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“Keeping Our Beaches Bare”

Run in Buff Like Calling Law’s Bluff

By Alex Brown

San Francisco, Calif.

It’s like holding a pair of twos against a straight flush – and raising.

It’s the equivalent of trailing by one against the “Steel Curtain” with five seconds to play – and attempting a two-point conversion.

It’s akin to scoring a date with Claudia – and making a play for Elle.

Quite simply, the annual bluff calling of the armada of Bay to Breakers nude runners, in the face of race organizers and police, is as intriguing as any Kenyan duel at the front of the pack.

By official race rules – as well as Section 314 of state law – those taking to the streets in nature’s garb are entitled to be detained by police, charged and faced with a one-year jail term.

And yet, they come, in the hundreds. They defy authority and, more importantly, establish themselves as one of the more intriguing aspects of San

Francisco’s renowned race.

“There’s nothing like running up the Hayes Street hill with the wind blowing through,” said Michael Gibbs, a noted nude runner. “It’s quite sensational.”

We’ll take your word on that, Michael.

But a question remains: Will police or race officials crack down on Gibbs and his bare-bottomed brethren this year?

They are entitled to, after all.

“Naked running is not permitted,” reads the notice on the official Bay to Breakers Web site

(www.baytobreakers.com). “The police department may arrest or cite violators.”

And Section 314 states: “Every person who willfully and lewdly . . . exposes his person, or the private parts thereof, in any public place, or in any place where there are present other persons to be offended or annoyed thereby . . . is punishable by imprisonment in the state prison, or in the county jail not exceeding one year.”

Serious stuff, but it’s a law that is nearly impossible to implement.

“In this city, you’re not going to

enforce that law,” said one SFPD officer on condition of anonymity. “[The Bay to Breakers] is a celebration.”

Officially, officers will make arrests if called upon by race organizers, police spokesman Jim Deignan said, but he had doubts he would receive many calls.

“We sometimes get a few calls to complain in the days after the race,” Deignan said. “But by then it’s too late.”

Organizers contacted by The Examiner on Thursday would not disclose whether they intended to enforce a crackdown on nude runners this year, despite the sternly worded warning on their web site.

Even so, Gibbs warned any such move would prove detrimental to the overall vibe of the event.

“I would be outraged,” Gibbs said. “Whatever happened to free spirit and expressing oneself? The Bay to Breakers is an ideal opportunity to show that in a very liberal city.”

Let the bluff-calling commence. ☆