comfortably along with several male friends, including her boyfriend, Tom, and her coach, Arnie. Soon after, she was spotted by a media truck and the news of a "girl" in the race spread rapidly. Several race officials began to taunt race director Jock Semple about a girl in his race. He was enraged and when he spotted Switzer he jumped out of the media truck and attempted to rip the numbers off of her chest. Semple was then tackled by Switzer's boyfriend, a former All American football player, the two landing in some bushes along the road. Switzer finished the race in four hours and 20 minutes with her numbers intact, but was disqualified by Semple and suspended for six months by the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU).

Mainstream media coverage of women's running, along with the bulk of historical work on women in distance running, has focused on the 1967 Boston Marathon exploits of Kathrine Switzer as a pivotal moment in the history of women's distance running (Cooper, 1992; Jutel, 2003; Plymire, 1997). Also on the Boston Marathon course that day was another woman, Roberta "Bobbi" Gibb. Gibb, however, was not a "numbered" runner in the race. She was, therefore, not an official participant and could not be disqualified, suspended, or even removed from the course. On that cold day, Gibb actually "finished" the race almost an hour ahead of Switzer (Pate & O'Neill, 2007) but Gibb had in fact become the first woman to complete the Boston Marathon when she did so a year prior, in 1966, in a time of 3:21:40.

So despite being the first woman to ever complete the race as well as finishing the 1967 race significantly faster than Switzer, Gibb received scant attention in the ensuing decades in comparison to Switzer. Her exploits merited a second

page photograph and article headlined "Girl Finished Marathon" in the *Boston Globe* (Ralby, 1966) the morning after the 1966 race. This news article was followed the next day by an editorial noting that Gibb had finished "in a respectable time, to the chagrin of BAA officials" while cautioning that "this feminine initiative may trigger a sweeping counter-offensive" and concluding with the question, "Really now, is this really a man's world, as most women complain?" ("The Lady Also Ran," April 21, 1966, p. 14). To their credit, the *Boston Globe* did publish a subsequent letter from a male member of the public that criticized the editorial staff for "seek(ing) to destroy one moment of well-deserved glory" asking that they "give credit where credit is due" (Deslongchamps, May 5, 1966, p. 14). The May 2, 1966 issue of *Sports Illustrated* featured an article on Gibb (Brown, 1966) but outside of the *SI* article, *Boston Globe* editorial, and a few local newspaper sources and others that simply noted that Gibb was also on the course that infamous day, there was little publicity about Gibb at the time. This may be due in part to Gibb's own reluctance to challenge the AAU and BAA. Gibb said that if her participation caused any problem she just wouldn't run the race ("The Lady Also Ran," April 21, 1966, p. 14).

Despite her statements in 1966, in Gibb's 2011 memoir it becomes quite clear that she considered her running the Boston Marathon a subversive act that was critical to proving to the world that women could run the marathon distance. Gibb's achievements were recognized only much later by Boston officials and the running community. In 1996, the BAA listed Gibb as the unofficial Boston Marathon winner for 1966–1968 ("Celebrating Four Decades," 2015) and Gibb was increasingly included in local events commemorating women's inclusion in the Boston Marathon ("Marathon's Elite Women Runners," 1996).

It is important to note that, even though Gibb received only scant media attention relative to Switzer, Gibb was actually not the first woman to complete a marathon in the United States (Davis, 2012). That honor went to Merry Lepper when she completed the Western Hemisphere Marathon in Culver City, California in 1963. Lepper and her friend Lyn Carmen snuck into the Western Hemisphere marathon by hiding in some bushes near the starting line and running without official numbers in the race, just as Gibb would do almost two years later in the Boston Marathon. All this said, despite the earlier completions of U.S. marathons by Lepper and Gibb, Switzer's participation in the 1967 Boston Marathon generated unprecedented media and public interest in women's distance running and it was Switzer that would go on to become the face of women's distance running in the United States.

