



The Winning Mindset

Lorraine Moller

The Reckoning of the Race

Purpose: The purpose of CTCs *The Winning Mindset* is to collect and present articles by accomplished athletes, coaches, and business leaders in an effort to provide our readers with valuable insight into successful training, racing, business, and the characteristics of a high-performance mindset.

Lorraine Moller enjoyed a 28-year international running career demonstrating an historic range in abilities. Her stellar track career (800m: 2:03.6, 1500m: 4:10.6, 3000m: 8:51.7) led to 16 major marathon wins including the Boston Marathon, 4 Olympic Marathons ('84, '88, '92, '96) and earning the Bronze Medal in 1992. A pioneer in the sport she helped pave the way for parity of events for women (women did not run the Olympic Marathon until 1984), and was at the forefront in the battle to bring professionalism to running. A native New Zealander, she was first coached by Arthur Lydiard's Olympic Medalist and coaching protégé John Davies, and later by Davies' protege, Dick Quax, Olympic silver medalist and 5000m world record holder. She also had the opportunity to learn from the icon himself. She is a founder and lead endurance instructor for the Lydiard Foundation, one of the top coaching certification programs in America. Today she travels worldwide to present classes to coaches of all levels. You can register for Lydiard classes and coaching services at www.LydiardFoundation.org. For more about Lorraine and/or personal coaching sessions visit her website at www.LorraineMoller.com.

CTCs Request: The book, *Wings of Mercury*, is an in-depth autobiography that graciously allows the reader into the Lorraine Moller story. That book, coupled with her superb ability to describe the inner battles an athlete faces with competition, failure, and breakthroughs is precisely why Lorraine was one of the first people I spoke to about writing an article for our CTC website in 2017. I'm confident that you will find value in the gems of advice that she has to offer. The way she explains the doubts and reasoning that every runner deals with in a race is helpful for competitors at all levels. Every race seems to present us with a *decision point* – and too often, the weaker runner negotiates his / her own demise. This 4-time Olympian paints the perfect picture of the problem, helping the athlete to be prepared and overcome the doubts. Thank you, Lorraine!

Lorraine's Response:

The Reckoning of the Race

By Lorraine Moller

"Know thyself."

This great edict is written above the temple of Apollo at Delphi in Greece, and has often been attributed to the ancient philosopher Socrates.

There is nothing like the athletic journey to know oneself. We prepare for our goal race over a time period. During this time, if we have trained well, our bodies have been remade into something stronger, more enduring and faster. When we stand on the start-line of the race itself, we are nervous for we know that we are literally putting ourselves on the line to face a direct confrontation with our inner self. Whether we emerge from the race victorious is how willing we are to face off on the limitations of the ego, and allow ourselves to manifest our goals.

Yes, it is a physical event, but during the race we become acutely aware that the outer journey is reflective of the inner journey. As Socrates was inferring and quantum physics now verifies, everything tangible originates from mind, and so for us to become masters of our own experience we must first conquer our own minds.

However our journey on earth does not come with an instruction manual - most of us are thrown in the deep end and have to figure it out for ourselves.

We do have guides however. One of mine was Arthur Lydiard, the great coach from New Zealand, who had an uncanny knack of being able to produce champions through his pyramid regime of training, and his ability to be able to reach into the minds of his runners and plant the seeds of greatness.

In my final preparation for my third Olympic Games I was at the time training in Boulder Colorado. At the age of 37 I was considered over the hill. Although my mental toughness was strong, there was a part of me that was buying into others' opinions and doubts about my age and ability to endure at the top level.

Arthur was visiting friends in Boulder, who arranged for me to have dinner with him.

(Excerpt from my memoir "On the Wings of Mercury")

Arthur asked me how my training was progressing. I told him that my coach had me on a programme of running about 90 miles a week, no track work but lots of long runs that just kept getting faster. "Good, good," he muttered, then paused as he carefully conveyed mashed potatoes

on the back of his fork and sipped on his lager. He was mulling my situation over in his head while he chewed, and I sat poised for the verdict which I knew was about to be delivered.

He put down his fork and paused as he looked me straight in the eye in true Arthur style: unblinking, absolute, omniscient. “Just remember that ninety per cent of runners perform below what they are capable of in the Olympics. You’re smart and experienced. You have trained the right way for years. You can win.”

I don’t know where Arthur got his statistic from, and I wonder if he just made it up on the spot, but I held that number in my head. Ninety per cent. That left ten per cent. There were 60 entrants. That would mean that I would be competing against just six people! Suddenly my task seemed so simple. I could feel myself lifting. The God of Running had just spoken to me. A hope in my heart had now become a distinct probability. Not for a moment did I consider that I would be in that 90 per cent. Sitting in front of Arthur that evening, I was knighted by his words as a ten per cent person. Being a ten per-center himself, Arthur most surely intended that.

