

By Jeff B. Marler

Finding My SECOND WIND

An artistic illustration of a runner's arm and leg in a field. The runner is wearing an orange shirt and blue shorts. The background shows a green field under a blue sky with white clouds. The runner's right arm is raised in a fist, and their left leg is in mid-stride, wearing a blue and white running shoe.

Just like physical exercise, we must exercise our spiritual muscles if we want to stay strong.

I was a senior in high school and had joined the cross-country team mainly to get in shape for track and field events that took place later in the year. As part of our training, every morning before school our coach would have us run to his home, which was four miles from the school, and then run back again.

Several times after having made the eight-mile run my coach asked me if I'd "found my second wind yet?"

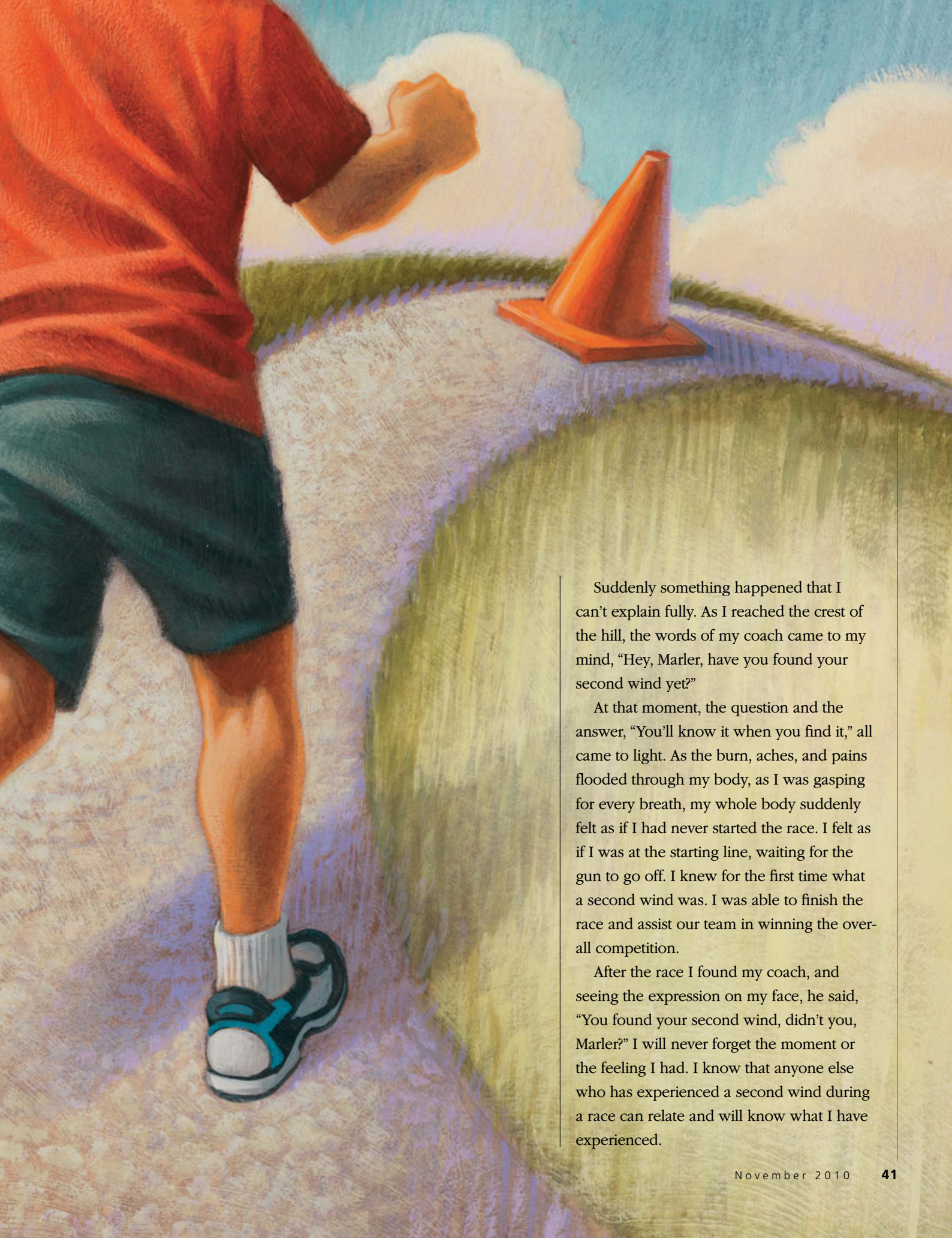
I'd always ask, out of breath, "What's a second wind?"