The emergence of women's distance running in the United States

The work of Cooper (1992), Plymire (1997), and Jutel (2003) explores the emergence of distance running in the 1960s and 1970s, with a particular focus on women's distance running. Their work details how distance running changed significantly in the 1970s, as large numbers of participants began to enter races,

particularly the marathon, simply to participate and to be physically active. This shift to participatory running contributed to the gradual inclusion of a more diverse group of women in distance running, in terms of ability and performance. These three scholars also explore the role of increasing commercialization within the sport of distance running and the impact this had on women's involvement in the sport. Cooper's (1992, 1995) work, for example, highlights the important role of Avon Products, Inc. (Avon) in facilitating significant opportunities for women in distance running in the early years. Avon later became a major player in the cause-based charity fundraising movement (King, 2006). Jutel's (2003) work also briefly documents the role of Bonne Bell, Inc. (Bonne Bell), L'eggs, and Avon in sponsoring women's running events.

Jutel (2003) examines the ways in which certain runners, in particular Switzer, dominated media representations of female distance runners. Jutel (2007) also documents the ways in which certain female runners are remembered and others forgotten. She, along with numerous others, has highlighted many of the women who broke gender barriers in distance running events but remained relatively unknown, including: the legend of Melpomene at the 1896 Olympic Games in Athens (Jutel, 2003); Julia Chase at the 1961 Manchester, CT Turkey Trot (Plymire, 1997); Merry Lepper who completed the 1963 Western Hemisphere Marathon in Culver City, CA (Davis, 2012); and, Millie Sampson at the 1964 Owairaka marathon in New Zealand (Robinson, 2013).

These relatively unknown women stand in stark contrast to Switzer, whose running of the 1967 marathon with numbers (and the attack on and disqualification of Switzer), was singled out as the most important event in the history of women's distance running. Jutel (2003) details three major reasons why Switzer's run was seized upon as the pivotal moment in the history of women in distance running: (1) the very public nature of Switzer's performance; (2) the fact that Switzer fit the cultural ideals of femininity, allowing the distance running community to avoid transgression of traditional gender roles even as Switzer broke down barriers for women in distance running; and, (3) the blatant discrimination against female runners prompted a public response. A significant focus of Jutel's (2003) work is on how Switzer abided by gender norms and in many ways reinforced dominant notions of femininity despite her rule breaking (Jutel, 2003).

The remainder of this chapter examines selected historical experiences of women in United States distance running from the 1967 Boston Marathon onward, with particular focus on how women's experiences in distance running diverged from the experiences of male distance runners. Four significant movements or events that shaped women's involvement in running during this time period are explored, including: the corporate sponsorship of women's running/walking events; the acceptance of the women's marathon into the Olympic program; women's involvement in the development of cause-based endurance fund-raising events; and, the Clydesdale/Athena movement.

The corporate sponsorship of distance running

The 1967 Boston Marathon occurred near the beginning of a period of significant growth for marathon racing, and running in general (Cooper, 1992). Between 1896 and the mid-1960s most of the competitors in the marathon were what would be considered serious runners (Plymire, 1987) and most races were relatively small. The general consensus was that if you could not run well you should not run at all. The short cut off times embraced by many race directors reflected this philosophy. Men ran rather than jogged, and the AAU banned women from running races over a mile and a half.

As the numbers of distance runners grew throughout the late 1960s and the early 1970s, the singular focus on elite runners began to wane. A much wider range of participants began competing in distance running events. Prior to 1964 there had never been more than 300 competitors in the Boston Marathon. By 1968 there were over 1,000 competitors ("Boston Marathon History," 2015). As the numbers of distance runners grew, the number of marathons being contested in the United States also grew, from 40 at the end of the 1960s to almost 200 by 1977 (Cooper, 1992). According to Cooper (1998), "by the late 1960s the presence of fitness runners heightened differentiation in the marathon: the event now comprised two races" (p. 131). In the inaugural New York City Marathon in 1970 there were only 127 participants (126 men and one woman) but by the 1979 running of the NYC Marathon there were 11,533 participants (10,207 men and 1,326 women). In 2014, over 50,000 runners took part in the NYC Marathon ("New York City Marathon," 2015).

