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Ten Kilometers on the Road: **The Significance of the Sports Landscape**

During the past twenty years, the increasing popularity of five- and ten-kilometer footraces has been due in great part to changes in the sport landscape. Karl Raitz has presented the influence of the sports landscape in *The Theater of Sport* (1995), in which he states that “both the game and the place contribute to the experience” of participating in and watching sport. Raitz’s volume presents articles by different authors on the ensemble (the “integration of place and artifacts”) of most major sports. I discuss the ways in which long-distance running is affected by ensemble. My information comes from *Runner’s World* magazine, where I am Historical Advisor, and from other media sources during the last twenty years, as well as from my own participation in long-distance running.

Participation in road racing has expanded because the ensemble has expanded; taking the five- and ten-kilometer events on the road allowed more people to enter the races. Raitz makes the point that the primary reason for attending or participating in a sporting event is the gratifying sporting experience. Running a ten-kilometer race on streets and avenues rather than on the track makes the race more interesting, especially for those who enter more to participate than to compete. The addition of water stations along the course makes the race more comfortable. Other components of the ensemble are the T-shirts and other items given to all entrants, the recorded music and group warm-ups before the race, and the arch of balloons over the finish line. The “name” runners who add to the prestige of the event often function as artifacts for the participants (“I saw Grete Waitz at the check-in!”) whether these great athletes are there to compete or to speak at clinics and discussions. The influence of ensemble is quite noticeable at a women’s race when you are all crowded together behind the starting line; it sure smells a lot better.

The ensemble can expand a race of a few hours into an event of several days’ duration. The 1996 New York City Marathon Exposition, featuring merchandise booths, free advice from experts, pasta parties, and famous athletes, begins on 31 October 1996 and continues for four days until the marathon itself on 3 November. The ensemble can also change the nature of the event. Women’s races often advance women’s issues. In a race to raise funds for breast cancer research, the awareness of a lifethreatening illness may overshadow the actual competition for some runners.

Study of the effects of the sport landscape contributes to cultural history in explaining how sports attract and hold followers, and how the need for audience and participants changes sporting events. This paper contributes to the business history of sport, because sponsors finance many of the artifacts, and because road races have become a business for some individuals and a fund-raising source for some organizations. This is also a paper on the promotion of fitness, since the experience of gratification may be necessary to attracting individuals to the pursuit of healthful activities.