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Liz Cho: There are going to be bumps in the road, but when I am running, I will always say to myself when I am tired or my mind is trying to play a trick on me, I try to breathe for a second and just say, "Okay, I will find my way through this and I can go the distance."

00:00:19

Rob Simmelkjaer: Hello everybody and welcome to Set the Pace, the official podcast of New York Road Runners presented by Peloton. I'm your host, Rob Simmelkjaer, the CEO of New York Road Runners. And I'm back after couple of weeks away and so happy to see the lovely face of my co-host, Peloton instructor, Becs Gentry. What's up girl? Long time no see.

00:00:41

Becs Gentry: We've been separated for weeks, yeah.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: We really have.

00:00:45

Becs Gentry: I know.

00:00:45

Rob Simmelkjaer: In forever.

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Becs Gentry: I'm like, "What happened?" Where did you go? Where did I go? We'd been off. We'd be night ships passing in the night, but we're back.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: It's great to see you.

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Becs Gentry: We're back to our regularly scheduled program. You too.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: I love listening to the shows when I was gone, especially you and Ted last week.

00:00:58

Becs Gentry: Yeah.

00:00:58

Rob Simmelkjaer: You were so great together. And Ted, as always, firing people up for a race week.

00:01:06

Becs Gentry: Yeah, the perfect breakdown.

00:01:06

Rob Simmelkjaer: Totally. And if you haven't listened to that already and you're running that United Airlines NYC Half this weekend, go back and listen to last week's episode because you and Ted really do a great job of breaking down everything anybody needs to know about running this race.

00:01:20

Becs Gentry: He was about to give me a job.

00:01:23

Rob Simmelkjaer: On the events team?

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Becs Gentry: He's like, "What? All right, you're getting the stuff before me."

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Rob Simmelkjaer: You know your stuff. You know your stuff. But it was great. And I just want to say to everybody out there, have a great weekend if you're running this weekend. We're so excited that, first and foremost, we're sitting here on Tuesday, so we don't know for sure, but the weather's looking good for this weekend.

00:01:46

Becs Gentry: Yeah.

00:01:47

Rob Simmelkjaer: And after this winter we've had.

00:01:48

Becs Gentry: I was going to say that, Rob.

00:01:49

Rob Simmelkjaer: Interruption after interruption. I really was thinking in mid-February, I was like, "Oh my God, it's never going to stop snowing here. We're going to have snow on the day of the half."

00:01:59

Becs Gentry: It's never going to be clear road.

00:02:01

Rob Simmelkjaer: Yes.

00:02:01

Becs Gentry: Yep. No, I think, as you said, in comparison to what we've experienced this winter, Sunday may be slightly cool in the morning, but that is nothing unusual for the UA NYC Half and it is going to feel glorious. I mean, we're sitting here in the middle of a miniature heat wave for the past two days, but we don't want it to be like that. We haven't trained in that right now and it's not the nicest of things to run a race in those unexpected and abnormal temperatures for this time of year. So it's going to be so good. I cannot wait to be at the finish line with the broadcast team ready to welcome everybody in.

00:02:47

Rob Simmelkjaer: Yeah, I'm excited for the runners. Things are looking really good. And Becs, this is really, it's the second-biggest event on our race calendar at New York Road Runners. It's the largest half marathon in the United States. For the second year in a row, runners are going to get to cross the iconic Brooklyn Bridge. So many folks who saw that last year and didn't run, because it was a late breaking development last year.

00:03:11

Becs Gentry: It was. Yeah.

00:03:12

Rob Simmelkjaer: We switched to the Brooklyn Bridge and so many people reached out to me and were like, "Oh, if I'd known it was going to go over the Brooklyn Bridge, I would have signed up this year." Well, you had your chance. Now you can do it. Now you actually get to experience that. So we're excited for folks to experience it.

00:03:26

Becs Gentry: Absolutely. And the field this year is pretty astonishing. We have professional field, including 27 Olympians and Paralympians from 17 different countries. I mean, it just goes to show you, and you can hear more about that in the episode with Ted about the vast range of runners who are coming through, not just from the different countries, but the diverse abilities of these runners coming through on Sunday. So make sure you check it out, make sure you know who to track because there are definitely some underlying names that you may not necessarily have heard of over the half distance who are showing up to toe the line, who really do deserve to have their performances watched closely. I'll be in the booth. I'll keep you guys posted. I promise.

00:04:18

Rob Simmelkjaer: It's one of the things that I think is so

interesting about the half distance is you've got the established marathoners who are running down to this distance, maybe because they're getting ready for a marathon, like Sharon Lokedi is.

00:04:29

Becs Gentry: Yep.

00:04:29

Rob Simmelkjaer: She's defending her Boston title in a month and she's using this as a springboard as she did very successfully last year, winning this race last year, then going on to win Boston.

00:04:39

Becs Gentry: Can't wait to see her.

00:04:40

Rob Simmelkjaer: You've got people like Abel Kipchumba, our defending champion on the men's side, Geert Schipper. And then you've just got this incredible array of shorter distance runners who are moving up to the distance, like Grant Fisher-

00:04:50

Becs Gentry: Yeah, Grant Fisher.

00:04:50

Rob Simmelkjaer: ... who created so much excitement running his first ever half on the road. So can't wait to see how that plays out for him. We've got other runners on the American and international side, Galen Rupp, Helen O'Beary, Agnes Ngetich, Emily Sisson. She's still got the American marathon record. And our friend, Dakotah Popehn. So it's just an awesome, awesome group of athletes.

00:05:14

Becs Gentry: Absolutely. And then for those of you who are out there cheering and along the route in the iconic Times Square area this weekend, we have more than 1,500 kids participating in the free Times Square Kids Run as part of the Rising New York Road Runners Youth Program. We all know it's the cutest thing watching these littles run their races. And I mean, not all of them are little. There are littles up to bigger kids as well doing this. And the runners running the half will be running alongside them, coming past them. And I just think for me, I think Brittany was there, Brittany Bell was stationed there last year. And when we cut to it, it was so heartwarming to see these adults running their 13.1. But as they came through Times Square, they were

taking a moment to energize the kids, cheer for their kids, and just share with these youth runners the experience and love that comes from running.

