**Reflections of a JRunner Relay Newbie**

“So how did the race go?” What a complicated question. I’ve run five half-marathons and many 5Ks and that question has always been easy to answer. Either I improved my time from the last race or not. Either I felt good afterwards or not. For the first time, I have to really think about the answer.

In the simplest sense, the race was terrible. My team lost by an hour. An hour! And I was easily the slowest guy on my team, so a good chunk of that hour was directly attributable to yours truly. As painful as it is to say this, it’s almost better that we were so completely hopeless because at least I feel like I didn’t lose the race for my team – it wasn’t *all* me.

Here’s where the question gets complicated. It’s no longer about being happy with my own subjective notion of good performance. It doesn’t matter that I made it through Leg 17 without requiring a hit of oxygen from the EMTs who were eyeing me nervously all the way up the hill (I mean, *mountain.* Whoever said that we should do *hill* training wasn’t clear on this point. Those squiggles on the elevation charts don’t do them justice). It matters that I started the leg way before the 4th guy and he passed me like I was standing still. It matters that I lost several crucial minutes for my team.

The question is also complicated because the race is about so much more than individual running. I spent a total of about 2 hours running out of a total 20 hours that my team was competing. So to answer the question of how the race went I have to think about all that non-running time.

From that perspective, the race was great. I knew only 3 guys from my team before we started. By the end of the race, I had gotten to know many new people, reconnected with a long-lost yeshiva classmate, and was inspired by all the displays of athleticism and camaraderie, not to mention all the war stories I heard in the car and at the exchange points. And that breakfast really hit the spot.

I can’t thank my teammates enough for the way they supported me. As I was running my first leg, up Route 9W at 4AM with all the other runners at least 20 minutes ahead of me, Elik decided to run alongside me for a couple of miles because, you know, his own legs just didn’t provide enough mileage for his training regimen. And Avi ran along with me up the mountain on Leg 27 shouting encouragement, even though by then the outcome was no longer in doubt. Funny, though, how everyone disappeared on Leg 17. Just sayin’.

So the race was great. I had a fun time. I hope I made up for my slow times by being a good teammate. I am in awe of the high level of performance that I witnessed across the spectrum of racers. If I even think about doing this again, I’m going to need to shave some serious time off my pace. I also have to resolve to bring less stuff. I was prepared for anything, having packed almost an entire pharmacy along with a veritable electronics store and enough Clif bars and gels to feed 3 teams. The only thing I was missing was anti-bear spray, which would have been useful for another team, as it turns out. But there were no encounters with snakes or skunks and no need for that extra roll of KT tape or the 2 extra beach towels, or all those batteries for the headlamps that we barely used, not to mention the flashlights in various sizes, etc… Oh, and I shouldn’t mention that I actually brought a book to read during all that down-time. What was I thinking?

Finally, I know that Bodie will not give me credit for this write-up unless I include his Six-Word memoirs. Here goes:

a) You: Ben Torah. Musician. Techie. Sometimes intense.

b) Your family: Beautiful, talented wife/kids. So grateful.

c) Your living: Computer geek with MBA. Worst nightmare.

d) How the race went for you: Small victories. Didn’t lose my breakfast.

e) How exhausted you were the day after: First time I slept past 9.

f) How much weight you gained or lost during the race: No idea. Really, no scale handy.