

## The Day I Felt Invincible

"BANG!" The starting gun exploded, and hundreds of high school girls sprinted into a funnel and onto a narrow road. The leads forged ahead, and small packs began to cluster. Racing across a grassy field, the runners picked up speed. The State Class Meet had begun.

My teammates and I had trained for months, and when I heard that gun, I realized how much this race meant to me. The focus of my dreams: the course, and the race itself.

Two months later, when my team won a Cross-Country Championship trophy, I knew I would run in the State tournament. To prepare for the challenge, I survived intense sprinting workouts to increase my speed, longer and faster runs to increase my endurance, and weightlifting exercises to strengthen my upper body. I set personal goals, and as I achieved each one, I set another.

Despite foul weather, increasing schoolwork, and tempting social events, I trained seven days a week. Whenever I or a teammate complained about feeling tired, sore, or overwhelmed, my coach would say, "Girls, the only time success comes before work is in the dictionary." Stubborn and unwilling to give up, I persevered.

Ecstatic about participating in the State contest, I spent the week before preparing myself mentally, physically, and nutritionally. Eventually, I believed I could run one of the best races of my life.

That day when the starting gun sounded, I flew into action. My heart pounded, my feet flew, and I envisioned crossing the finish line with a cheering crowd roaring my name.

Would you ever have thought I would come in first, and that out of twenty-five competing schools, my team finished in second place? I know you think your grandmother moves like a three-toed sloth, but I'll bet you never knew I once ran at lightning speed.