And it really does just make you think this is what kids need right now is that just unrequited support and motivation, especially on Sunday. So make sure you keep your eyes out for that, whether you're in New York or on the broadcast.

00:06:29

Rob Simmelkjaer: Yeah. It's always a very special event, the Times Square Kids Run. Other big news this year, Becs, we moved the expo for this event, the United Airlines NYC Half Expo will be held for the first time ever at the same place the Marathon Expo was held, the Javits Convention Center from March 12th to 14th. So make sure you know that. Don't go to the old spot. Go to Javits.

00:06:51

Becs Gentry: Go to Javits.

00:06:52

Rob Simmelkjaer: That's where your bib is waiting for you.

00:06:54

Becs Gentry: Pop over to Peloton and say hi to us as well. If you've never checked out the Peloton Studios New York, we are literally a five-minute walk, not even, from the Javits Center. So feel free to pop over, grab a coffee, come say hi to us as well. It might give you a little extra motivation to meet your favorite instructors or whatever.

00:07:12

Rob Simmelkjaer: I love that. That's actually great. It is right around the corner. You guys should have a little meet the instructor party over there for people going to the half expo. It's a great idea.

00:07:21

Becs Gentry: I know. I know.

00:07:23

Rob Simmelkjaer: We're also excited that we're going to have our new logo and our new branding out in force. This will be the first race we really have that, so we're excited about that. And you can follow the race on ABC New York Channel 7, ESPN+, New York Road Runner's own YouTube channel and the NYRR app, which will include live runner tracking and coverage of the professional race. So big, big things happening and we're so excited.

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Becs Gentry: So many big things.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: I can't believe Becs, this is my fourth time overseeing this event as CEO.

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Becs Gentry: Already? How's that happen?

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Rob Simmelkjaer: It blows my mind that it's gone this quickly. It never feels like old hat. This is still a really big deal, a really big event. And so many people have had this circled on their calendar looking forward to this day for months and months. So it's always so special.

00:08:13

Becs Gentry: It really is. And I think one tip I will give people, I think we've said this before, Rob, but maybe more so with the TCS New York City Marathon when the app was regenerated, if you like. But I think Ted and I may have missed this last week, but download the app now. As soon as you're hearing this, download it now if you don't already have it and try and get all of the runners you want to track into your app on Saturday because it's technology and we don't want you to miss your runners on Sunday because there are going to be thousands. I think there's 30,000 people running. That means there's probably going to be at least 30,000 people tracking. And that's just one person per runner right there. So we want you to make sure that you can have them. So be prepared as a spectator as well as a runner and make sure you're all lined up.

So all you have to do on Sunday morning is wake up, open the app, and you will see how your runners are progressing on this awesome new... Well, I guess we can't call it new anymore, but on the awesome app.

00:09:15

Rob Simmelkjaer: Yes, absolutely. I've already started to put my people in there. And speaking of people to track, coming up on Set the Pace, two of New York City's most popular news anchors. You know them well from Channel 7 Eyewitness News, our great partners. They cover the races. Well, these two are stepping out from behind the anchor desk to actually run the United Airlines NYC Half this coming Sunday. Liz Cho and Mike Marza will be joining us in just a minute. So stay tuned for that.

00:09:45

Becs Gentry: Peloton is taking running and race tech to the next level with the new Peloton Cross Training Series Tread+ powered by Peloton IQ. Built for runners who want top tier performance, the Tread+ helps you train smarter and get race ready with precision. Peloton IQ offers personalized insights that evolve as you progress, so you can fine-tune your pacing and peak at the right moment. And with strength workouts, designed to build the muscle you need to support every mile, your training goes beyond the run. Plus, pace target classes designed to build consistency, boost speed, and improve your splits. Every single run supports your full training cycle, from recovery miles to challenging race pace intervals. Experience our most advanced tread yet at onepeloton.com. Peloton, the official digital fitness partner of New York Road Runners.

00:10:40

Rob Simmelkjaer: There will be nearly 30,000 stories at this week's United Airlines NYC Half, the kinds of stories that today's guests spend their days telling on television across the New York area every day. But this weekend, instead of covering the stories, they'll be a part of the story. Liz Cho and Mike Marza are anchors for WABC Channel 7 Eyewitness News, and together they help report on the events that shape daily life across the five boroughs of our great city. This Sunday, they're stepping away from the newsroom and on to Eastern Parkway as they both toe the line at the United Airlines NYC Half. Liz was part of the ABC relay at the 2025 TCS New York City Marathon, which she followed up with the NYRR Midnight Run. She was just getting warmed up apparently. Mike ran the TCS New York City Marathon for the first time in 2025.

And today we're talking with both of them about what it's like to cover the stories and run in the middle of them as well. Liz and Mike, we're thrilled you're running this weekend. Congratulations and welcome.

00:11:49

Liz Cho: I'm so excited. I'm so excited to be here today speaking with you guys. It feels surreal, but thrilled about today and this weekend.

00:11:58

Rob Simmelkjaer: It's surreal for me to have you on our podcast. It's incredible, Liz and Mike.

00:12:05

Mike Marza: I'll tell you what, and Liz and I had talked about this. And you guys know more than both of us, but just

there is this fraternity, this sorority, this group that you feel now part of because you do take part in it. And it's much more than just the running. And I know we're going to get into this, but it's much more about being part of the city and the city aspect because it truly is a day in the city and these two days, the half and the full, it's unlike anything I've ever experienced. And I'm so excited to replicate that with the half coming up, certainly because I live in Brooklyn, it's not too far to get to the starting line. So that's going to be great.

00:12:44

Becs Gentry: Very, very true.

00:12:44

Mike Marza: Yeah, it's going to be fun. And Liz and I have pushed each other along this journey and it's just, I can see where people get bitten by the running bug and they want to continue to run and run. And it's grueling and it's fun and it's challenging, but it's also really, really fun.

