

STILL IN IT

by Patrick Kinney

Every time I run  
every minute  
whether it's a race or not  
whether I'm alone or not  
whether you're awake or not  
to witness  
I'm in it

The first lap's a sled ride  
second sinks as lungs expand  
third makes me think  
how will I endure this thirty minutes?  
yet nowhere near my limit  
still in it  
still in it

Music lightens legs  
dancing mind fuels feet to finish  
sirens' song sails ship and body through  
caffeine swells  
twin shoals  
of pain and penance  
still in it  
still in it

Seventh lap  
first sprint  
of seven  
rest between them  
at a 6:20 mile pace  
just a single minute  
lungs fight ribcage to escape  
body pleads for slower pace  
I tell myself  
you've made it through this  
every day  
every race  
stay in it  
stay in it

By lap thirteen  
bones and muscles throb  
chest aches  
loud grunt and shake of head  
mind on music  
dancing legs  
speed pace  
push pain away  
will I give up?  
not today!

(continued on next page)

STILL IN IT (continued, same stanza)

still in it  
still in it

Eighteen and  
one more lap to finish  
pain recedes  
pushing legs  
to reach my outer limit  
every runner lapped  
clock my only competition  
still in it  
still in it

And then the finish line is breached  
when all the pain has peaked  
release  
gulping air till peace  
till peace, yet

never in it  
never in it