

A decidedly Canadian response to the shambles that was the running portion of the modern pentathlon in Beijing

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Living so close to the United States-Canada border means that there's a lot of friendly teasing of the many Canadians in our midst. It's a good thing Canadians as a whole seem to have a pretty good sense of humor about it. (Well, except the Quebecers. Those humorless grumps.) The final stage of the modern pentathlon is supposed to be a cross-country course, run through grassy fields, with occasional obstacles like a brook that needs to be hurdled. At the 2008 Olympics in Beijing, however, the course didn't so much resemble a cross-country run as it did waiting in line at Disneyland. Instead of traversing an outdoor course, the runners ran through a labyrinth constructed on the outer track of the athletic field, navigating dozens of switchbacks that converted the 1000-meter track into a test of how well you can make sharp turns. I remember being completely flabbergasted when I saw the course. It was a total disaster. Which is why I was amused at the response from Monica Pinette, a Canadian athlete who participated in the competition. Summing up her displeasure, she said, "I'm pretty angry. I'm going to write a nasty letter." That just struck me as a quintessentially Canadian way of expressing extreme dissatisfaction.

Today marks the opening of the 2010 Winter Olympic Games in Vancouver. Best wishes to all the Canadians out there. Even if I still tease you every so often.

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