00:13:00

Becs Gentry: It sure is.

00:13:00

Liz Cho: Really, really fun. I will say that the folks in our newsroom are so sick and tired of hearing Mike and I talk every single day saying, "How many miles did you do today?" And literally Mike and I trying to one up each other on how much we've run.

00:13:15

Rob Simmelkjaer: Just like every workplace in America where there's a marathon runner or a half marathon runner, there's always that, "Oh, he's talking about the marathon again."

00:13:23

Becs Gentry: Yep. Again, here we go. Guys, let's take it back though, because you both have covered a lot of New York in your day-to-day jobs as news reporters. What made both of you make the decision to be a part of this amazing day in New York instead of reporting on it?

00:13:45

Liz Cho: Mike, you want to go first?

00:13:48

Mike Marza: If you would like. For me, and I think we've talked about this a lot, is because it is such a part of the fabric of this city and we talk about for the full

marathon, 50,000 stories, this weekend, 30,000 stories. It's just incredible when you're a part of it. I didn't really fully appreciate it until I was a part of it, but just covering it, every single person has a journey to get to even the starting line. And that's the incredible part is that they've already run their own marathon just to prepare for this. And what was most striking to me is like being a part of the group and running and seeing people who were afflicted with different things. Whether they had one leg or they were being helped by other people or maybe they had cramps along the way. And to see this group of runners be powered by the people on the sidelines, I think for me seeing that for so long and then becoming part of it, it truly is a special group. And then it just makes you feel like you're part of something bigger than yourself.

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Becs Gentry: I love that. I love that. Liz, how about you?

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Liz Cho: When I first moved to New York City 25 years ago and I was living on the Upper West Side, I would go out to the finish line for the New York City Marathon and watch the runners finish. And I would be blown away by seeing people cross the finish line and just the look of being blown away by their own accomplishment and the grit. And I always said to myself like, "Oh, that'd be so cool if I could ever do something like that," but then would totally chicken out. And then I was lucky enough to be part of the pasta party with you guys and to see the community there and the joy. And so this summer when I became an empty nester, my daughter went off to college and I had all this empty time in my hands and I really felt like I have to find a hobby. I need to find a new identity.

And so all of a sudden the GMA 50 relay came about and I just, I had not run in a very long time and I said, "I'm just going to do it. I'm just going to do it and start my journey that way." And then I was so blown away by running in the relay and seeing New York City from a completely different perspective as a participant and not just an observer. It was one of the most exhilarating experiences of my life and the moments of pure joy that you see along the route. And I only ran the 6.2 and I was tearing up. And ever since then, I was just like, "It is now or never." And so I have just been on the journey and I have been loving it every step of the way, I have been loving it.

00:16:52

Rob Simmelkjaer: This makes me so happy to hear because it means our plan worked, right? That the ABC relay gave her

that taste. It gave all the folks who ran with you that taste. And we're hoping that some of them would want to step up and run a longer distance. And so Liz, now it's you stepping up to the half distance. Now, Mike, you've run the full before. So talk a bit about how you are going to approach running a half in I don't know how many halves you've run. Do you have a time goal in mind? What are you looking to accomplish on Sunday?

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Mike Marza: And I should mention that my wife who works at ABC News actually ran the relay with Liz as part of the GMA relay. And so for both of us to be training along the way, we have three young children. And so to find the time just to do that has been really a big challenge to do. But I think for me, running the marathon was a much different aspect because leading up to the marathon, it's the summer, the weather is nicer. I think the struggles that I've had personally leading up to this half is, I mean, two weeks ago we had a blizzard and we've had snow on the ground for like a month.

And even though I was still running, sucking in all of that cold air and just trying to prepare in that mindset and not knowing what the weather's going to be, it sounds like it's going to be pretty decent weather for the half. But not knowing what that was going to be was a much different mindset going into it. I was able to finish my first marathon in, well, I'll tell you exactly what the time is, three hours, 53 minutes and 42 seconds.

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Becs Gentry: Wow, congrats.

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Liz Cho: That is so impressive.

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Mike Marza: Thank you. I didn't know that it was a decent time when I was running, but I started getting alerts through my AirPods from people who would text me and it would read the text to me saying, "Oh my gosh, you're doing great. Keep going, keep going." And so I think for the going into the half, I would like to try to hit that mark maybe around a nine-minute mile. I got to try to keep up with Liz, which is going to be a challenge because she's going to blaze right past me.

00:18:54

Liz Cho: No. No.

00:18:55

Mike Marza: But I think the biggest thing is I always like to say is to finish it and to enjoy the day. And every time I say that, I know when I get onto the starting line, I'm going to try to perform well. But I think for me, it's enjoying, much more so because I didn't know going into the marathon what I was going to feel, how I was going to feel. I truly did just want to finish. My biggest concern was cramping up, maybe getting an injury along the way and not finishing. And I think for this one is to enjoy the moment and to enjoy just being there and being part of something so special.

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Becs Gentry: Yeah. Love that. Liz, what is your goal?

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Rob Simmelkjaer: How's this step up been for you, Liz, to this distance? What's this training been like for you? Especially as Mike mentioned in this brutal winter we've had.

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Liz Cho: I have found that I actually don't mind running in rain and snow, which I find surprising because I'm not a very adventurous or outdoorsy person, but I have learned that I like running on the treadmill less. It's really hard, really hard to get into the groove on a treadmill.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Despite the fact that my co-host makes her living on a treadmill, I completely agree.

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Liz Cho: I know, I know, I know, I know. And I think it's because in the treadmill in my basement, you're staring at the wall because the television doesn't work. We have awful cell service down there and I have no wifi. So I'm literally just down there staring at a white wall the whole time. So it's hard for me to get into my groove. So I always try to just say, "Just layer up and go outside, you warm up." And somehow I always find a groove. There have been some runs that have been much harder than others. But my whole approach to all of this, so when I ran the relay, I had a girlfriend send me flowers and it came with this card that says grit and hustle equals gristle. And then it came with another saying that says, "It's about grit and willing to work harder than whatever is working against you no matter what."