It was during the early 1970s that distance running started to become commodified, with corporate sponsorship beginning to shape the future of running (Plymire, 1997). Fred Lebow, director of the New York City Marathon, led the way in the commodification process. Lebow realized that a key to the success of the New York City Marathon lay in attracting a large number of competitors to the race and in the revenue their participation would generate (Cooper, 1992).

Lebow also recognized that increased numbers of participants could lead to additional revenue from corporate sponsors seeking to target their goods and services to distance running enthusiasts. Thus, Lebow decided to increase the numbers of marathon participants, regardless of their athletic ability. Cooper (1992) details how Lebow implemented a number of strategies to make the New York City Marathon more attractive to a larger number of runners. These strategies included: keeping the course open longer; recording the race times of all official finishers; and, providing commemorative medals and t-shirts for those completing the race. Finishers t-shirts, heavily adorned with race sponsorship logos, have become standard at most, if not all, races. This type of commodification fundamentally changed the marathon.

Although AAU rules still prevented women from running the marathon distance in the late 1960s and the IAAF did not officially sanction a women's marathon until 1979 (Sailors, 2012), some women were beginning to participate in marathon distance races because they believed women should have the same

opportunities as men (Davis, 2012; Gibb, 2011; Switzer, 2009). In addition to the push from prospective women participants, the process of commercialization and the growing role of corporate sponsorship was also pushing the door open for women. In keeping with his desire to maximize race revenues, Lebow allowed women to compete in the first running of the New York Marathon in 1970 (Cooper, 1992). There was just one woman who entered the inaugural running of the NYC Marathon and she did not finish the race ("New York City Marathon," 2015). In 1971, five women started the race and four completed the race, with 19-year old Beth Bonner winning the women's title in 2:55:22.

In the fall of 1971, the AAU ruled that some women could compete in the marathon distance but the women must not be in the same exact race as the men (Switzer, 2009). The women would have a separate start and finish line or would not start at the same time as the men (Butler, 2012). But despite the progress made with the AAU, many female runners and Lebow were unhappy with the continued restriction on women's participation in the marathon. Several women and Lebow organized a protest against the AAU at the start of the 1972 race (Butler, 2012). Finally, in 1972 women were allowed to officially run the same marathon as the men.

As he was building the New York Marathon into one of the most popular and successful U.S. marathons, Lebow was approached by the public relations firm of S. C. Johnson & Son, Incorporated, about the creation of a women's marathon (Cooper, 1992). Given the reluctance in the early 1970s to have women and men compete in the same race, and a history of separate sport for men and women, this approach made sense. The problem was that Lebow wasn't sure there were enough women interested in competing in a women-only marathon. Instead, he pitched the idea of a shorter race. Lebow was a masterful promoter of the event. Despite his best efforts, which included taping flyers to light poles in Manhattan, the first Women's Mini-Marathon held in 1972 had only 78 participants and covered six miles. In 1977, cosmetics company Bonne Bell took over sponsorship of the Mini-Marathon and it became the Bonne Bell Mini-Marathon. Race organizers expected around 200 competitors but 2,231 women showed up for the race, including 17-year old high school student Lynn Jennings, who won the race in a time of 34:31 ("Start Strong," 2015). Jennings went on to win the event six times and placed second five times. The race continues today as the Tufts Health Plan 10K. The 2013 version of the race had almost 6,000 participants, including 18 women who had run the race for 37 consecutive years. While attracting a broad cross-section of the women's running community, the Tufts Health Plan 10K has also become an elite race attracting the best female runners from around the world. USA Track and Field has regularly designated the race as the United States 10K National Championship for women.

