

**Open letter to Martin Franklin** by Steve Holman

Martin Franklin was the surprise 5th American male finisher in the New York City Marathon with a time of 2:18:44, an Olympic Trials qualifier. However, race officials determined that Franklin missed three electronic checkpoints during the race, resulting in his disqualification. Franklin will have an opportunity to appeal the decision, and in the unlikely event that his time is reinstated, I apologize in advance for all the mean things I'm going to say about him.

Dear Martin,

What is wrong with you, man?

When I first heard you were disqualified for cheating, I thought it was sort of funny. Not funny "ha-ha" but funny "duh"! I didn't think people still did that sort of thing, especially in a race like the New York City Marathon, with its computerized chip timing, electronic checkpoints along the course, random spotters and videotape verification. And two million eyewitnesses.

It appears you simply jumped on the course somewhere after the 20-mile checkpoint. I'm not questioning your strategy or anything, but I think you might have benefited from taking extra time to come up with something a bit more clever.

But the odd thing to me is that you chose to cheat and put yourself in 19th place. Not much money, fame and glory for 19th place, Martin. When Rosie Ruiz jumped off the subway near the end of the 1980 Boston Marathon, at least she won the race. When you cheat, Martin, you must have the courage to cheat with gusto. The only thing worse than a cheater is a cheater with low standards.

OK, so maybe your goal was to win the American Championship, in which case you badly misjudged the talent level of the real American runners. Or maybe your goal was to steal a berth to the Olympic Trials, where presumably you would have attempted to cheat yourself into fourth place. But really, Martin, what the heck was the point?

Throughout my career, I have always tried to be outspoken against illegal drug use in track, a far worse form of cheating than your little prank. But I have always wondered: How do cheaters sleep at night? How do you justify it? How can you feel good about your accomplishments when you know you achieved them unfairly? Any insights, Marty?

Maybe I have played into your little trap by giving you the attention for which you seem so desperate. You are now far better known than if you had slogged out the entire distance with everyone else, assuming you could actually complete a marathon. So, if I have in fact caused you embarrassment and brought shame to your family, I am pleased.

You owe an apology to all of the participants and organizers of the NYC Marathon for detracting from what was a tremendously successful event. As you quickly return to obscurity, just remember one thing: Cheaters never win, nor do they finish 19th.

Regards,  
Steve

*Steve Holman was a '92 Olympian and NCAA champion at 1500 meters. His 3:31.52, set in 1997, ranks him third on the all-time American list. On October 5, Holman was inducted into the Minnesota Track & Field Hall of Fame.*