And so I took that very early on and I just said, "I have to lean into that." I'm just going to lean into it.

And there are going to be some days that are going to be easier than others. And in terms of building the miles, I would just keep it consistent during the weeks of like five and six every few days. And then on a Saturday, I would be like, "Okay, let's see if we can do eight today. Let's see if we can do nine. How did I feel after the nine?" There was a while where I would get to 10 and I would freak myself out and just think like, "Okay, do I have what it takes to go in?" And Janai Norman, who is an ABC News correspondent and GMA anchor, she ran the marathon. And I remember seeing her the day after the marathon and she was talking about it because she was standing there looking so spectacular in a suit and heels the day after running a marathon.

And she was just saying, "Sometimes when you're out there running, your mind, it plays tricks on you. It tells you you cannot do it, but it's just a trick." And so I took that and I was like, "Okay, in those moments when I am running and my body is saying or my head's saying to me, "I just want to stop." I'm just going to try to like, "No, this is a trick. Let's just see if we can keep going." And that carried me through some moments where I was like, "I don't know if I can do this." And then Mike knows in our building, because we are owned by Disney, our newsroom is on the sixth floor and our studio is on the fourth floor. So when I go down to the studio every day, I take the stairs and at every landing, there is a Disney movie quote. So sometimes it's like, "To infinity and beyond," and whatnot.

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Mike Marza: That's the one I was going to say. Yeah. Yeah.

00:22:57

Liz Cho: But on the sixth floor, when I leave the newsroom every day to go down to the studio, there's one from Hercules, which I had never heard before, which is, "I will find my way, I can go the distance." And I have taken that now and I have adapted it to everything in every day. There are going to be bumps on the road. There are going to be moments where you just want to be like, "Ugh." But when I am running, I will always say to myself when I am tired or my mind is trying to play a trick on me, I try to breathe for a second and just say, "Okay, I will find my way through this and I can go the distance." And so that now is my prevailing thought when I am running and it helped. It helped. And it's helped me build so I can get to the 13.1. I have not gone past that yet, but I feel like I think this is as good as it's going to get heading into this weekend mentally.

00:24:06

Becs Gentry: Amazing. I love that you're utilizing the Disney quotes, the mantras, but making them your own, because I think that's really important in this world because we can open our phones, we can take a Peloton class, whatever, and hear mantras taken from somebody else, but the whole thing may not resonate for you. So I love that advice to people of like, "Mold it into what's going to actually make you motivated in those words." As you mentioned work, Liz, let's talk about the newsroom because I think a lot of our listeners would love to know the vibe in the newsroom when you and Mike told your colleagues that you were going to run this race. What was everyone's reaction? How has it been?

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Liz Cho: I think with Mike, they know that Mike is going to... He's an accomplished marathoner now.

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Mike Marza: Don't know about that. I mean, I finished.

00:25:02

Liz Cho: In this world of us amateur runners. And I will also say that Mike and I also very much look up to Sam Ryan who has run 13 to 14 marathons, and she has been the one who has been our coach. And in fact, she gave me my own little care package to bring to the starting line.

00:25:25

Becs Gentry: Oh my goodness, the sweetest.

00:25:27

Liz Cho: Yes. Yes. No, so she's been our mama bear helping us through this.

00:25:32

Rob Simmelkjaer: Love it.

00:25:32

Becs Gentry: Love Sam.

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Liz Cho: And she was like, "Bring a poncho in case it rains."

00:25:37

Becs Gentry: Oh my, stop. She's adorable.

00:25:39

Liz Cho: She's the best. I think the newsroom has been very tolerant of us because we work in, all of our desks are right next to each other. So we're talking about the news and all of the very serious headlines that are happening every single day, but then there will be some moments where Mike and I will get a little competitive with one another.

00:26:06

Mike Marza: Well, that's what I was going to say, not to interrupt, but so I'll know when Liz, it'll be a Monday, I'll know when Liz had a great running weekend because she's over there, she's got this standing desk, she's working hard preparing for the newscast. And she'll look over to me and I happen to be right on that same row. And she says, "So did you run this weekend?" And I'll say, "Yeah, maybe I got like four or six in." She's like, "Oh." Waiting for me to say, "Well, how many did you do?" "You know, I did like 12. I did a little 12, I guess." And so I'll know when she's had a successful time because she'll do that. And then David Novarro just rolls his eyes. He's like, "The runners are at it again."

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Liz Cho: He's like, "I think they just tune us out now."

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Mike Marza: That's true. That's true.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Liz.

00:26:57

Mike Marza: They put their own AirPods in. Yeah, exactly.

00:26:57

Becs Gentry: Yeah. We can't listen to this anymore.

00:27:02

Mike Marza: Exactly.

00:27:02

Rob Simmelkjaer: Liz is officially a runner. If she's doing that, okay. She's asking that little question.

00:27:03

Becs Gentry: The potential, when can I one up?

00:27:11

Rob Simmelkjaer: That's right.

00:27:11

Becs Gentry: How can I one up? I love it. I love it.

00:27:13

Liz Cho: That's the best thing you could ever say to me because it's so funny because Dave Novarro said to me yesterday, he was like, "You're really a runner now." And I was like, "I don't think I can call myself that yet." I haven't run a first real big race. I still have imposter syndrome. So the fact that Rob Simmelkjaer just said that to me is praise.

00:27:30

Rob Simmelkjaer: You're a runner, Liz. You're a runner. At the finish line, when I see you, I'll put that medal around your neck and it will be even more official at that point. So we can't wait to see that happen.

00:27:42

Liz Cho: Oh my God.

00:27:42

Rob Simmelkjaer: Mike, I'm thinking about you and the role that you play in the city. You sit in the chair, the anchor chair that has been occupied by so many great journalists in the history of this city. I'm old enough to remember Bill Beutel at Eyewitness News. Obviously, Bill Ritter, who worked with Liz for so many years, was such a staple in our city. You're now in that chair. And I'm wondering for you, it must have been really cool to run the marathon because you get to know this city in a different way when you run the marathon. I grew up in New York. I was born in Manhattan and I never really felt I knew New York until I'd run the marathon. It took me to neighborhoods I'd never been to. I really understood it in a different way.

