

Few options for runners dealing with hecklers

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Happy Labor Day! The fall does not begin until the autumnal equinox on Sept. 21, but many view Labor Day as summer's end. Have a safe and fun holiday frolicking in the sun.

I have dreamed of doing the following to hecklers and careless and rude drivers.

I'm out on a run just before school about 7:30 a.m.

A convertible races by with the horn blaring. Two plastic bottles whiz past my head. I pull the track starter pistol from my fanny pack, drop to one knee and fire two shots. The car screeches to a halt. The teenagers, too obese to run away, tremble in their seats. I smell urine as I jog by them with a smile on my face and say, "Have a good day."

Runners and cyclists, however, are powerless in situations when we are taunted or threatened on the road. It is hard to get license plate numbers to report such incidents to the police.

Here's a true story.

In the days when a drawbridge went over the Intracoastal

Waterway to Quintana, I was riding north on the island side of the bridge when a truck passed by me, and someone threw a bottle at me. It barely missed my head. The drawbridge closed for a barge, and I pulled up behind the truck on my bike.

I memorized the license number and called the police. Those four students got into deep trouble. A police officer brought them to my home to apologize. Justice.

What can runners and cyclists do against those who harass or threaten us? Unfortunately, not much except to ensure we practice safe runs and rides ourselves.

First, we need to run or ride in safe, familiar places. I run and ride on the highways around Freeport, but I choose roads with wide shoulders and plenty of room to leave the road if I must. Of course, when I ride my bike, I wear a helmet. If I run early in the morning, I wear a reflector vest. I have seen cyclists without helmets, some youngsters on the way to school and runners in the dark of the morning or evening dressed in black. Not a good idea.

I never trust a vehicle to yield the right of way. I am especially careful when I approach intersections or a point where vehicles go to the shoulder to get around a car turning left. When I am running, I face the traffic; when I am cycling I ride with the

traffic flow. I slow down and expect a vehicle not to give me the right of way.

Innumerable times, hecklers have harassed me, blasted their horns, screeched their breaks (while my heart beat faster waiting for the car to hit me). There is not much we can do about them except put ourselves in a zone to psychologically shut them out.

If we respond in kind or shoot them one half of the peace sign, we could be in trouble.

A runner or a cyclist is no match again a vehicle or a car full of thugs who might jump out and assault him.

Hecklers and careless drivers are unavoidable hazards on the road. It goes with the territory. Just do your best to keep safe because some of those on the road have no respect or concern for us.

Running footnote:

Family Fitness in Lake Jackson celebrates its 10th anniversary with a 5K run/walk on Saturday, Sept 13, beginning at 7 a.m. The contest will benefit The Brazos River Project and will include a barbecue cookoff and family activities throughout the day. Registration forms are available at Family Fitness at 333 FM 2004. For additional information, contact Merie Abercrombie at (979) 297-3200 or e-mail [abercrombiefit4u\(at\)yahoo.com](mailto:abercrombiefit4u(at)yahoo.com).

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