Jess Bell, chairman of Bonne Bell, Inc., was a pioneer in the field of corporate fitness. A marathoner himself and a member of the President's Council on Physical Fitness, Bell introduced fitness programs for employees of Bonne Bell in the 1970s (Baranick, 2005). Under his leadership, the company created on-site workout facilities for employees, including a track and a weight room, and also

offered exercise programs for employees at both the firm's headquarters in Lakewood, Ohio and a production plant in Westlake, Ohio. Bell encouraged workers to work out, lose weight, and stop smoking by offering financial incentives. These programs were part of Bell's "Be Fit. Look Good" philosophy. Bell's first foray into sponsorship of distance running events was a community race between employees of the firm's headquarters and the production plant. But his role in the development of women's running events would prove even more significant than his pioneering efforts in corporate fitness.

Bell's decision to sponsor the Mini-Marathon in 1977 brought Bonne Bell to the forefront of the running boom with the first women-only race series in the United States. Bell actively recruited Kathrine Switzer to take charge of the Bonne Bell series (Switzer, 2009). Switzer was interested in the job with Bonne Bell if it could help her get distance events into the Olympics, but Jess Bell was unable or unwilling to pay her enough salary for Switzer to leave her job in New York. She described their interaction on the topic of her working for Bonne Bell in her book *Marathon Woman*:

> I sent Jess a proposal on his series idea, stressing state-of-the-art race organization, AAU sanctions, and professional public relations. It was more than Jess wanted to spend—he just wanted a celebration of women. Still, he offered me a job. Unfortunately, it was for less than I was making at AMF … I got paid as a consultant and we let the job discussion drift.
>
> (Switzer, 2009, p. 310)

Thus, while Switzer never became a full time employee at Bonne Bell, she continued to be involved with the company's efforts to sponsor distance-running events for women.

Around the same time that Bonne Bell began sponsoring the Mini-Marathon, another cosmetics company appeared on the women's running scene (Cooper, 1995). Switzer pitched the idea of an international marathon for women and a women's racing circuit to Avon. Avon hired Switzer as a manager of special promotions with her primary job to run its already existing women's tennis futures circuit, with a secondary focus on creating running opportunities for women (Switzer, 2009). Avon's International Running Circuit for women was introduced in 1978 with the inaugural running of Avon Women's International Marathon in Atlanta, Georgia ("Avon Running," 2015). Switzer (2009) invited all of the top female runners in the world; 14 of the top 25 female runners showed up to compete. The next year the race was held in Germany and in 1980 the streets of London were shut down to accommodate the third running of the Avon Women's International Marathon. Avon expanded its racing circuit around the world, adding races in Brazil, Belgium, and Japan; it also expanded its women's racing series within the United States. The women who won local races qualified to participate at the next level, culminating in the Avon International Marathon. The Avon International Marathon and race circuit were designed to develop an international participation base in women's distance running that

would help accelerate the addition of the women's marathon to the Olympic program (Switzer, 2009). However, despite all of these efforts and the enormous growth of women's running, women still struggled for acceptance at the highest level within the sport of distance running—the Olympics.

Women's Olympic Marathon debut

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, the IOC consistently refused to allow the women's marathon onto the Olympic Program. And although the AAU began holding an AAU women's marathon championship in 1974 and the IAAF began sanctioning marathon distance races in 1979 (Hansen, 2012), the IOC continued to exclude the marathon for women at the Olympic Games.

The early exclusion of women was firmly rooted in the beliefs of the founder of the modern Olympic Games, Pierre de Coubertin. His efforts to exclude women from the Olympics continued throughout his presidency from 1896 to 1925; his failure to continue to exclude them ultimately contributed to his resignation (Teetzel, 2006). The exclusion of women from Olympic distance running events was reinforced by the well-documented media construction of the 800 m running event for women at the 1928 Olympic Games (Vertinsky, 2000). In 1928, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) had finally allowed women to run the 800 m race. But the widespread media coverage of the race depicted exhausted women collapsing on the track. The media's negative construction of this event led to the removal of the event in the next Olympics, and it did not reappear until the 1960 Rome Olympics. Although men had competed in the next longest event, the 1,500 m race, beginning in 1896, a 1,500 m event was not added to the Olympic program for women until 1972 (Sailors, 2012).