As you cover the news, having run the TCS New York City Marathon, do you sometimes say, "Oh, let's send it over to Kemberly Richardson and sit this spot or somebody else in that spot." I'm like, have a little moment where you're like, "Oh, I ran through there. I know where she is."

00:28:51

Mike Marza: Absolutely. It is incredible. I mean, in a lot of ways, I think about my journey at Witness News as a marathon. I'm only on mile or two. Just to have the privilege of being in the race, same thing I felt when I actually ran the... I feel the same thing about being part of this group. And Liz, certainly one of the pillars of that, I think being part of the group also, you lean on other people, including Bill, who's been an incredible mentor

to me and still is, great friend and just a truly special person, much like Sam Ryan has been in my marathon journey. But whether I was covering news out on the streets or now running through these neighborhoods, to your point, getting to feel the energy of the different boroughs. I mean, there's a part in the Bronx where you're running and the spectators are close in on the course, and it's almost like they slingshot you in those final back third of the miles, which is just incredible.

And you feel that energy. And I remember covering different things whether it was positive or negative in different parts of the city, and to your point, whether it's Kemberly Richardson or you have Michelle Charlesworth out there. And we would always toss to them and say, "Okay, let's go to the people." And you see the runners and then to have that reverse angle. And to feel the energy, and I think that's really the only way to describe it, is that when you're running through people who are... Some people are brunching, and I mean, the champagne bottles are popping, and it's 9:00 AM, and they're acting like it's maybe 10:00 PM at the club. They're so excited just to be close to the runners. It's a wild sight. You have kids who are holding up signs, the creativity of New Yorkers and the signs they hold up, right?

One woman said, "Finish the 26.2 and you could take me on a date," or something maybe more suggestive than that. And it was a wild scene as you're running through it. And that's what's cool about the whole experience is that you get to see the different characteristics, whether you're running through Williamsburg and there are two or three blocks that just in that neighborhood, they have other obligations that day, there's no one for a block or two. And then you come into this explosion of energy on Fifth Avenue in that slow climb. And Sam Ryan said, "Well, you're going to see the screen where it's going to lead the turn into Central Park." But it felt like it was 20 miles away because of that slow incline. And to feel the people experiencing that with me in a different way was really cool. But to your point, yeah, you just love this city.

I mean, I'm ready to run right now, to be honest, because it gets you so fired up to think about because they're going to remember that too from a different angle, but they're going to say, like Liz was saying, "I remember going to watch the marathon. I remember when this runner did blank and this." So people taking shots of fireball, actually runners, runners take it. And I'm like, "How is this happening? I'm just trying to get to my next gel station." You know what I mean? But it's fun. It's fun. It's unlike anything I've ever experienced.

00:32:15

Liz Cho: Yeah. And to peg off of that, the news is really hard these days, internationally, in our country, and in New York City. And there are days where I know Mike and I leave the newsroom and you just shake your head because it can be hard to process. So you cannot underestimate the beauty of marathon day because there is such a collective joy. It is New York City in this most beautiful light to see all the different colors, all the diversity, everyone coming together towards one thing and everyone working so hard, whether it's the NYPD protecting the city, whether it's New York Road Runners putting on this massive production, sanitation helping to clean up afterwards, the runners and all their stories, the volunteers who are there helping the runners and all of the supporters. To have New York City shine in such a beautiful light, you have to recognize that. And it is such an awesome experience.

00:33:33

Rob Simmelkjaer: Thank you, Liz.

00:33:33

Mike Marza: I will say, well, I was just going to, just real quick to Liz's point, because I think it's something certainly today to be said. When you're running, everybody is a New Yorker. They're not a Democrat, they're not a Republican, they're not an independent. It doesn't matter what part of the city you're from, everybody unites under that New Yorker flag and that marathon or half marathon day, and that's just something that we need so much right now.

00:33:57

Rob Simmelkjaer: Yeah. That's why we call it the best day of the year in New York City. And it truly is. No one ever debates it. Becs, when I listen to Liz Cho wax poetic about marathon day in New York City, and she's completely right. But do you know what I hear when I hear that? I hear someone who's maybe going to use this NYC Half as a springboard.

00:34:18

Becs Gentry: I would say so.

00:34:20

Rob Simmelkjaer: Just me.

00:34:20

Liz Cho: I'm hoping. I'm hoping.

00:34:22

Rob Simmelkjaer: Is that your hope?

00:34:25

Liz Cho: That is my hope. I will say this.

00:34:27

Rob Simmelkjaer: Breaking news.

00:34:29

Liz Cho: Crossing a marathon finish line is a bucket list thing. And I am of a certain age that I need to start crossing those bucket list things off. So if I can get through Sunday and I can cross that finish line and feel proud of my performance, I would hope that this will springboard me to that next level.

00:34:53

Becs Gentry: We'd love that.

00:34:54

Liz Cho: We'll see.

00:34:54

Becs Gentry: We'll take it. We'll take it. Let's talk about how you train. A lot of our listeners are well-versed marathon racers or brand new. We have a huge, huge variety of people listening to this podcast. And I think from the outset, looking at both of you, it's really hard to comprehend how you train with a job that's quite unpredictable. You don't know, as you said, Liz, the world is heavy. New York is in a rough place right now. And how have both of you incorporated training for this race alongside having to deal with potentially terrible breaking news or things that are just playing on your mind over and over again?

00:35:42

Liz Cho: Well, so I am a creature of habit. So I've had to build it into my morning routine. I have a 90-minute commute into the city most days, so I make sure that I get up extra early and I pound some caffeine.

00:36:00

Becs Gentry: How early?

00:36:02

Liz Cho: I get up around 5:00 AM.

00:36:04

Becs Gentry: Okay.

00:36:05

Liz Cho: And not that early, because I know that there are some runners who are out there like 3:00 AM. I cannot do that.

