

# Races+Places

BUZZ FROM THE PACK, ELITE NEWS, AND OUR RACE CALENDAR



**TAKING OVER**  
Participants enjoy a traffic-free Central Park West in the Mini's first mile.

## Girls on the Run

For one busy mom, an all-women's race is a welcome appointment **BY SARAH LORGE BUTLER**

**T**HERE'S SOMETHING about the New York Road Runners Mini 10-K that feels like a girls' night out. This counterintuitive thought comes to me at 9 a.m. on a June day that's humid enough to poach salmon. But instead of staring down a frosty margarita, I'm contemplating six hilly miles in front of me. Luckily, the right friend in the right setting can make any event feel like a celebration.

I've met my friend Gabrielle here for eight of the past 13 years. A decade ago, we were single New Yorkers who spent

Sundays running races and relaxing at brunch. Now we have four kids between us and live 100 miles apart in worlds that contain far more Eggos than eggs benedict. This race is an opportunity to grab a few minutes of conversation uninterrupted by scraped knees or dirty diapers. By conversation, I mean Gabrielle gazes at me with pity as I barrage her with excuses for my poor conditioning: This ache, that pain, the kids aren't sleeping. And did I mention how hot it is?

No matter. The pregame show reminds

me that this race is about something larger than my own mileage tally. New York Road Runners has been putting on this women-only event since 1972, and they know how to whoop up participants with girl-power speeches. A few years earlier, I heard Kathrine Switzer describe the first Mini, where the 78 entrants were viewed as oddities and asked to hike up their dresses at a press conference. ➔

The Beach to Beacon 10-K in Maine sold out in less than two hours. Runners raising money for charity may still apply for entry at [beach2beacon.org](http://beach2beacon.org).

**NEWS  
FLASH**

## WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

Switzer (center, with bow) at the 1972 Mini, the first women-only road race.

My, how times have changed. The 2008 field of 4,000 includes Deena Kastor, Magdalena Lewy Boulet, and Blake Russell (who earned spots on the Olympic Marathon team six weeks earlier). They're escorted to the start by New York City schoolgirls, and the rest of the field gives them a rousing ovation.

I can actually see the top runners warming up. Gabrielle and I are in the first corral—I've been, um, ambitious in estimating my time. But at a larger event



or with men crowding the start, the closest I'd come to seeing elites would be on the news later that night.


Another perk: The first mile runs up a traffic-free Central Park West. Other races close streets, too, but here there's a different sense of clout than at a coed event.

Problem is, I hit that basically flat stretch way too hard every year and pay for it soon thereafter.

The course turns into Central Park after 30 blocks and heads downhill past the two-mile mark before the steep, long, and winding ascents begin. On the bright side, absent the other sex, there's a lot less theatrical grunting and flying spittle.

I've lost sight of Gabrielle, who has already crested the hills. Whatever, her kids are older and sleeping more. As my pace slows, I think about how this race, with hundreds in my age group, provides an accurate measure of how my training is faring against the opposing forces of work, family, and age. The answer: Not so

TOP TO BOTTOM: COURTESY KATHRINE SWITZER'S BOOK 'MARATHON WOMAN'; THOMAS MACDONALD



## BEST SCHWAG

Awards Worth Bonking For

**SHELL OF A TIME** At the Baltimore 10-Miler on June 20, the \$50 entry fee covers not only postrace beer and watermelon—the 3,000 finishers of the event also receive a water-repellent hooded shell. [baltimoretenmiler.com](http://baltimoretenmiler.com)

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great. Just before mile four—where each year I vow that *next* year, I'll train harder; *next* year, I won't charge out at the start 20 seconds faster than every other mile; and *next* year, I'll keep up with all these women who are also running through their busy lives—the course finally flattens. There's a mile of relief until another short incline at mile five.

Spectators line both sides of a slope up to the finish, where a volunteer hands me a medal and tries to give me a rose, an offering that's supposed to please the ladies. I turn it down. It will wilt before I've left the park, and if I don't have one for both kids, there's going to be a squabble. A few minutes later, I find Gabrielle, who finished two minutes ahead of me, but isn't thrilled. "I think I started out too fast," she says. "I do that every year."

We round up the kids, excuse the babysitters, and head out to continue catching up over enormous bagels slathered with cream cheese. It's not exactly a margarita, but it's definitely a celebration.

## Girl Power

Five races where women rule

### **Freihofer's Run for Women 5-K** **Albany, New York (May 30)**

Since 1979, top athletes have flocked to this race. It's also a favorite of regular runners, thanks to a team competition with such categories as mother/daughter. [freihoferstrun.com](http://freihoferstrun.com)

### **Tufts Health Plan 10-K** **Boston (October 12)**

This event started in 1977 as the Bonne Belle Mini Marathon, and its flat course zips through Cambridge and Boston's Back Bay. [tuftshealthplan.com/tufts10k](http://tuftshealthplan.com/tufts10k)

### **Nike Women's Marathon** **San Francisco (October 18)**

Since 2004, runners have trekked from downtown to the Pacific Ocean, where men in tuxedos hand them a Tiffany's necklace. [nike.com/nikemarathon](http://nike.com/nikemarathon)



### **MORNING GLORY**

The Nike Women's Marathon starts in San Francisco's Union Square at 7 a.m.

### **Disney Princess Half-Marathon** **Orlando, Florida (March 7, 2010)**

This event, new in 2009, starts at Epcot Center and meanders to Cinderella's castle and back. Finishers receive a tiara-shaped medal. [disneyworldsports.com](http://disneyworldsports.com)

### **More/Fitness Marathon** **New York City (2010 date TBD)**

The marathon is limited to women 40 and older, while women of all ages can run the companion half-marathon; both races are set in Central Park. [nyrr.org](http://nyrr.org)