Despite growing pressure, due at least in part to the success of the Avon International Running Circuit, in July of 1980 the IOC deemed the women's marathon too controversial and decided to postpone a vote until the following February. The main reason cited was a lack of supporting evidence that marathon running was not medically dangerous for women (Switzer, 2009). The myth that long distance running or strenuous athletic exertion was dangerous for women was central to the IOC's reluctance to add certain women's events to the Olympic program (Sailors, 2012). The exclusion of women from Olympic competition in distance running, ski jumping, as well as team sports such as hockey and soccer, was often based on the perception of female frailty. Sailors (2012) cited additional factors affecting women's struggle to have distance events on the Olympic program. Sailors argued that concerns about female masculinity, and the belief that women were simply not interested in long distance running, also contributed to the IOC's reluctance to add distance-running events for women. Vertinsky's (2000) work studying older female runners addressed how women were once seen as too frail for any strenuous activity lasting more than a few minutes. The idea that long distance running was dangerous or risky for women continued to be perpetuated into the 1980s. Laurendeau's (2008) work on women's exclusion from ski jumping explains how "risk discourses operate

to authorize and legitimate particular exclusionary practices" (p. 385). Women's participation in endurance running events, much like ski jumping, was and is shaped by completely illogical risk discourses that have resulted in women's exclusion from those events.

Concerns about sport interfering with women's femininity shaped the way many female runners were represented in mainstream and running media of the 1960s and 1970s (Jutel, 2003). Jutel's (2003) work provides a detailed review of the ways in which female runners, especially marathoners, were constructed as feminine in order to make running appear more acceptable for women. Fears about female runner's femininity were limiting women's opportunities to compete at the highest levels, including at the Olympic Games. Jutel (2003) described how important it was for Olympic inclusion that female runners maintained their femininity:

> The marathon was not the result of challenge so much as it was the result of conforming to gender expectations. The fortuitous convergence of visible gender conformity and injustice furnished the initial impetus; continued development hinged, however, on preserving expectations of femininity within a framework of resistance and diligence.
>
> (p. 34)

Jutel goes on to argue that Switzer became the focal point for women's right to run long distance races because Switzer did not upset the gender order.

Gradually discourses surrounding women and physical activity began to evolve. This evolution was impacted by scientific research that failed to demonstrate undue harm to women undertaking strenuous physical activity. Jutel (2003) suggested that one of the key players in this shift was physician and long distance running coach Ernst van Aaken. Van Aaken was in a unique position to address this issue as a doctor and a long time supporter of women's running. He was instrumental in refuting the medical discourses that viewed women as frail and women's participation in long distance running as dangerous. His efforts made it very difficult for race organizers, including the IOC, to continue to exclude women from competition. The American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) also played a pivotal role in challenging these dominant discourses. In late 1979, ACSM recognized the scientific research and issued an opinion statement that read in part:

> It is the opinion of the American College of Sports Medicine that female athletes should not be denied the opportunity to complete in long-distance running. There exists no conclusive scientific or medical evidence that long-distance running is contraindicated for the healthy, trained female athlete. The American College of Sports Medicine recommends that females be allowed to compete at the national and international level in the same distances in which their male counterparts compete.
>
> (ACSM, 1979, ix)

Global resistance to women's participation in the marathon was beginning to wane as arguments supporting women's exclusion had been refuted by scientific research.

Although women's participation in distance running events had achieved fairly widespread acceptance by the early 1980s, time seemed to be running out to get the women's marathon added for the 1984 Los Angeles Olympic Games. However, shortly after the IAAF sanctioned the Tokyo International Marathon it recommended to the IOC that it allow the women's marathon. The combined efforts of Switzer and Avon, along with the IAAF support, culminated in the IOC's February 23, 1981 decision to allow the women's marathon (Switzer, 2009). With this principal goal achieved, the last Avon International Marathon for women was held in 1984 on the same Los Angeles course where the first Olympic Marathon would be contested just a few months later.

