

Never Too Late

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The butterflies in my belly were too difficult to ignore. My fingers fidgeted relentlessly in my tracksuit pockets. Spending the last forty minutes stretching and warming up, I was ready for my event, the 1500 metre race. Now I was just waiting on my teacher to usher me to the marshalling area. I approached the teacher several times asking when was it time to go. I knew it was coming up soon, it should be any moment. However, I received the same answer each time, 'Just wait a few more minutes.' After about the fifth time, I approached him patiently, trying not to be too pushy, waiting for a pause in his conversation to interrupt. I glanced across the track and saw girls my age lining up at the 1500m line. I froze in horror, as I heard the gun fire and echo across the stadium.

My face fell.

It was over.

All the training that I had done was wasted.

Yet, this was not the end! Something inside me urged my legs to sprint onto the track. The race starter just took one look at me and began to politely direct me, 'Look, I don't think you should....' But I didn't even let him finish his sentence. As I ran my heart was pounding; I stripped off my jumper and tracksuit pants as I moved towards the start line. As I passed it, the rest of the pack was already 200m ahead of me. While I was running down the straight I started crying, overwhelmed, trying to comprehend what had just happen. When I heard the crowd, I realised that I was not running alone. I had a whole crowd of people supporting and cheering me on. This only made me more determined and hungry for victory. As each lap passed, I got

closer and closer to the other runners. With two laps to go, I had started to catch some of the back runners, but I didn't stop there. With 100m to go and only one runner between me and the state title, I could hear my name echoing across the loud speaker as I chased her down the straight. I sprinted across the finish line with a huge grin on my face. I had done it! Deafened by the roar of the crowd who were on their feet, celebrating my victory, it was the most surreal feeling. After the race, strangers approached me and congratulated me. Deep down I felt that I owed them thanks for supporting me against all odds. Deep down I think that my actions stirred something inside them that reminded them that when a situation looks like it's not worth bothering with, that maybe, just maybe, it is.

No one would've blamed me for sitting down and being disappointed with the day, saying, 'I missed my race.' At the very least I would have got a sympathetic pat on the back, perhaps even an encouraging word or two, telling me, 'You'll show them next time.' However, the decision to run the race that day, to run with determination to win, showed me that we are more than what others say we are. We are who we decide to be in that moment.

