

MODEL RUNNER SETS HIGH GOAL

Takes aim at NYC Marathon

IT CAN happen to anyone.

Mary Bryant is a Ford model and last June doctors found a tumor seven centimeters long in her left breast.

Four months after her mastectomy and in the middle of a six-month chemotherapy program she plans to run in the New York City Marathon Nov. 1.

Bryant, a Cleveland native, is another unlikely victim of cancer, but said that she hopes her case and that of Darryl Strawberry will help raise public awareness.

"Nobody is immune from having something happen to them," Bryant said. Bryant went into her doctor's office on the morning of June 1, wearing a plaid skirt and halter top for a lunch date, and six hours later her life had changed forever.

Bryant wouldn't divulge her age, saying that because she still models it's her job "to create an image."

She did say that she had never had a mammogram because she is "well under 40."

But days after a friend was diagnosed with breast cancer Bryant was given cause for worry.

"I had noticed a lump," Bryant said.

Bryant went to her usual doctor who told her to see a specialist, who in turn sent her to another doctor, where she ultimately was given the bad news.

Bryant remembers exactly what happened in that third office, having documented it all in her journal.

"He exact words, because they're ingrained in my head, 'You have a very

ON THE RUN

**BEN
WEBER**



large, dense calcification in your left breast, which is present in the early stages of cancer," Bryant recalled.

If there were any denying the situation for Bryant, she said that it was washed away by a nurse whose tone of voice let Bryant know she was no longer in complete control of her life.

In a slow, condescending voice Bryant was told she was, from then on, a patient.

"My name is Gloria and I'm here to talk to you about what we're going to do . . ." and it's like somebody busted the faucets, I started balling my eyes out," Bryant said.

Bryant had the surgery, and two weeks later was back to modeling, left with a long scar on the left side of her chest.

"They took the whole darn breast," Bryant said.

Bryant has run the marathon three times before, starting in 1994.

But now, Bryant is fighting her chemotherapy, which is given to her intravenously every three weeks.

The drugs attack all the fast growing cells in her body, affecting her hair, her skin, her immune sys-

tem, but most of all her energy level.

"You're fatigued all the time," Bryant said. "It never goes away, I never get back to my normal self completely."

"I'm not used to having to take naps all the time."

The lack of free time Bryant has is directly related to why she started running in the first place.

Bryant's brother Don, has been a quadriplegic since he was 16.

Now 44, Don's only way to move is by pressing his head back against his headrest, directing the his motored wheelchair.

Last year, Bryant ran the NYC Marathon alongside her brother, and this year she's heading up "Don's Team" a group of four people in powered wheelchairs she trains in Central Park as a volunteer for the Achilles Track Club.

Bryant credits the marathon with keeping her brother alive.

It's her brother's condition that has given Bryant the impetus to go out and teach others about the potential of the human spirit.

"My personal mission is to encourage other people to try to do whatever it is they want to try to do," Bryant said. "We're so afraid how we're going to look next to the other guy."

"It's the same thing you see in modeling."

In the middle of her chemotherapy, Bryant is risking her health, especially if

marathon-day temperatures dip below freezing because of the damage done to her immune system.

"I have no idea if I'll finish 26 miles," Bryant said. "I could be playing with my life. The first guy who ran the 26 miles died."

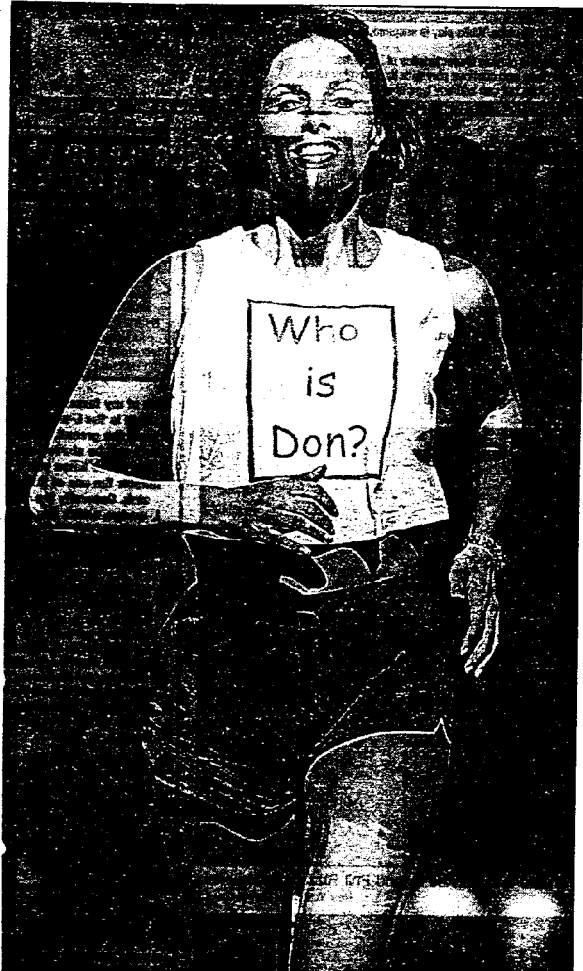
Bryant was referring to the legend of Pheidippides, who is supposed to have died after running from Marathon to Athens in 490 B.C. to tell of the Greek victory over the Persians.

"I'm not just doing this for myself, I'm doing it for my brother and the team," Bryant said.

Before any of this happened, Bryant toured the country as an inspirational speaker talking to high schoolers about the modeling world and their own image.

She's already completed the course three times in the past.

Crossing the finish line in Central Park next month will give her one fine story to tell of the best of all possible story endings.



GOOD REASON: Model Mary Bryant says her brother Don is why she's running in the NYC Marathon Nov. 1.

New York Post, Michael Norcia