On August 5, 1984, 50 women lined up to start the first ever women's Olympic marathon at Santa Monica College near Los Angeles (Pattillo, 2014). Joan Benoit Samuelson, representing the United States, took the lead at mile three and never relinquished it. She won the race in 2:24:52, beating the second place finisher, Grete Waitz, by over a minute. Moran (1984, August 6), writing for the *New York Times* the following day, described Benoit's race:

> With a daring that successfully challenged the finest female distance runners in the world and an ease that surprised even herself, Joan Benoit took a calculated risk, ran away from the field after passing the three-mile mark, and won the first Olympic marathon for women.
>
> (Online)

It is difficult to measure the impact of Benoit's gold medal performance in the Los Angeles Olympics on women's distance running in the United States, but it is clear that in the ensuing decades many women in the United States took up the sport of running. Pattillo (2014), writing in *Competitor* magazine, described the perceived impact that Benoit's victory had on women in the United States:

> Although there were many women running pioneers and elite-level runners before Samuelson won gold, Joanie's stunning effort in Los Angeles that summer set about an energy wave that hasn't stopped 30 years later. In the wake of Joanie's victory came athletic empowerment, advancements in women's running apparel, Oprah running a marathon and inspired generations of women runners running for their goals and motivations.
>
> (Online)

It is important to note that the inclusion of the marathon for women in the Olympics did not signify full equality for female distance runners. There were no 5,000 m or 10,000 m races staged for women at the 1984 Olympic Games. The latter was added for the 1988 Games and the former was finally added in 1996 (Sailors, 2012).

Despite these lingering challenges, with the AAU, IAAF, and IOC allowing women to compete in marathon distance racing, there is no denying the landscape of women's distance running had changed significantly by the mid-1980s. Most distance running events now welcomed both men and women. With women's participation no longer limited to women-only competitions, distance running events had less appeal to corporate sponsors marketing specifically to women. As a result, elite women-only running events like the Avon International Running Circuit began to sputter in the mid-1980s. Avon attempted a return to women's running in 1998 with the creation of the Avon Running Global Circuit and Challenge (Wall, 1999). The Avon Global Circuit was intended to provide elite competition for the best 10 km female runners in the world, but was also designed to appeal to all levels of runners. Included with the Global Circuit races were a series of grassroots training workshops for new female runners. Avon proposed the series of 10 km runs, 5 km walks, and pre-race clinics that would bring women of varying running abilities together with a focus on fitness and health. The circuit was scheduled for 16 countries including Germany, Italy, Hungary, Argentina, Chile, Brazil, Venezuela, Panama, Mexico, Canada, Thailand, Malaysia, the Philippines, and the United States.

It appears that this comeback to women's running lasted only a few years. Little mention of Avon sponsorship of competitive running exists after the creation of the Avon Running Global Circuit in 1998. The IAAF noted on its website that Catherine Ndereba won the 2001 Avon Running Global Championship in Budapest ("Catherine Ndereba Captures," 2001). King (2006) mentions that there was a Avon Global Championship race in Bangkok in 2003. But after 2003, there is no mention of the Avon Running Global Championship or Circuit. Currently, Avon Running sponsors a Women's Run in Berlin with a 10 km and 5 km walk and run. This appears to be the only active Avon race. However, just as Avon seemed to shift out of sponsoring elite, competitive women's running events, their commitment to and involvement in more participation-based running and walking events seemed to grow. In the 1990s, Avon would become one of the leaders in promoting participation in endurance events for the purpose of cause-based fundraising.

