

Running commentary

By Charlie Kanzig
Correspondent

Women’s running produced some significant stories this week that deserve further attention — and which have caused me to reflect on a number of women’s issues.

Many news outlets ran the feature story last week of 70-year-old Kathrine Switzer running the Boston Marathon Monday, April 17, 50 years after she was accosted on the same course by Jock Semple, an official, who attempted to tear her race number off of her body during the 1967 marathon. He was enraged that a woman had gained entry to the men-only event. Amateur Athletic Union rules of the time prohibited women from participating in their events.

Interestingly, Switzer was not the first woman to run the race and Semple was aware of this fact. The difference was that they were not officially entered. She paid the two-dollar entry fee under the name of K.V. Switzer, leaving no indication she was a woman. Semple believed that allowing a woman as an official entrant would damage the integrity of the event.

The photos of Semple rushing up to her early in the race has become an iconic symbol of sexism in sports, and many commentators agree the real turning point of women participating in athletics in America. Switzer went on to finish the race despite Semple’s efforts to stop her. Switzer finished this year’s race as well, looking fit as a fiddle in finishing in 4:44:31, which is just 24 minutes slower than when she was 20.

To his credit, Semple adjusted his beliefs in the ensuing years and Switzer made peace with him.

She has spent most of her life promoting women’s participation on running and in other arenas.

In an interview, Switzer described how it was her father’s encouragement to run in order to get in shape for field hockey that sent her down the path as a life-long runner. She described how running gave her a feeling of empowerment and fearlessness.

That confidence clearly has not abated, and she is certainly a role model for women and men of all ages when it comes to overcoming obstacles.

On Saturday, April 22,

another motivated woman broke the world record for the marathon at a race in London. Mary Keitany, 35, of Kenya ran 2:17:01 to break the previous record held by Paula Radcliffe by 41 seconds. Radcliffe still owns the overall record of 2:15:25, which is in a separate category since she was paced by men in that race. It was her third victory at London.

I don’t know if Keitany has any idea who Switzer is, but figure she owes her a debt of gratitude for championing women running marathons, including at the very highest levels. Keitany’s battle is different than Switzer’s. She is living in a time when dozens of Kenyan athletes have been banned from races due to the use of performance enhancing drugs.

Here on the local running scene, the Sisters “Better-Half” Marathon takes place this Saturday at 9 a.m. from Village Green Park. Runners can choose from a 6.55-mile “quarter” marathon, a 13.1-mile half marathon, or a partner run in which each runner does one 6.55-mile loop. The event supports the Sisters High School swim team. The race website is www.sistershalfmarathon.com.

The Better Half race is an example of what has transpired in America since Switzer helped break down the barriers that limited women. Many of last year’s 174 racers were women. Today, the majority of participants in all running races are women. It’s hard to believe that in 1967, many people still believed that women were not capable of running long distances, and that if they did, they risked all sorts of damage to their bodies. The Olympics didn’t allow women to run the marathon until 1984. For the first half of my coaching career, girls ran 3,000-meter races in cross-country while boys ran 5,000 meters.

Things are still not equal for women runners for sure. Men typically receive much higher endorsement and prize money awards than women, and, for reasons unknown to me, to this day, women run a shorter distance in NCAA cross-country meets than their male counterparts.

Thank goodness for Kathrine Switzer’s boldness 50 years ago and for all the other pioneering women who follow her footsteps.



The Mr. SHS contestants and their escorts portrayed movie couples in an opening dance number.

MR. SHS: Proceeds of multiple events benefit Sisters FAN

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fly casting, photography and music. The swimwear portion of the program demonstrated that board shorts or a wetsuit could become the thing on a runway in Atlantic City.

The contestants and their escorts dazzled in formal-wear at the conclusion of the

evening, when the winners were announced.

Lauren Wattenburg donned the tiara as “Best Escort,” having earned the designation by putting in effort above and beyond the call of duty in helping make the pageant a success. Jacob Gurney was crowned Mr. SHS, and, in the comradely spirit of the pageant, his fellow contestants hoisted him on their shoulders as he thanked everyone involved.

Mr. SHS is a program that

evolves over weeks of fundraisers from a dodgeball tourney to a spaghetti feed, with hours of rehearsal going into the final pageant.

The impact of its beneficiary was driven home by a video shown at the outset of the pageant, where families who have been given a hand up through FAN recounted their stories and thanked the organization.

For more information on Sisters FAN, visit <http://ssd6.org/parents/sistersfan>.

SISTERS HIGH SCHOOL CLASS OF 2017

Ginger Gayle Baker
Great things are ahead. We are so proud of your accomplishment.
Mom & Dad

SCHOOL CLASS OF 2017

“Dude” Davis
Seeing the bright side! Your personality shines bright!
Uncle Buck

cutty
p trying goals!

Feature your GRADUATING OUTLAW in the June 14 issue of The Nugget for just \$99. *It’s fun and easy...*

Provide a photo of your choice (senior photo, adorable baby pic, funny kid) with student’s name and brief sentiments from a friend or loved one.

Call Karen Kassy at 541-549-9941 to place your tribute!