To which he would reply, "You'll know it when you find it."

After several weeks of arduous training we finally had our first cross-country meet. It was well over eight miles long, with no stops and only an orange cone indicating the halfway mark. Knowing how difficult the last four miles had been for me every morning, I

began to doubt myself even before the race began. But out of respect for my coach and with my competitive spirit, I positioned myself at the starting line.

The gun went off and we were on our way, trying to pace ourselves so we would have enough energy to finish. As usual, I could feel the burn and fatigue starting to build up with every stride I was taking. Well into the race I wobbled around a corner looking up a hill that seemed to be Mount Everest, only to see the halfway sign marked by the orange cone. I was exhausted. By this time I was feeling the temptation to quit. But relying on competitive drive still left in me, I made it to the top, with a weak, staggering run.



Suddenly something happened that I can't explain fully. As I reached the crest of the hill, the words of my coach came to my mind, "Hey, Marler, have you found your second wind yet?"

At that moment, the question and the answer, "You'll know it when you find it," all came to light. As the burn, aches, and pains flooded through my body, as I was gasping for every breath, my whole body suddenly felt as if I had never started the race. I felt as if I was at the starting line, waiting for the gun to go off. I knew for the first time what a second wind was. I was able to finish the race and assist our team in winning the overall competition.

After the race I found my coach, and seeing the expression on my face, he said, "You found your second wind, didn't you, Marler?" I will never forget the moment or the feeling I had. I know that anyone else who has experienced a second wind during a race can relate and will know what I have experienced.

I was in Scotland as a missionary when I found my spiritual second wind, my sure witness of the Book of Mormon. I was kneeling by my bed in prayer when the Holy Ghost bore witness to my soul that the Book of Mormon was true.

I compare gaining a sure witness of the Book of Mormon to that experience of finding a second wind during a race. There is a parallel between hard physical exercise and hard spiritual exercise that eventually helps us reach a goal. I had trust and faith in my coach and knew that something good would come from his instruction. The same applies during our spiritual exercise and training. We don't have to have a perfect knowledge of the things related to our study of the gospel; we put our faith and trust in the Lord through prayer, scripture study, attending our meetings, and worthily partaking of the sacrament. We also hearken to the words from His chosen servants.

I remember distinctly the time and place I found my spiritual second wind, my more sure witness of the Book of Mormon.

I was in Scotland in my first assignment as a missionary in a little town called Barrhead just outside of Glasgow. I had been challenged by a Scotsman asking me how I knew the Book of Mormon was true. It was at that point I realized I had never received a sure witness or even put the book to the test as Moroni challenges us in Moroni 10:3–5. You first have to have a sincere desire to read the Book of Mormon; then you study and ponder the message with real intent and pray in faith, asking the Lord if it is true—something I had not yet done.

It was later one evening as I was kneeling by my bed in humble prayer that I received a feeling so powerful, so sweet, and so warm that it was as if I had just reached the crest of a hill in my spiritual race for truth and understanding. The Holy Ghost bore witness to my soul that the Book of Mormon was true. Like my physical second wind, no one can tell me that I imagined this witness. It was real! I knew it, and no one could take it away from me. From that point on, I had no problem bearing testimony of the Book of Mormon, living prophets, and the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. I could never deny it!

With physical exercise, you must continue working or your body becomes weak and endurance becomes a challenge. The same applies with spiritual exercise; it must be constant. If you stop, your spiritual endurance will become weak.

We all need to be persistent in our desire to know for ourselves the truth of the living Church restored in these the latter days. My spiritual second wind continues to be just as invigorating now as the day I received my first witness of the Book of Mormon in Scotland. I will never forget that moment in my life. **NE**

