

ABSTRACT

Author: Nicole Rizzo
Title: Running on Thin Ice
Thesis Advisor: Rachel Furey
Department: Department of English and Honors College
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This thesis is a memoir tracing my personal experiences as a female long-distance runner as they relate to body image, perfectionism, and mental health. My writing is shaped and influenced by many women: brilliant distance runner Maddie Holleran's death by suicide at the age of 19, Olympic runner Alexi Pappas's messages of body positivity and the importance of nourishing oneself, elite distance runner Mary Cain's story revealing issues of women's health and exploitation in the sport and advocacy for a better system, and distance runner Molly Seidel's triumph of winning the bronze medal in the 2021 Olympic marathon after overcoming an eating disorder. The thesis follows a journey of finding joy in running, and how it is lost due to distorted eating, over exercising, and perfectionism. The story shows my search to find joy in running again by accepting help and learning to believe in myself. The purpose of the thesis is to share and accept my own story while being a voice for the many women who have endured the same experiences as me but could not find the words to express them.