00:36:12

Becs Gentry: 5:00 is still very early.

00:36:16

Liz Cho: And so I get up, I pound some caffeine because I need the caffeine. And then I just set out. My goal is during the week to do two days of strength training because after I ran the midnight run and I had not done any strength training before then, I realize that I was in a lot of pain. So I have tried to work, incorporate two days of strength training. And then Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday of running. Early morning, Friday, I take my day. I don't run on Fridays, and then I do long runs on Saturdays, and then a shorter run on Sundays. And then strength train on Mondays. But I have to get up. It is the first thing that I do, caffeinated with a playlist, out I go. Because soon as work is done, I don't have the energy.

00:37:15

Becs Gentry: Your brain's in a different place, I'm sure.

00:37:17

Liz Cho: Yeah. Yeah.

00:37:17

Rob Simmelkjaer: Mike, how about you?

00:37:18

Liz Cho: Not to mention I have 10 pounds of makeup on my face at that point too, so.

00:37:22

Becs Gentry: Tell me about it.

00:37:22

Rob Simmelkjaer: Mike, what about you? Are you in the city? What's your routine?

00:37:28

Mike Marza: Yeah, so I'm at Brooklyn. I'm not far from Disney and from WABC, but I will say for me, it's really juggling the three kids in their obligations. The benefit I do have now with running is that because I work nights, I do have some time in the morning. Leading up to the marathon, I did

the Road Runners suggested training pallet for the most part. I did develop some Achilles tendonitis during the marathon lead up.

00:37:58

Becs Gentry: I'm sorry.

00:37:58

Mike Marza: Which was really... Yeah, it was just... I appreciate that. And for all the runners who have dealt with that, it is something so nagging. I remember Liz and I talked about it. I got the compression sleeves. And to take a break for a week and a half or two weeks just to rest. That was honestly harder than running was not running because I felt like I was falling behind and I knew that getting back into it was going to be challenging. So that was really tough to deal with and a setback that I know a lot of runners deal with, which are these injuries that you have to fight through. So thankfully this time around, it hasn't been that acute, but the weather has been a big deal as we talked about. But now, yesterday and today, I mean, it is so nice-

00:38:42

Liz Cho: Gorgeous.

00:38:42

Mike Marza: ... to get these final few miles in. I didn't follow the same training path for the hassle, see how that goes, but I usually try to get at least six miles a day. I'll do my long runs as well. But I strength train probably four to five times a week on top of the running.

00:38:56

Rob Simmelkjaer: Wow. Awesome.

00:38:57

Mike Marza: So I'll run like seven or eight miles and then get some strength training in too. But I did not do enough squats before the marathon and that elevation killed me. So we'll see if I prepared enough for the half, but it's definitely the time commitment. And for everybody who's a runner, and I know we all know this, but it's the part that I don't think I fully embrace because I'll tell Rhiannon here at the house, "If I have to do a long run, I'll be back in a couple hours." And she's like, "Couple hours?" And I'm saying, "Well, you got to do the math." And that's what it becomes when you're leading up to it. So definitely the time commitment and just trying to battle through some of the nicks and stuff you get along the way is part of the

experience.

00:39:39

Becs Gentry: Yeah. And it's crazy as a parent. I mean, you have three kids, correct?

00:39:44

Mike Marza: Three kids. Yeah. 12, 10 and seven.

00:39:45

Becs Gentry: Right.

00:39:45

Mike Marza: Years old young.

00:39:45

Becs Gentry: Yeah. You're juggling their schedules as well as your schedule. They're at that age, I'm sure, where they've got commitments that they've got to fulfill. And as you say to your wife, Rhiannon, "Bye for two hours." And she's like, "Okay, cool. Just the four of us. Just going to stay here then, I guess, and we'll wait for you sweaty thing to come back. Cool."

00:40:08

Liz Cho: Right, exactly.

00:40:10

Mike Marza: No, that's what the kids usually say, my daughter, who she actually plays basketball. She's on three basketball teams. I actually coach one of the teams.

00:40:17

Becs Gentry: Oh my gosh.

00:40:17

Mike Marza: Fourth grade. So he always says, "Oh, daddy's been running. Look how sweaty he is." But it's also something, and I think it's important that we talk about this too, because I think for all the moms, the dads out there, I just think it's awesome for them to see. That says too. And I try to run with my son who's 12 and he runs a mile or two and trying to get him into it. I'm looking forward to him getting involved in some of the Road Runners, the youth programs. But I think just for saying, "Here's a goal. Daddy's not a runner, but I'm going to run and I'm going to try to work through these things." And they saw me at the finish line at the marathon and they still talk about... I think that's honestly the most memorable experience of the day, if I'm being honest, is that seeing their, I often say

joy because they're still young, they're like, "All right, what are we going to do next? Daddy's done with his thing that he did this morning." But I've heard them tell their friends, "Hey, my dad did the marathon."

00:41:16

Becs Gentry: Wow.

00:41:16

Mike Marza: And that's cool for me, and that honestly helps me go forward too.

00:41:21

Rob Simmelkjaer: It's really cool. It's really cool. And Liz, I love what you said earlier about the fact that you're an empty nester now, and this is your time to do this because I have to say, I've got two kids, 17 and 12, so I've got a ways to go, but there is no day I dread more than the day I drop my youngest daughter off to college. It is so scary to me. And that next day of like, "Wait, what am I doing? Anyway, who am I? Why do I exist?"

00:41:55

Liz Cho: Right.

00:41:55

Rob Simmelkjaer: Yeah, you've got a job, but it's a massive void, right? So it's so great that you're filling it with this. And I know there are a lot of people who can relate to that.

