

Additional NYS Athletic Trainers and their Colleagues Share 2013 Boston Marathon Experience

In addition to the Marist group, other NYS athletic trainers experienced the Boston Marathon tragedies that day in a different way – as runners. Madeline Pagano, ATC, a physical education teacher and per diem AT at a private school in Manhattan, had finished the race just minutes before the explosions. A former spectator at Marathon Monday years earlier as a student at Merrimack College (North Andover, MA), this was Pagano’s first time running the Boston Marathon and she was relishing the experience. She had many college friends in the crowd cheering her on and finished with her personal best marathon time. After collecting her medal, she was nearing the buses when the explosions went off. Due to her distance from the blasts and the chaos and panic that followed, Pagano fought the urge to return to help out, but was certainly willing to do so. About her experience, Pagano shares, “I am very fortunate that everyone I knew was alright. After returning to school, students said they were worried about me because, as an athletic trainer, they knew if I was there I wouldn’t hesitate to help.”

Tim Bellisari, ATC, a teacher and AT at Locust Valley High School (Long Island, NY) was also running in the marathon – to honor a former Boston University classmate who died of cancer the previous year by raising money for the American Cancer Society. Unlike Pagano however, Bellisari was just behind the blasts and was only made aware of the events that had occurred when a wall of people blocked the course with less than one mile to go, ending the race. He immediately called family and friends - some of whom who were on Boylston Street, a few near the finish line - to confirm that everyone, including himself, was uninjured. “Some of our friends in the crowd, who are also certified athletic trainers, were about two store fronts from the second blast. Although they were literally were knocked off their feet from explosion, they were unharmed and even subsequently offered their services to the police and other medical staff but were asked to evacuate,” Bellisari explains. He continues, “Being present during such a catastrophic event caused a mixture of emotions – shock, anger, frustration, and guilt.”

Colleagues in the medical field also had stories to share. One of those is Lisa Laski, Executive Administrative Assistant at Excelsior Orthopedics, a company who employs athletic trainers in the Buffalo area. She was a spectator that day and was not more than twenty feet in front of the first blast. Given her proximity to the explosion, she surprisingly, and fortunately, sustained only minor physical injuries. “We were blown off our feet and landed in a heap with other victims. We got up as quickly as possible - thankfully our injuries allowed us to do so – and started walking away from Boylston Street. The shock of what had happened and fear of what might be next pushed us to walk away. We found an ambulance a block or so away and sought medical care there, though there were first responders helping those at the bomb site.” When asked if her career in the medical arena affected her reaction or coping in any way, she so honestly and candidly responded, “I would think that being in and around the medical profession

would help one to handle a situation like that somewhat better; But at the same time, it's a circumstance you would never imagine being in and all I remember is that shock took over until we felt safely out of harms way and were able to process what had happened."