

Cross-country team balances pain, joy

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Senior Reporter

Humber varsity cross country runner Liam Bauman balances the thin line between sport-related pain and passion.

All cross country runners know they will go through hell in a race, the extreme fatigue, the shortness of breath and burning muscles. The whole body just hurts.

“But that is the fun part, dealing with that pain,” said Liam Bauman, one of the members of the Humber cross-country team. “I embrace the pain because it is going to happen, even in the workouts, you have to go with that mindset.”

Pain management is a big part of cross country and can separate those who win, and those who don't reach the podium. Those who beat the pain, wins the race.

Hawks head coach Scott Skimming suggests there is a complex inner struggle runners have with themselves, the battle of wanting to give up and stop, and the self that wants to compete.

“Athletes need to understand that their brains are hardwired to protect the body and that the safety factor between their mental



HUMBER HAWKS/YASH PATEL

Hawks cross-country runner Liam Bauman balances the thin line between sport-related pain and passion.

breakers and their actual physical limits is large,” he said.

Skimming said pushing past the mental barriers takes practice and athletes need to get comfortable being uncomfortable.

The suffering in cross-country training and competition is not vain. Bauman has reasons he endures it.

“You can think cross country is individual, but is also a team

sport, so you have to fight for the team and yourself,” the first-year Kinesiology student said.

“You don't want to finish knowing that you could have done more or you could have gone faster. When you overcome this suffering, it's definitely rewarding,” Bauman said.

Skimming said part of what runners do is keep a clear mind and focus on their objectives

during a race.

“Ideally athletes stay extrospective when racing,” he said. “If they focus on their goals, their environment and reading their competitors, they can minimize the hardship they are enduring and the negativity introspection might offer.”

Although long-distance runners train to tolerate pain better than others, the strain on body and

mind can be part of the training, the Hawks' head coach said.

“Training is where we prepare athletes for the rigours of racing,” he said.

“The goal is to reduce the safety factor by providing specific pieces of work that push them past their current mental breakers for short, controlled amounts of time so they know they can go there and what it is going to feel like.”

It's in training as well where athletes learn the different ways to deal with the different kinds of fatigue and aches like calf cramps, annoying during practice, but devastating in a race.

Whenever problems like that arise, that's where Bauman uses the mental aspect of the sport.

“You have to keep talking to yourself. You have to tell yourself that you are capable of it,” he said.

But the cramps are but one of the ways the stressors appear along with a lack of breath or a side stitch.

Bauman is more than familiar with all of them as he works out six days a week. The pain is a way of life. The pain is a pleasure.

“Is it possible to enjoy suffering? I think so,” he said.

Maple Leafs take season opener in comeback fashion

Luca Tersigni
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The Toronto Maple Leafs launched its 2023-24 campaign on Wednesday night at Scotiabank Arena beating the Montreal Canadiens in the heart-stopping fashion fans have come to embrace.

Before the action, Maple Leafs head coach Sheldon Keefe talked about getting off on the right foot, as the team had its fair share of inconsistencies in the past couple of seasons.

“It took us too long last year to really find our game and play with purpose and all those kind of things,” Keefe said. “It's the NHL, you got to put in the work and be ready.”

The puck hit the ice and fans got a glimpse at the rebuilt first line of Auston Matthews, Mitch Marner and new addition Tyler Bertuzzi.

Early in the first period, both teams developed chance after chance, but the Habs took the lead after Leafs defenceman T.J. Brodie tripped up on the Canadiens' blue line opening a breakaway lane for Canadiens centre Jake Evans.

The first goal had Toronto looking sluggish until another new addition to the team, Ryan Reaves,

laid a huge hit on Habs Kaiden Guhle, leading to a fight between Reeves and Montreal defenceman Arber Xhekaj.

This sparked an energy in the building that rallied the crowd.

The fans' silence became overwhelming again after Montreal increased their lead to 2-0 on an Alex Newhook tap-in early in the second period.

Toronto finally put their foot on the gas as newcomer Noah Gregor, who had a strong preseason with the team, fired it past Habs goalie Jake Allen making it a 2-1 game.

The Leafs struck again, this time on the power play, as Matthews found the back of the net, giving him his first goal of the season — and his 300th of his career while breaking a team record of getting to that level the fastest — and tying the game at two a piece.

The scoring didn't end there. William Nylander gave the Leafs a 3-2 lead with less than a minute left in the second as he blasted one past Allen on the powerplay for his first of the year.

“I think the power play, obviously that was big for us, came up with a couple of big goals just to get us back into it,” Matthews said after the game.

The Canadiens crushed the Leafs' momentum early in the third by scoring two goals a minute apart to take a 4-3 lead.

Toronto's D-core would end up making another costly mistake as Timothy Liljegren fanned on a clearance in his zone setting up Canadiens forward Jesse Ylonen for a goal that would make the game 5-3.

With this game seemingly in the grasp of the Canadiens, Keefe pulled goalie Ilya Samsonov with five minutes remaining to give the Leafs a man advantage.

The risky decision from the coach would pay off as Matthews slid the puck underneath Allen's pads for his second, getting the Leafs back within one.

With time winding down and the Leafs pushing to tie the game, Nylander would intercept a clearance attempt and start a scrum in front of the Habs net. Matthews, who would not be stopped at two goals, found a way to force the puck into the net, giving him his 8th career hat-trick and tying the game in the last minute of play forcing overtime.

The Leafs looked vicious in the added period but took a late penalty that would give the Canadiens

a power play for the remainder of overtime. The Leafs penalty kill heroics shut the door bringing the game to a penalty shootout.

Both goalies were unbeaten through the first four shooters until Mitch Marner made a nifty move and scored to give Toronto the advantage. The Leafs netminder shut the door on the Habs final shooter giving Toronto a 6-5 win on opening night and their first win of the season.

Leafs' Captain John Tavares said it was good the team took the home-opener.

“Obviously (it's) good to get the two points,” Tavares said. “Winning in this league is difficult, so just staying with it at many points in the game and finding our way to get that done, but no doubt we need to defend better.”

The Leafs take on the Minnesota Wild in their second test for the new season on Saturday, Oct. 14.



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Leafs' Mitch Marner scores shootout game winner against Montreal.