1st of August 1992— Summer Olympics Women’s Marathon, Barcelona, Spain

As I watched my competitors warming up the following afternoon at the start line of the Olympic marathon in the outskirts of Barcelona, I could see that Arthur was right. Ninety per cent of these women were already in the throes of selecting their demise from the unwritten running manual, *101 Ways to Run Below Your Best*. The heat was already proving today’s popular choice, next would be the hill where many would quit, followed by the distance, the smog, the pressure, the side stitch, tummy ache, shoes that blister, muscles that hurt, not enough water, too much water, not enough sleep, indigestible breakfast, last week’s cold, etc., etc., etc. I had used them all at one time or other in the last twenty years. Now, inside my bubble there was room for none of them. Even the asthma that had bothered me so badly over the past year had become a non-issue, although I carried an inhaler in my pre-race kit as a precaution. My ferritin levels had topped out at 28, as high as they had ever been. I felt fit. This was time for business. I was here to collect on the energy investment I had made a year before: to meet my future waiting just 26 miles away in the stadium: to win.

Bang! We were underway — a caravan of 60 women vying for glory at the top of the hill where the Olympic stadium stood, 26 merciless miles away.

We ambled along, cagily saving ourselves for the battle. For the first time in the Olympic Women’s Marathon there were no heroics at the outset with some frisky whippersnapper from nowhere racing ahead of the pack thinking she could steal the race. We knew the fiery dragons of Barcelona would eat such foolishness for an appetiser. I ran at the side of the front pack, bidding my time and keeping out of trouble. The first ten miles were my warm-up.

Occasionally, when doubts began to surface in my mind, I ran to the front of the pack for a few yards. It made me feel as if I was winning. Just a few steps and I had enough of a shot of confidence to settle back into the pack for another few miles.

At precisely half way, several runners fled from the front of the pack for their winning bids. They were following their coaches' instructions: "Stay in the pack until half way, then take the lead and win!" I could bet they would not finish well, for they still had fat in their cheeks and had not yet learned to feel the race for themselves. But I knew I needed to be within covering distance, for it would take only one unknown prodigy to hang on to that lead and take my place on the podium. Along with the other sets of mature legs defined by sinuous pistons and pulleys working under translucent skin, I gave chase.

Over the next few miles, runners burst ahead like Icarus taking flight, and one by one they fell back to earth with melted wings and were swallowed up by the ensuing flurry of feet. These bids swiftly reconfigured us from a running sisterhood to a frantic string of chased, chasers, and stragglers.

Soon tall, terraced apartments buildings with wrought iron balconies enclosed the streets that were thick with cheering onlookers. We were approaching downtown. I was expecting to see the honeycombed towers of Gaudi's Sagrada Familia cathedral at around 14 miles. I had deliberately selected this landmark as a mental milestone, but we were almost at 15 miles and I must have missed it. It did not occur to me that I had raised my eyes from the ground only long enough to sight my next turn and plot a straight line to it. I wondered how I could have overlooked such a glaring structure but I would not commit the sacrilege of turning my head away from my goal. "Don't look back!" the peppery old coaches back home would bark to lanky, barefooted lads and lasses on grass tracks. Such pragmatism had made an indelible impression on me. I rarely looked back and never cast my thoughts back either. My concentration was purposefully locked in forward gear.

I first became aware of my surroundings on the long stretch of Las Ramblas. I had walked this famous avenue many times and I was comforted to recognise where I was in relation to the finish. I was a chaser and I could sense the aura of the Japanese runner hitchhiking on my pursuit as I picked off runners in front of me: first two other young Japanese in dark sunglasses, striding together, next the reigning bronze medallist, East German, Katrin Dorre, and then the seasoned Russian, Madina Biktagarova. There was no response from any of them and they let our carriage pass them by as they began their death march to the finish. Soon there was just one runner in front of us.

My attention was taken by a familiar voice from the sidelines, yelling "Go Lorraine!" I looked up to see Harlan. I was heartened. From the first time we met, the sight of him had always lifted me. I could tell he was excited and I looked straight at him and flashed my hand in acknowledgement. I did not want to use my precious energy in words so I wanted my eyes to convey that I had this under control and not to worry about me. I had just passed the 16-mile mark and I felt fantastic.

The crossroads. The point of reckoning. The defining moment. Unwittingly I had just passed into Mercury's territory and was about to be tested. I should have known that the minute I thought I had it in the bag was the same minute I would fall prey to my own hubris. I should have recognised that my foe was not out there but in my own self. But I didn't. I was not aware that the title of Olympic Champion required my fortified walls be razed and my fears emptied out, that I needed to die to my past insufficiencies right then and be filled anew, with a heart open and courageous enough to bear such an awesome responsibility.

