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Mixed Memories

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Mike Andersen's first Boston Marathon will be memorable for more ways than one. The 2013 Boston Marathon was everything he imagined it would be until the bombs went off — the bombs that killed at least two and injured many more.

"I had finished the marathon about two hours before the explosions happened," Andersen said. "I was two blocks away and people around us said it felt like thunder. It was chaos all around us."

When the bombs went off, the 2010 University of Dayton graduate and his fiancée Kendel Ross, also a 2010 Dayton graduate, were enjoying a celebratory meal at the Marriott Hotel. Andersen had run a personal best race with a time of 2:25.12 — just eight minutes off the Olympic Trials qualifying time of 2:18.

Both Andersen and Ross are safe, but are having trouble reaching family due to interrupted cell service in the area. They are also caught in Boston because their automobile is downtown. He has very mixed emotions about the day's events.

"It was amazing. I got so emotional in a good way. Kendel was there at the end and supported me through the whole race," he said. "I just tried to take it all in. There were tons of people, very happy people."

"I hope they continue the Boston Marathon and it is bigger and better next year," he added. "I hope this does not deter from people coming together for such an amazing event of camaraderie. My prayers go out to the families of those who lost someone today."

Andersen's time sliced more than a minute (1:07) off his personal best and it helped him to a 42nd overall finish out of more than 27,000 runners. He was 34th in his age group. And it was just his third marathon — Andersen ran his first full marathon in October of 2011 in Detroit.

"The atmosphere was magical; all of the fans there to support and all the runners alongside me," he said. "You play out the race in your mind. I saw myself running strong and mentally sticking with it the whole time. I never felt good in the race. I never found my groove...I just kept pushing the entire way. Mentally, it was a challenge."

Andersen, who currently manages Running Lab, an innovative shoe store in Brighton, Mich., that uses video to analyze which shoe best fits each runner, was the first Flyer to earn men's cross country All-Atlantic 10 honors every season (2005, 2006, 2008, 2009). He was the 2005 A-10 Rookie of the Year, won the 2006 Penn State Spiked Shoe Invitational and the 2007 National Catholic Invitational at Notre Dame.

"Mike Andersen is a great ambassador for distance running. He's brought a lot of credence to our program at the University of Dayton," said University of Dayton head men's cross country coach Rich Davis. "He continues to love running and puts in the work to compete. That's what we're all about."

Andersen's time qualified him for the 2014 Boston Marathon. He already has plans to compete in other races.

"I will run a marathon in late fall in Philly. I plan on doing a half marathon, the Dayton River Corridor," Andersen said. "Kendel and I say we are going to run the Detroit half marathon two days

after we get married."

Anderson and Ross, a four-year standout on the Flyer women's basketball team and current strength and conditioning coach for the Flyers women's team, will be married Oct. 18.

Both have Olympic aspirations. Ross was a first alternate on the Canadian Women's Basketball National Team for the 2012 London Olympics and aims to make the team for the 2016 Rio Olympics. Andersen would like to make the Olympic Trials for 2016.

"I like to see how fast I can get and I can never be satisfied," said Andersen. "I'm getting closer and closer to the time standard for the Olympic Trials. The top three in each event advance to the Olympics."

Both have big dreams, but for now they are just happy to be safe with each other.

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