

RUNNING CITY GIRL: Run like a girl

IT'S a well-known fact: women love fashion. From girly to tomboy to sporty, we all love to look great in our own way. As running has become the current rage, so too has fashion for women runners.

The writer with her girlfriends and their running skirts at various running events

What used to be a pair of plain black shorts and cotton tees has widened into a selection of styles. And one of the latest fads is running skirts.

For those who have never come across one, running skirts are made of moisture-wicking material and designed for running. In general, they come in two main styles; with attached briefs or attached shorts. There is a range of designs to choose from: Polka dots, camouflage, plaids and many more. The best thing about these skirts is that they are comfortable.

SKIRTING THE ISSUE

I run in skirts, regardless of distance. I've completed three full marathons in them. To spice up the local running scene, my girlfriends and I have participated in a number of local races in costumes - as school girls, pirates and military, to name a few - with matching skirts.

Do running skirts affect my running performance in any way? No. Do I have fun running in them? Absolutely.

Unfortunately, the idea of running skirts is not something that every runner is thrilled about. Some think that those who run in skirts aren't serious runners.

Some are even offended by the idea, thinking that these skirt devotees are turning the sport into a fashion show.

Well, I beg to disagree. In my opinion, there are many ways we can define a runner, but based on what that person wears is certainly not one of them.

I have to be honest, though. When I first saw female runners in skirts on the streets of Kuala Lumpur, I was sceptical. Although I totally supported the idea of looking good while breaking a sweat, I wasn't fully convinced about the practicality of these skirts.

IN COMFORTABLE FASHION

As a runner, I was of the opinion that comfort shouldn't be sacrificed for fashion. A skirt with double-ruffles at the back didn't

seem to fit into my definition of comfort.

As women in running skirts grew in numbers, so did my curiosity. There must be something about the outfit, something beyond fashion, which appeal to these women. I wanted to try running in one to find out what the hype was really all about.

So, one day, I took the plunge. I bought myself my first running skirt. A plain, classic black skirt that I thought looked simple yet adorable.

When I first had it on, I had issues with its length (or rather the lack of it). But I had to admit that the skirt was more flattering on me than my shorts or capri tights.

It then struck me that these skirts were perhaps not so much for fashion as they were for celebrating the female form while running. In addition, the fabric was noticeably lightweight and airy. Once I started running, I was impressed. The skirt was cool and breezy. It didn't restrict my movements and I loved the way it swung as I ran.

I liked the fact that I didn't have to spend a single second thinking about my shorts creeping up. My verdict? The skirt was probably the most comfortable item of clothing I had run in. At the end of the run, I became a skirt-convert.

FEMININE FEATURE

Features aside, I personally like what running skirts signify ? that femininity doesn't have to stop when my hair is in a ponytail and I'm sweating my face off. I like the feeling of being feminine and athletic at the same time. To me, in one way or another, running skirts symbolise the kind of woman I want to be.

Love them or hate them, running skirts are definitely making a statement in the running world. It is up to each individual to decide whether to take this statement positively or not.

There will always be a debate on the 'seriousness' of those running in skirts, but these skirts are here to stay. For my part, anything that adds fun to my running activities works for me.

And who says you can't have fun while breaking your running records? I know my girlfriends and I have done this, repeatedly.