

OLD SCENES ARE GONE FOREVER

Gone now is the Irvington Oval, buried beneath massive apartment buildings and a garage. Gone are many of the scenes of that first Marathon. But the thrills of this classic of the road will never die. Rather, they have grown and will continue to grow with age.

Starting tomorrow morning for a hectic 24 hour period, the B. A. A. Marathon will drive the United Nations, the OPA and the classiest murders of the day off the front pages. Baseball, the national pastime, will be relegated to the corners of the sports pages. For millions of modern fans and fanatics the race will be news, big news.

For many of us it will be 26 miles, 385 yards of happy memories!

I took a few moments yesterday to mingle with some simple arithmetic, and deducting about 10 of the B. A. A. races which I missed during years spent at Georgetown at the turn of the century, and during the first World war, I figure I have witnessed personally some 40 of the Boston Marathons, as a spectator and sportswriter, man and boy, or vice versa. John Graham, it was, who coached the B. A. A. team at the Athenian Olympics, and it was he who returned to the United States by slow steamer with the germ of the idea of the Boston Marathon fast growing in his mind.

RUNNERS ATE THEIR LUNCH

He planted the idea and Boston picked it up fast. The races that followed that first Marathon were colorful affairs. I can remember the scenes as the newspapermen of the day covered the race in horse and buggies—the runners oftentimes stopping to sit by the roadside and rest a moment on the long grind into the city. Sometimes you'd even see one squatting on the curbstone eating a light lunch. Training methods have changed—for the better!

Then there was the parade of the years. The race gained added local interest in 1898 and 1899 when two Cambridge runners, R. J. McDonald and Larry Brignoli, respectively, won the classic victory. Who can ever forget 1907, when Tom Longboat, the Canadian Indian, had the help of the railroads of America in winning his laurel wreath? Longboat and Bob Fowler were battling it out at Framingham, when a train came between them. Longboat was on the Boston side; Fowler, the favorite, on the wrong side. And when the engineer finally steamed out of the way, Longboat was away ahead and sped on to his triumph.

In 1911, a newcomer by the name of Clarence De Mar was the victor. De Mar! At approximately 2:35 p.m. of the 19th of April, 1930, he had won the race seven times (1911, '22, '23, '24, '27, '28 and '30) and his name had been lengthened to Clarence DeMarathon. It used to be that we sportswriters would say that there was no need of us covering the race. "Just write ahead of time that De Mar wins," was the cry in the profession. The most popular victories were those of Bill Kennedy, the ancient bricklayer, in 1917, and of Jimmy Henigan of Medford, the man with the perpetual smile, in 1931.

TARZAN BROWN CARRIED ON

The most colorful was that of Tarzan Brown in 1936, when the Indian wanted to quit away out beyond Boston College, and his manager egged him on by yelling the white lie, "There's only one mile to go." The greatest thrill of the entire half a century for yours truly was, perhaps, that of 1941, when I stood by the finish at Exeter street and watched Les Pawson, Johnny Kelley and Don Heinicke cross the line in that order—exactly as I had predicted they would, across the board! The colorful Pawson wanted me to have his laurel wreath that day.

This is the 50th anniversary of the Marathon all right, and golden is indeed the word for it.

That's only half the story, though. The other (and the better?) half belongs to the nameless horde of runners who descend on Boston year after year, as Patriots' Day looms nearer on the calendar. Annually they come without fail, and many of them find their way here to the Post sports department. There was one who demonstrated his strength by lifting my desk into the air with one hand. In the race he collapsed short of Wellesley. There was another who decorated our office with laurel for no good reason at all. We almost had to put a wreath on his grave out around Natick.

Their names escape my memory, but their deeds will live on forever.