

Dear Diary,

Was it worth it?

Would I do it again?

Beneath the deafening stamps of feet and clatter of anticipated entertainment, I waited in a state of numbness - a sour taste of sweat on my gums. The booming vibrations from the announcer's sound system reverberated through the tunnel and I could just hear the ringing sound of my name. In a confused daze of determination and anxiety I entered the stadium and the blinding lights from the crowds seemed to propel me into the focused realisation that I needed.

I initiated a slow jog to my starting blocks and was suddenly greeted by an old friend - or enemy should I say? There he was, the feared one - the one that before any event all runners despised - the twinge - on the hamstring. I tried to ignore it - I would not allow it to win again. I could accept being beaten by others, but not by my own body. I shook it off.

Looking around at my opponents, fires of determination burned in their eyes and reminded me that I was not the only one who had sacrificed years of my life in preparation for this moment. The horn signalled that the moment had arrived.

Pointing the gun towards the sky, the official took her place and my eyes lowered, falling upon the pale crimsoned beads of the track that circled the arena. Not allowing the butterflies to take control, I got set and PFFFA - the gun still rang in my ears as everything around me became a blur. Everything except for the looming finish line and my fellow competitors.

Ten metres - a moderately good start, but not a winning one.

Twenty-five metres - I made gains. My peripheral vision informed me that I was trailing third place.

Fifty metres - I advanced ahead and was in third.

Seventy-five metres - I was going to do it. I was in a medal position. The dream of the podium - the dream that so many boys had dreamt of was, for me, about to come true aaaaggggghhh!

Seventy-six metres - It was over.

The pain seared and my left leg gave way. I tried to stand, but it only intensified the agony. I balanced my way to a standing position and pathetically limped a few desperate more metres.

Eighty metres - I couldn't do it. The emotions overwhelmed me and salty tears blinded my vision. I squinted ahead towards the finish line and could make out the silhouettes of figures walking towards me. These were my competitors or, rather now, my comrades. Each of them propped me up and supported me, giving me the strength, hope and will to cross the line. Irrelevant of my position, I was an Olympian and a 2024 finisher.

Was it worth it? Yes

Would I do it again? See you in 2028.