

'This is what I call sticking it to MS'



Sheila Schroeder of Sycamore Township exults as she enters Manhattan at Mile 16 of Sunday's New York City Marathon. She says she runs to defy multiple sclerosis. At right is runner's guide Chip Hunter of Indian Hill.

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Marathoner beats rain, illness

44-year-old proves anything's possible

BY GEOFF HOBSON

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NEW YORK — In those final painful and surreal moments of a marathon, some runners claim to have seen God.

We didn't see him Sunday, but we heard him as we veered into Central Park at Mile 23 of the New York City Marathon.

Thunder rumbled overhead, and a downpour turned the final 3 miles of roads to rivers.

But nothing could wash the smile off the face of Sheila

Schroeder.

Her defiant challenge to her multiple sclerosis had left her wobbly and weak. But as she walked across the finish line, leaning on Theresa Bain, one of her runner's guides, she had to agree with me.

Maybe that really was God applauding her time of 6 hours, 31 minutes and 52 seconds for the 26.2-mile course.

Sure, the Bengals beat San Diego on Sunday. But the best performance by a Cincinnati athlete undoubtedly was that of this 44-year-old Sycamore Township mother of two.

Her past three weeks of training were virtually wiped out by a cold. And Sunday's slick streets and even slicker

bridges posed a nightmare for a person whose balance has been impaired by a disease that attacks the muscles and nerves.

And there was that nasty toe blister that had to be popped back in a Brooklyn deli during Mile 7.

"This is the best, isn't it?" she asked at the finish.

I've had better. Two hours later, I felt like a pin cushion. Poke any spot on my body and it was sore. From Mile 25 to Mile 26, my left leg presented

an agonizing dilemma.

When I lifted it, a nagging cramp suddenly bit my calf. When I put the leg down, usually in a pool of water, a toe blister bit again. I was about 10 yards in front of Sheila. But for the first time, I had doubts that I could finish with her. And I wondered whether agreeing to be one of her runner's guides was a mistake.

I was still recovering from an incident at Mile 7.

I needed a bathroom desperately and called to the firefighters at Brooklyn's 122nd Station. They graciously waved me in, but I almost ripped off the restroom door

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Marathon results

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- ▶ List of top finishers. D2