

By Danielle Monson

*It wasn't about winning or losing;
it was about feeling God's love.*

“Why do my legs feel like bricks?” I thought anxiously as I jogged slowly around the warm-up field at the high school league track meet, where I was desperately hoping to qualify for the upcoming state championship in my favorite race, the 800 meters. My anxiety was more than just the usual pre-race butterflies. I had been battling a cold all week, and having just finished a race, I was worried that I was too exhausted to compete well in my event, which was within the next half hour. I thought about how defeated I would feel to have worked so hard all season only to fail when it counted most.

Suddenly my thoughts were interrupted by a familiar voice. “Hey, how are you feeling?” It was Joe, a local track coach who had come to watch the meet.

“Umm, I’ve been better,” I responded truthfully.

“Well, I’m looking forward to seeing you win the 800 today,” Joe smiled encouragingly.

“We’ll see,” I responded, “I haven’t been feeling well, so at this point I just hope I can make it through the





ILLUSTRATION BY DILLEEN MARSH

ME ON TRACK

race and qualify for State.”

“I’m sure you’ll be fine,”

Joe said. “Just relax and you’ll do OK!”

I wished I could feel so sure, but waves of doubt continued to wash over me. As the first call for the 800 meters came over the loud-speaker, I tried to mentally prepare myself for the race. Suddenly, I remembered that a prayer before a race always calmed me and helped me focus. I needed that more than ever, so I found a secluded area on the field and silently began to pray.

“Heavenly Father,” I offered quietly, “I feel so weak today and really need Thy help. I am going to try my very best out there on the track, but please meet me halfway.”

I heard the final call for my race and ended my prayer quickly. A warm peace filled my heart, and I knew that Heavenly Father had heard my quiet plea for help. I calmly took my place on the starting line and waited for the starting gun. Suddenly the official yelled, “RUNNERS TAKE YOUR MARK . . . SET . . .” and the gun was fired.

I took my first few strides with ease, noting how light

“When I needed extra help before the race, Heavenly Father answered my prayer.”

my legs were. I felt as though something special was inside of me. I felt strong and swift, despite having felt so terrible only moments before. As I approached the home stretch of the race, I realized I was in the lead, and before I knew it, I was crossing the finish line in first place!

Joe motioned me over to him as I stepped off the track. “Hey, that race was great! I thought you were sick? What got into you?”

I smiled back. “I *was* sick, and I was praying that I would be able to get through that race!”

Joe chuckled and replied, “That’s great that you prayed, but I don’t think God really cares that much about track and field.”

I paused for a moment and then softly responded, “You’re right! I don’t think He cares very much about track at all, but I know He cares about me.”

As I walked away, I felt the same peace return to my heart that I had felt before my race. I knew Heavenly Father was confirming what I had just told Joe—that He did care about me—and what I had said was true. I thanked Heavenly Father for that assurance. Knowing I was loved by Heavenly Father was the best feeling I had ever felt, even better than winning a race! **NE**