

## Discourse of Athleticism

"Winning has nothing to do with racing. Most days don't have races anyway. Winning is about struggle and effort and optimism, and never, ever, ever giving up" (Burfoot).

This quote cuts to the very core of high school racing. Runners have one of the toughest jobs known to man: Give your all, then give what's left- every single day. Because the truth is that it's not about the race at the end of the week, it's about the hours of dedication and the literal blood, sweat, and tears that come with each practice, each moment of our lives.

With this introduction to my rhetorical analysis, I have inadvertently displayed the "pathetic" argument (the pathos argument). The emotional aspect of cross-country is the most unexpected and compelling argument in favor of the sport. In terms of rhetorical argument, there isn't much tangible or verbal communication. Rather, there is a deep community of unspoken language that every runner knows by heart.

Though the wordless communication of the sport remains the precedent, it would still be nothing without the help of logical and professional evidence to support the physical implications of running and racing. All around the internet, social media, and at live events there is a slew of experts advocating for physical and mental health through the medium of distance running. Like other communities, the runners of the world have a form of communication that dives deeper than simple words. Runners communicate with experts in the field, through compared statistics on a screen, and most importantly, through respect for the struggle that we each face every day. As a "home base" for this discourse, Strava has risen as a forum where

runners can not only find the advice of experts and compare running dynamics but also make connections that will span any distance or competition.

“Strava” is a multi-sport social media platform that displays all aspects of rhetorical language. Strava connects athletes to experts in the field, veterans of the sport, and health medicine professionals from all around the world. There is no shortage of experience to be found on the site. Utah’s own Olympic runner, Connor Mantz, continually shares his experiences and professional advice with up-and-coming runners. In addition to Olympians like Mantz, there are extreme trail-running experts like Kilian Burgada, high-profile running influencers like Hellah Sidibe, and so many more. There is no athletic question that cannot be answered on Strava.

To support the opinions of experts in the field, Strava has also become a forum for statistics and worldwide competition. On Strava each user can view their all-time records, their individual rankings, and much more information to build one’s running portfolio. Not only are there all-time statistics but Strava gives runners a dynamic breakdown on a run-to-run basis. This makes the app an extremely convenient tool for all runners’ needs.

Certain aspects of Strava show the pathetic argument as well, but to see the true, raw, emotion of the sport we have to look into the deep unspoken language that can only be seen in action.

The finish line of a race comes like an answered prayer. It is the final slowness that my body longs for. But with the halt in motion comes the allowance to feel every part of my body that I’d been neglecting for the last twenty minutes. Blackness plays in the edges of my vision, the air I breathe is a dense sludge, and my heart runs faster than my legs ever could. One after another my competitors stumble down the chute, some pass out, some throw up, some burst into

uncontrollable gasping tears, and some just fall to the ground in whatever shade that can be found.

Before I could find somewhere to sit and collect myself, I felt a pair of sweaty arms around me. It was a girl I didn't know, from a team that could beat us out of the state championship. She was breathing hard and I could feel her legs shake as if they were ready to give out. Despite the sweat, despite our hearts that seemed to beat into each other denying our lungs of steady rhythm, I fell into her and we stood there supporting each other through the pain we faced along with every other girl on that course. We simultaneously felt our own hurt, joy, and pride, then that of our competitors. On the course, our hearts pound and our spirits grow full with the determination to not only win the race but to prove ourselves worthy of the desperation that we feel with every step.

This is the feeling that produces the “pathetic” appeal to the sport of cross country. Without having any knowledge of a person's life, circumstances, or even their name, runners and other athletes of all kinds can know each other to the deepest extent. It is the most sophisticated form of communication, the unspoken respect that is bred through the commonality of struggle and triumph. It is this love for each other that makes every race that much easier. Because no matter how hard a race may be, no matter how steep the hill may seem, I am never alone.

In real life and on a screen, the sport of cross-country exhibits each form of rhetoric in one way or another. I however would argue that the most impactful form of argument and discourse is the kind that takes a level of emotional intelligence and respect. It is this kind of deep connection that builds people up; The kind of connection that can move mountains.

Works Cited

Earley, Brigitt. *35 Inspirational Running Quotes to Power You Through Every Mile*. 23 Feb.

2024, [www.onepeloton.com/blog/inspirational-running-quotes/](http://www.onepeloton.com/blog/inspirational-running-quotes/).