

# Run

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*No matter what gets in the way, Makena Madsen knows what it takes to finish the race.*

Running along the beaches near Santa Cruz, California, can be an invigorating experience—the pulse of the waves, the soft sand, the salty air, the boundless ocean. But when you reach the rocky point at end of the beach, you have to turn around and run back the other way.

Unless, of course, you swim around it.

And that's exactly what Makena Madsen does. Each year this 16-year-old from the Capitola Ward in the Santa Cruz California Stake participates in an event called a Run-Swim-Run. In this race along the coast from one pier to another, the sandy beach is interrupted by a harbor and two rocky points, which the racers must swim around.

All in all, the race amounts to about six miles of running and one mile of swimming. Makena can complete the strenuous course in just over an hour—one of the best times for her age group.

Though the race takes great athletic ability, for Makena, it represents more than just an athletic contest. For one thing, it raises funds for a local nonprofit group that sponsors positive and wholesome activities for youth. For another thing, it is a chance to learn lessons about life, the gospel, and herself.

## Lessons from the Race

The race has taught Makena about many things, including preparation, overcoming obstacles, and making good choices.

She has learned to look ahead for danger, as well. The run along the beach is relatively easy. But once you reach the point where you have to swim, there are a number of things to watch out for.

“Depending on the swell, the swim can be dangerous,” she says.



# IM Run



## MAKENA'S FAVORITE SCRIPTURE

**L**uke 1:37: "For with God nothing shall be impossible."

"I like that one because if you always have faith in God and keep the commandments, then you can pretty much do anything—then you'll be able to return to Him."



## DANGER AND SURPRISE

A race like the Run-Swim-Run can have its share of danger and surprise. Here are a few things to consider.

**Swell**—If the swell is too high, the waves can drive you into the rocks.

**High water**—If the water level is high, less sand is exposed on the beach, sometimes forcing you to climb on rocks.

**Seaweed**—Thick seaweed can slow you down and cut your skin.

**Seals**—Sometimes seals will pop up near you while you're swimming, which can be quite startling.

"Sometimes you have to make sure that the waves won't slam you into the rocks."

"One time I went through the seaweed," she says. "It probably would have been faster for me to go around. It's hard to get through it because it pulls on you and scratches you all up and you can't swim through it. And it hurts."

She compares this experience to choices that entangle us in worldly or destructive behaviors and cause us to get stuck instead of making progress. Such choices are like shortcuts that seem easy at first but aren't the right way to go.

### Good Coaching

Makena has many influences in her life that help her make good choices. She credits her parents with having taught her Heavenly Father's plan, which has helped her realize the importance of making choices on her own.

"I like learning about the plan of salvation, which is my dad's favorite thing to teach us," she says. "It shows you the whole picture, so



you actually know why you're here, and you have a reason to be good, not just because your parents told you to."

By following her parents' counsel, Makena, who is the oldest in the family, is also setting an example for her younger sister and brothers to follow. For instance, she has taken to heart what she has learned about personal prayer.

"I like to pray," she says. "That's a good thing. I like to be able to pray wherever I am, in any situation." Prayer even works in school, she says. Once she was intimidated by a history teacher who would ask questions and assign homework if you gave the wrong answer. "I prayed she wouldn't call on me or that I would know the answer," says Makena. She wasn't called on, but more importantly, she says, "I felt peace."

In seminary she has appreciated the lessons that have helped her better understand and relate to the scriptures—like the time the teacher had them carry some "golden plates"

around the neighborhood when they were learning about how Joseph Smith protected the Book of Mormon record.

Makena is also grateful for her youth leaders. “Our leaders do a lot for us,” she says. “They spend a lot of time to make fun activities on Mutual night. And I like the Young Women lessons. They have a lot to do with our daily lives.”

### Good Friends

In addition to parents and adult leaders, Makena says that her friends help her keep her standards high—both those who are Church members and those who aren’t.

“All the girls in our ward are friends,” she says. “It’s good to have friends who have the same standards as you.” And though there aren’t many LDS students at her school, that isn’t a big issue. “At school everyone knows I’m Mormon,” she says, “but a lot of them have similar standards.”

In this community, teenagers like Makena make a lot of friends across school boundaries, as well. And she feels that she and her friends all support each other and help each other make good choices.

### Racing On

Makena participates in several different clubs, sports, and other activities at school and in the community, including soccer, volleyball, and dance. And she keeps up on her studies, too. She’s already thinking about college, though she’s not exactly sure where she wants to go.

One thing is sure, though. No matter what challenges and obstacles may present themselves, Makena knows that with her faith in the gospel, she can overcome them—even if she has to swim around them. **NE**