00:42:06

Liz Cho: And it was really hard. And my daughter, who is now a freshman in college in New York City, thankfully, so she is close, she's a dancer. She's getting a BFA in dance. And so I was always the dance mom who was traveling with her, constantly only thinking about her needs and what we can do to help her out. So then when she left for school, it was literally like, "Oh my God, what am I going to do? Who am I?" And so the running really helped me figure out what are my needs. Is it appropriate for me to think about my own needs and wants and stuff like that again? And then realizing like, "No, no, no, I can do that." And to talk about what Mike was saying, when I would say to her, I'm like, "Oh, I just finished my first eight miles." And she'd be like, "Oh my God, mom, that's really cool." And to have your 18-year-old daughter say to me last week, "I really respect what you were doing." I was like, "Oh my God, that's amazing, amazing." And I was lucky enough, she was so blown away because she was at the finish line at the marathon after I finished my 6.2. And she was really

excited about it that she ran with me New Year's Eve in the Midnight Run because she was so excited about it and wanted to feel... She wanted to be a little bit part of that community and to see what it was like. And it was such an awesome experience. We finished the finish line holding hands and stuff like that. It was just the greatest thing in the world.

00:43:51

Becs Gentry: I mean, that's what makes all of this so special, not just as parents, obviously that really amplifies it. But the people that you are inspiring on the other side of the screen, whether it is literally the TV screen where you're reporting, or also through Instagram and however you're communicating this. It's just incredible to know that not just your daughter was inspired to go out for a run, there could be another young girl or young boy looking at you both and being like, "Oh, actually I want to be a news reporter when I grow up. And they're running, so I'm going to try it too because it makes them happy. So maybe it'll make me happy," or these correlations.

Yeah, that's another reason why I think it is the best day ever because you watch people in real life just fulfilling these goals and that pride just emanates from people just... Still, I'm sure a year down the line when you see this race, and Mike, when you next see the TCS New York City Marathon, you're just going to feel that pride bubble up again and be like, "Oh yeah, I did that. I did that. That's really cool."

00:44:54

Liz Cho: And then when things aren't working out well, you can say to yourself like, "Okay, so how do I take from those hard moments out running and apply it to my everyday? How is it that I can carry that through and then make these hard moments a little bit more tolerable, help me see through it?" And I love that aspect of running. I have fallen in love with the mental part of running and the discipline and the learning how to be flexible with yourself, but also pushing yourself through what can be some really hard moments. And also whatever you bring with you to the starting line, whether it was a bad day or a bad conversation to work through it while you're out running to clear your head and feel lighter at the end of it. So much.

00:45:50

Rob Simmelkjaer: All right. So we've got some rapid fire runner questions we like to throw at people.

00:45:54

Becs Gentry: Because you are both runners.

00:45:54

Rob Simmelkjaer: We already know they're both runners. We've established that and we already know some of these, but let's do a little rapid fire. Mike, we'll start with you. Coffee before a run or after?

00:46:07

Mike Marza: Definitely before. Always before and after. Always coffee.

00:46:12

Rob Simmelkjaer: Both? Before and after. What about during?

00:46:16

Mike Marza: I would take a shot of espresso along the route. Absolutely. Absolutely.

00:46:21

Becs Gentry: Caffeine in your gels, do you have caffeine in your gels?

00:46:25

Mike Marza: I don't do a lot of the gels, but I'll do a couple.

00:46:28

Becs Gentry: Okay.

00:46:29

Mike Marza: And absolutely caffeinated. Yes.

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Becs Gentry: Oh, my goodness.

00:46:32

Rob Simmelkjaer: Liz, we know you need your coffee before. What about during and after?

00:46:35

Liz Cho: A hundred percent. No, I am a coffee before and then that is it.

00:46:39

Rob Simmelkjaer: Smart move.

00:46:41

Becs Gentry: Very smart move.

00:46:42

Liz Cho: But three shots of espresso.

00:46:44

Becs Gentry: Oh my good Lord.

00:46:46

Liz Cho: And then I'm ready to go.

00:46:47

Rob Simmelkjaer: I don't get to move in whether you're going for a run or not, you're going to be running around your room. Exactly.

00:46:50

Liz Cho: Yes.

00:46:50

Becs Gentry: I am such a weakly caffeinated person as in I never really drink coffee and I get so worried.

00:46:58

Rob Simmelkjaer: Natural energy. Natural energy. So annoying.

00:46:58

Becs Gentry: With the heart rate. Natural, yeah, whatever. I've just been doing it for too long. Okay. Mike, for you and then we'll come to you Liz. Favorite place in New York to run?

00:47:11

Mike Marza: Prospect Park.

00:47:12

Becs Gentry: Yay, he likes the hills.

00:47:17

Liz Cho: I love Central Park and running around the Jackie Onassis Reservoir. That's where I started out 10 years ago running and it's just beautiful. Beautiful.

00:47:25

Becs Gentry: Iconic.

00:47:26

Rob Simmelkjaer: Yeah, it's pretty good. Okay. Favorite borough, especially for you, Mike, you've run all five. Favorite borough to run in?

00:47:34

Mike Marza: Brooklyn.

00:47:34

Rob Simmelkjaer: Of course.

00:47:35

Becs Gentry: Brooklyn.

00:47:35

Mike Marza: I mean, Brooklyn, that's where I'm at. Yes, no. Yeah. But Brooklyn, hands down. The energy that slingshots you right at the beginning of the course, no doubt.

00:47:44

Rob Simmelkjaer: What about you, Liz, with the race coming up this weekend? You'll be doing a lot of Brooklyn miles. Have you run much in Brooklyn before?

00:47:51

Liz Cho: I have not. I have not run in Brooklyn at all. So I am really looking forward to every aspect of it. I think obviously running across the Brooklyn Bridge is going to be a breathtaking moment. I know last year it was really foggy, which I don't think weather-wise we will have that this year, but I think just... I mean, how many people get to say, "I ran over the Brooklyn Bridge."

00:48:17

Becs Gentry: That's it.

00:48:18

Liz Cho: And then also running through Times Square has got to be iconic as well. So I'm really looking forward to both of those moments.

00:48:24

Rob Simmelkjaer: It's a really special route. Thank you, Liz. It's a really special route. The Brooklyn Bridge edition has made it so fun. A little less elevation too, by the way. Manhattan Bridge is higher.

00:48:33

Becs Gentry: Manhattan is steeper.

