Team Rusk Goes the Distance

IT WAS 1:00 P.M. ON SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 1, and Bonnie Marks, PsyD, waited just past the finish line of the 2009 New York City Marathon, scanning the sea of exhausted faces. “Do you see Yuki?” the NYU Langone Medical Center psychologist asked. “He should be here any minute.”

The 26-mile race was several hours old, and runners were streaming into Central Park by the thousands. At last, Dr. Marks spied the person she was seeking. Supported on either side by two guides who ran with him every step of the way, 23-year-old Yuki Goto was barely standing. Through his fatigue, however, a glint of satisfaction shone. His goal had been to break 3 hours and 40 minutes, and his companion’s wristwatch showed his time: 3:39.

“Find a medic!” Dr. Marks ordered. Yuki was hustled onto a golf cart, where he gulped down a half-gallon of water and Gatorade. By the time he got to the medical tent, a few hundred yards away, he was starting to recover.


“Yuki’s feeling better,” Dr. Marks reassured the young man’s mother over her cell phone. “He’s making jokes.”

Dr. Marks’s concern was both personal and professional: she is a Psychology Fellow with the Brain Injury Day Treatment Program at the Medical Center’s Rusk Institute for Rehabilitation Medicine, where Yuki was a patient until very recently. Following a near-fatal car accident several years ago that left him in a coma for two weeks, part of his brain had to be surgically removed. “It left me completely bent over,” Yuki recalls. “I had to learn to walk again.” After doing physical therapy at another venue, he spent two-and-a-half years in the Rusk Institute program working to overcome the cognitive and psychological deficits caused by his traumatic brain injury, or TBI.

The 2009 New York City Marathon, Yuki’s third, also marked the debut of Team Rusk, a group of Rusk Institute patients who competed as a group in this year’s race. Three team members—Yuki, Allan Tyson, and Samuel Brandenburg—are alumni of the brain injury program. The other six are graduates of Rusk’s physical therapy program. ✤

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