Cause-based racing

Endurance events became a major site for charity or "cause-based" fundraising in the 1980s. In part fueled by the excitement associated with Joan Benoit Samuelson's gold medal marathon race in the 1984 Olympics, large numbers of people took up running and the opportunities to complete in endurance events grew exponentially. The running boom was part of the larger fitness boom that King (2006) talks about in her work, *Pink Ribbons, Inc*. Millions of people began to jog, go to the gym, and exercise alongside workout videos. Jane Fonda's video, *Workout*, became a top seller and sold over a million copies within a couple of years of its release (King, 2006). Home fitness equipment and videos became staples of the fitness industry. Many of these now-active people also began to enter races, particularly the marathon.

The origins of cause-based endurance events may be found in Terry Fox's Canadian Marathon of Hope in 1980, which combined endurance physical activity with cause-based fundraising (Jeffery, 2010). King (2006) suggests that there were several other events that also preceded the boom in physical activity-focused fundraising for charity, citing the March of Dime's WalkAmerica event as a prime example of combining physical activity and cause-based fundraising. The WalkAmerica event started in 1970 and is now one of the longest running activity-based fundraising events in existence.

Setting aside these early examples, it was really in the 1980s that cause-based endurance events began to take off. Three of the most well-known and successful programs started in the 1980s: the Susan G. Komen Race for the Cure, which started in Dallas, Texas in 1983; the American Cancer Society's Relay for Life in 1985; and the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society's Team in Training program, which started in 1988. These organizations provide trainers, training programs, and develop training communities specific to their fundraising efforts and associated physical endurance events. The creation of these programs has changed the face of endurance sport. These runners and walkers, who appear to be much more often women than men, form a large presence at many distance races. Although it varies by event and sponsor, one participant estimated that women comprised 90–95 percent of the participants in an Avon two-day walk staged in 2014 (A. Ryan, personal communication, April 5, 2015).

A slightly later entrant to sponsorship of cause-based endurance events, and as Avon's competitive women's running circuit faltered, the company began to focus on fundraising for women's health care issues. The first Avon Breast Cancer Fundraising three-day walk was held in 1998. In 2002, Avon moved to a two-day walk format that continues today (King, 2006). The Avon 39 is the only walking event format currently listed on the Avon website. Participants raise funds in order to participate in the event, in which participants cover up to 39 miles over two days ("Avon 39," 2015). In 2014, individuals were required to raise a minimum of $1,800 to participate in the event (A. Ryan, personal communication, April, 5, 2015). According to their website, the proceeds from the events are used to fund research and educational programs, promote awareness, provide breast cancer screenings, and assist individuals with breast cancer ("Avon 39," 2015).

The Leukemia and Lymphoma Society's Team in Training program has grown to become the largest marathon-training program in the world. In 2013, they celebrated the 25th anniversary of their first event, the 1988 New York City Marathon. As participation in cause-based fundraising has grown, even the Boston Marathon—considered one of the most prestigious distance running events—accepts participants who are running for various cause-based organizations. These cause-based runners are not required to the meet the challenging qualifying times that other runners must in order to participate in the race. The growth of cause-based fundraising has accelerated the overall democratization of endurance events.

Clydesdale and Athena running

As endurance events gradually came to accept women participants and cause-based fundraising, distance running was becoming democratized on another front. Large numbers of participants began to enter races, particularly the marathon, simply to participate and to be physically active (Cooper, 1992). This shift to participatory running contributed to the gradual inclusion of people with a wide range of ages, body types, sizes, and weights (Chase, 2008, 2012). Across the United States, running groups and organizations developed to serve this diverse group.

In the early 1980s, Joe Law, a statistician from Baltimore, spurred the Clydesdale movement after analyzing race times and body weight (Chase, 2008). He found that race times increased significantly for runners over certain weights and began actively lobbying race directors to add weight divisions in their events. In the ensuing two decades, a number of running organizations developed that were dedicated to advocating for weight divisions and providing weight divisions competition in distance running. The organizations include the New England Clydesdale and Filly Racing Federation, the USA Clydesdale and Filly Racing Federation, Team Clydesdale, and Run Big Chicago. In part because of pressure from these running groups and organizations, some races began to include categories for runners based on body weight to accommodate these bigger, fatter, and—sometimes—slower runners. These categories for runners based on body weight were commonly known as Clydesdale divisions for men and Filly or Athena divisions for women. Most of these weight-based running groups and organizations were or are primarily led by male runners (Chase, 2012).