00:48:34

Rob Simmelkjaer: So you're welcome.

00:48:34

Becs Gentry: Brooklyn is longer.

00:48:34

Liz Cho: Thank you.

00:48:34

Becs Gentry: I think. Okay. If you listen to things when you run, what do you listen to?

00:48:43

Mike Marza: I actually listen to the news.

00:48:48

Becs Gentry: No way.

00:48:48

Mike Marza: I do. I listen to the news.

00:48:53

Rob Simmelkjaer: That's amazing.

00:48:55

Becs Gentry: Current news or do you listen to your shows?

00:48:56

Mike Marza: Live news.

00:48:56

Becs Gentry: Live news. Oh my God.

00:48:56

Mike Marza: I listen to Liz. No, I listen to the news because so much is changing. And so there are inevitably news conferences happening and I'll be preparing for the job as I'm listening just because I want to feel connected to the current events.

00:49:14

Rob Simmelkjaer: This is a man who was born for his job. Okay?

00:49:21

Liz Cho: Literally.

00:49:21

Rob Simmelkjaer: He is listening to the news.

00:49:21

Becs Gentry: He literally eats, drinks, moves, and sleeps with the news.

00:49:24  
Liz Cho: Yes.

00:49:24  
Mike Marza: Pretty much. Pretty much. And coffee. Coffee is the news.

00:49:29  
Liz Cho: I do not listen to the news. I do not listen to the news. I have to listen to music. So my playlist starts off with Phil Collins, Take Me Home, that gets me into it.

00:49:39  
Becs Gentry: What a hit.

00:49:40  
Liz Cho: And then I've got the killers. I've got Bruce Springsteen. I've got a lot of Taylor Swift.

00:49:46  
Becs Gentry: Perfect.

00:49:46  
Liz Cho: I will say this. A lot of the times towards the end, I am singing out loud. So I've got Donna Summer, MacArthur Park. I've got a lot of Pink, Kelly Clarkson, anything that I can sing to.

00:49:58  
Rob Simmelkjaer: Liz, we got to share playlists. I like what you're doing there. I like a lot of what you just put out there. Let's talk offline. We can do some playlists. Okay. Last question. What's the first meal that you both are going to want to eat after you finish on Sunday?

00:50:14  
Mike Marza: For me, probably chicken parm, something like that.

00:50:19  
Rob Simmelkjaer: Yeah. That's good caloric intake. Absolutely. You got a place you like for that, Mike, or you got homemade plans?

00:50:28  
Mike Marza: There's Giovanni's, which is around the corner from us here in Brooklyn. Michael takes care of us.

00:50:35  
Rob Simmelkjaer: Nice.

00:50:35

Mike Marza: Yeah. Giovanni's a good spot.

00:50:35

Becs Gentry: That's a good spot.

00:50:41

Liz Cho: I'm thinking of burger and french fries. Definitely french fries. I'm leaning towards a burger right now.

00:50:48

Rob Simmelkjaer: Can't go wrong. It tastes so much better. Guys, I cannot wait to see you both this week. And I have officially put you both in my tracker already in the app. So I'm tracking you.

00:50:59

Becs Gentry: We will be watching you.

00:51:00

Rob Simmelkjaer: There will be many others tracking you. I'm sure in the newsroom, everyone's going to be tracking the two of you.

00:51:05

Becs Gentry: They're going to be so thrilled for Monday morning when you can't talk about it. Well, maybe Tuesday.

00:51:10

Liz Cho: I know. Right?

00:51:11

Becs Gentry: Maybe Tuesday. They'll give you Monday as the day of honor, the day of parading your medals around, and then Tuesday they're going to be like, no more.

00:51:18

Liz Cho: Yeah, exactly. Exactly.

00:51:19

Mike Marza: Until Liz starts searching the next half.

00:51:20

Liz Cho: Until the next race.

00:51:22

Rob Simmelkjaer: Exactly. The next race.

00:51:24

Liz Cho: I'm already in the Brooklyn half, so I cannot wait. So I'm already on to the next one after that.

00:51:28

Rob Simmelkjaer: She's ready. She is coming strong.

00:51:30

Becs Gentry: She's got it all lined up. We just need to add that TCS New York City Marathon onto it for November.

00:51:34

Rob Simmelkjaer: Well, I'm excited for both of you, Mike and Liz, especially for you as your first half. It's a special thing to cross a finish line like that for the first time. So can't wait to see you at the finish line. Good luck. Thank you for joining us.

00:51:48

Liz Cho: Thank you guys.

00:51:48

Rob Simmelkjaer: Thank you for all the awesome coverage you guys give us as well at Channel 7 of the marathons.

00:51:54

Liz Cho: It's a real honor.

00:51:54

Rob Simmelkjaer: Of everything we do at Road Runners all year long. I really appreciate you guys, your whole team there. My friend Marilu Galvez and everybody at Channel 7 WABC. So thanks for joining us and we'll see you at the finish line.

00:52:05

Liz Cho: Thank you.

00:52:06

Mike Marza: Thank you.

00:52:07

Rob Simmelkjaer: All right. Liz Cho and Mike Marza from Eyewitness News, Channel 7, New York. New York Road Runners is a nonprofit organization with a vision to build healthier lives and stronger communities through the transformative power of running. The support of members and donors like you helps us achieve our mission to transform the health and wellbeing of our communities through inclusive and accessible running experiences, empowering all to achieve their potential. Learn more and contribute at [nyrr.org/donate](http://nyrr.org/donate). All right, that does it for another episode of Set the Pace. We want to thank our guest today from Channel 7, WABC, Liz Cho and Mike Marza. Best of luck to them. Best of luck to everyone who

is running the United Airlines NYC Half this weekend.

Can't wait to see you all at the finish line. Remember, get yourselves ready, bring some extra clothes for the start. Don't get cold. And also respect the distance. 13.1 is not a short amount of mileage to run, so make sure you listen to your body and slow down when you need to. But if you're feeling strong, go for it. Hope to see you at the finish line. Have a great, great time at the expo and thanks for listening. We'll see you then.