This was the cue for my Rational Mind to step in. She looked snappy in her pressed and pleated power suit, selected just for this special occasion. While I had been busy with my imagination the past weeks, erecting magical pink bubbles and lighting incense to invoke Greek Gods at my Olympic altar, she had busied herself with a postgraduate course in 'Judicious Personal Energy Management for Status Quo Maintenance' at Harvard Business School. She had been dispatched urgently by her boss, The Ego, to rein me in. Unlike the directness of the dragon's fire, her breath was cold and her agenda insidious, cultivated specifically to dampen the fever of unbridled dreaming.

Lorraine, what do you think you are doing? she asked with a little sigh in her voice.

I'm chasing down that Russian up ahead so I can win the Olympics.

Oh, really? She raised her eyebrow. *Just remember, it is very hot, and you are not a good heat runner.*

You know, I haven't given the temperature a thought. I really don't feel hot.

Yes, but there are still ten miles to go. The heat can grab you just like that. She snapped her fingers. *Ten miles at the end of a hot marathon can seem like twenty. This is no time to be rash. Slow down.*

But if I slow down I may not catch the leader.

And risk blowing up? Come on, Lorraine. The course goes uphill. You know you are not a good uphill runner. Chances are the Russian will come back to you.

But I feel so good.

Hey, you know not to trust your feelings. They always get you into a hell of a lot of trouble. Slow down, there's a smart girl. The race doesn't start till 20 miles. You know that.

But this is the Olympics, I won't get another chance.

You're absolutely right. And look, you have third in the bag. Third is more than you can hope for. Hold onto it. Everyone is watching. We don't want you making a fool of yourself. Now slow down before you blow it.

So I slowed down. The young Japanese runner, Yuko Arimori moved past me in pursuit of the white-vested runner up ahead, gaining ten, 20 then 50 yards on me. I watched her swaying form chip into the lead of the upright Russian, then catch her. As the two of them merged strides, my heart sank. Her onslaught had been met with renewed vigor from her rival and I knew they would now gain strength from each other. The race for first was 70 metres ahead of me and they were slowly but surely drawing away. I dug in and could feel that I was far from spent. We ran equidistant for a long time, slowly climbing the base of Montjuïc, but I knew that on this ever-steepening uphill that I would not catch them. Soon the curves around the mountain took them out of view.

Our energetic bond had now been severed. I was on my own. The road was newly paved, re-cut for the smooth passage of this grand event. Up, up, up it wended to the Olympic stadium, a magical kingdom in the sky beckoning me on in the twilight. I was still strong but now the snap in my ankles was deadened by the weight of knowing **I had blown my chance for gold.**

Third! Wow, that's great for you. Best you're ever going to do. Sure beats fifth, Ms Rational Smarty-pants chirped as I head for the tunnel into the stadium. *Now look good, everybody is watching.*

I straightened my back and lifted my arms. As I stepped into the arena, a roar rose to greet me. I scanned the stadium stands. Eighty thousand people were standing on their feet, heralding my entrance. My body jolted with the realisation that such rampant jubilation was directed towards me. I had not expected that a third place would surpass a hundredfold the exhilaration of all my other wins put together. The cheering swirled around the stadium and filled me up so that I felt I might burst with goodness. This was the collective sound of enthusiastic appreciation: the sound of humanity welcoming me as theirs. Who would have ever thought that I, Lorraine Mary Moller, from little old Putaruru in New Zealand, would be here at the centre of the universe? For the first time ever, I felt ecstatically alive. I held it in, trying to immortalise this feeling. *This, I said to myself, is the finest moment of my life.*

The recounting of this race brings forward several markers that can be encountered in any race where the runner is undertaking their own heroic journey. (Refer to the works of Joseph Campbell and *The Hero of a Thousand Faces*): Firstly, that in our training we are developing a rapport with our inner self. Quickly we realize that the inner self has two primary forces:

- One that likes to keep things as they are and will sabotage your best efforts and talk you out of your own greatness. It also keeps you safe and alive, like a parent who is always ready to remind you that you are not Superman, and even though you just got a magic cape for your birthday you should not jump off the 3rd story roof. That's its job.
- And the other self that dares to dream and risk, and will lift you from the mundane and take you into the magical (and often unrealistic) realm of infinite potentials.

Secondly, that training offers us the opportunity to know those voices and to modulate their influence so that we develop the discipline to know when to hold back and play safe, and when in that defining moment of the race, to throw caution to the wind and go for it.

Thirdly, when you go into the race it is you against you. You are on your own without anyone to tell you what to do. More than likely you will reach that threshold to new territory where you will have the urge to quit or play small.

- **Such a point usually occurs somewhere about two-thirds of the way into the race, that no-man's land where your freshness has dwindled and you cannot yet smell the barn. Be prepared to meet your saboteur there, knowing that you have already made the decision to face off with it.**

Beyond this reckoning lies a new and better version of Self.