In 1989, the Portland Marathon became one of the first races to add weight divisions (Chase, 2012). They have continued to offer five Clydesdale divisions for men (ranging from 185 to 300+ pounds) and three Athena divisions for women (ranging from 145 to 180+ pounds). In contrast to the variety of weight divisions offered for women at the Portland Marathon, most races with weight divisions offer multiple divisions for men but only one division for women. There are also often significantly less women participating in weight divisions in distance running events. For example, at the 2008 Portland Marathon, approximately 10 percent of the male runners (125 total) competed as Clydesdale runners while approximately 6 percent of female runners (32 total) were registered within the Athena division ("Portland Marathon," 2015). The Portland Marathon website lists incomplete race results from 2014 (only one division each for Clydesdale and Athena competitors was reported) while the registration area included five divisions for men and three divisions for women. There were nine male runners listed in the one Clydesdale division, but only four female runners listed in the sole Athena division ("Portland Marathon," 2015).

The Chicago Area Runners Association (CARA) provides a Clydesdale and Athena circuit for its runners. There are two divisions for Athena runners (155 to 169 pounds and greater than 170 pounds) and three divisions for Clydesdale runners (185 to 199 pounds; 200 to 224 pounds; and greater than 225 pounds).

CARA does not organize or provide races specifically for Clydesdale or Athena runners. Instead, CARA creates a virtual circuit consisting of specific running events and the results are reported to CARA (Chase, 2012). Thus, the races are not limited to Clydesdale or Athena participants, but the results from these races are used to calculate the standings in the Clydesdale and Athena circuits. In 2014, only 12 women participated in CARA Athena circuit while 33 men participated in the CARA Clydesdale circuit ("Clydesdale and Athena Competition," 2015). Similar to the Portland Marathon, more men than women compete in these Chicago area weight-based racing divisions.

Despite efforts of promoters and race organizers to include weight-based running divisions for women, women's place in Clydesdale running has often been on the sidelines. The lack of divisions for women is often attributed to a lack of women who want to participate in weight divisions (Chase, 2008). The reality is that while more women now participate in distance running events than men, more men choose to compete in weight divisions. The important question is why? Why are so few women willing to participate in Athena divisions? Many of the Clydesdale runners I interviewed for my research addressed how difficult it was to get women to participate in Athena divisions (Chase, 2008). Several men offered the theory that weight is a much less loaded issue for men than women. The men indicated they had no problems getting up on the scale in front of other runners. It seems that generally speaking, entering oneself into a Clydesdale category is not as problematic for men as is for women. Thus, while Athena categories have opened the door to meaningful competition for some female runners, many women have been unwilling to walk through that door.

Conclusion

Although women have now been formally participating in distance running events for five decades, the early efforts of women such as Julia Chase, Merry Lepper, Mildred Sampson, and even Roberta Gibb were largely undocumented and unnoticed by the running community. The bold actions of Kathrine Switzer and early race sponsors Bonne Bell and Avon did much to engender the participation of women in distance running and walking events. As women's distance running events proliferated, so did the women's running community.

The women's running community has grown to include a broad spectrum of women runners, including elite runners who are now offered nearly the same competitive opportunities as men, as well as recreational runners of various ages, body types, and running speeds, many of whom are involved in cause-based fundraising programs. While this chapter has examined how the growth of women's participation in distance running has been hampered by hegemonic notions of femininity, ideas about women's frailty, and notions of what constitutes an appropriate female running body, it has also addressed how women's increased participation in distance running challenged dominant ideas of femininity, helped disprove perceptions of women's frailty, and challenged dominant notions of the appropriate size or weight of female bodies.

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