

46 Enigma Named De Mar: Or, Why Marathoners Run



Clarence DeMar

By AUSTEN LAKE

TOMORROW AT HIGH NOON begins that strangest of all sport events, the BAA Marathon in which 181 assorted oddities will twitch and squirm over the 26 miles between Hopkinton's bush-bordered lane and Exeter street's brick canyon. This has been going on each Memorial Day for 51 years as the biggest and freest sport spectacle on earth and witnessed by more than a million spectators who line the way to catch brief flashes of the runner's convulsions and hear the hilarious honk of official motor cars.

This one has a strong international aroma, which is a perfume of rubbing liniments, perspiration and the odor of goose grease. For seven foreign countries have entered representatives including Turkey (Koru), Greece (Kyriakides and Ragazos), Finland (Heitanen and Muinonen), Korea (Sohn, Nam and BokSu), England (Bailey), India (Kissoon), and Canada (Cote, Morton, Evans, Young, etc.).

DeMar Is Rising 59

WHAT MAKES 'EM DO IT? For Marathon runners, like Clarence DeMar, are puzzling pranks of Mother Nature, cousins to the rubber-skinned circus people and those who eat electric light bulbs. Because, anybody who would deliberately set out to gallop 26 miles over concrete highways and dirt roads with nothing more than a 100-to-1 shot gamble that he might win a silver bon-bon dish or a plated cocktail shaker, is an intellectual oddity if not a downright mental freak.

Yet here is DeMar, nearly 59 and lean as a lead pencil, shuffling off 15 and 20 miles a day as a mere conditioning teaser for tomorrow's main event, loping along the roads with his queer rocking-horse stride. Fifty-nine is a time of life when a man should sit around the kitchen range in his stocking feet, petting the family cat and telling the wife how he hears Mrs. Doody is hauling Patsy up for nonsupport again. But not Clarence.

For 37 years DeMar has been plodding around the countryside, suffering stomach cramps, skinned heels, muscle gripes and keeping on until his eyeballs felt like hot grapes and his mouth was filled with cotton. And now he looks patriarchal like the paintings of those hollow-cheeked, early Christians one finds in old cathedrals. Why does he do it?

I suppose that Clarence, who was a puny youngster in fragile health, is doing a form of physical research in showing the world that a man's body is no older than the degree of his enthusiasm. He finished 33rd last year and hasn't won the BAA event since 1930 but, somehow, it is still his major hobby to feel the chuff-chuff of his soles on the asphalt, the sensation of bird shot in his throat and the sight of people's faces swimming past like something painted on eggs.

I suppose I should dwell on youth and the bony youngsters who have been loping along Beacon st. these last two weeks in their track lingerie and with eyes burning in their skull sockets like twin glow holes in a furnace. Or ask what it is that makes men travel clear around the world just to suffer feelings of hot rivets under their hearts. But DeMar tells me that the pains of labor are nothing and that to a true marathoner no drudge is too long or too exacting to stifle his interest. Some men like to fish, says Clarence, some like to watch horses run, some prefer the tedium of flogging a little white pellet around a grassy course with a whippy mallet. But the marathoner likes to feel his legs move. It amounts to a mania, a concentration, a fixation.

Concentrate, He Says

YES SAYS DeMAR, MARATHONERS must concentrate with the same fierce beam of attention as an auditor checking bank ledgers. I remember riding behind him one April morning during the BAA run when a well meaning spectator doused him with a small pail of water from the sidelines, expecting DeMar to be grateful. And Clarence, breaking his stride, had paused to blister the man with profanity that caused his lips to curl up like a window sash and with words that crackled like a teamster's whip. And though he almost never cursed during the rest of the jaunt down Commonwealth ave, he kept working his mouth as though mumbling outrage to himself. "Yes," says Clarence, "it ruined my concentration," an astonishing idea to me, who had always imagined that marathon runners snuff out the light of intelligence and run the route in a state of blissful ignorance.

Trailing the procession tomorrow, far in the rear will come the Red Cross ambulance with BAA physicians and their lady aides, who hoist the stomach sick runners aboard and bust ammonia bombs under their snouts. For scores of the marathon addicts who turn up annually for the race hoof only a few exhibitional miles before turning tourist and seeing the rest of the procession over a tailboard.

But many others plod along behind the leaders as a comet tail of disembodied spirits, seeing faces swim past and listening to the pound of their pulses. They, to me, are the gallant heroes of the demented parade, who swallow their gas bubbles and stagger in hours after the event is over.

Symbols of middle class life they are, a thumbnail measure of humanity divided into three classes: (1) the few leaders who reap the glory and prizes; (2) the inferior breeds who bounce a few spendthrift steps and become passengers for the rest of the journey; and (3) the great body of undistinguished but resolute plodders who keep churning away, holding their ribs below the heart and living on hope and courage. It's the way of all life.

Southworth Juggles Lineup for Hub Opener

By BILL GRIMES

Among the more prominent celebrities listed to attend the opening of the 1947 National League season this afternoon at Braves Field, in which the tail end Braves will clash with the pacemaking Phillies, are Gov. Robert Bradford, Mayor James M. Curley and Chief Wild Horse, head of the Wampanoag tribes.

AT BRAVES FIELD

BOSTON

Hopp, cf
Rowell, lf
Holmes, rf
R. Elliott, 3b
M. McCormick, 1b
Masi, c
Culler, ss
Barrett, p

PHILA.

Newsome, ss
Wyrostek, cf
Ennis, lf
Northey, rf
Tabor, 3b
F. McCormick, 1b
Seminick, c
Verban, 2b
Judd, p

Game starts at 2:00.

McCormick Is 'Hot' at Plate

It required five hours and six minutes for the Braves and Dodgers to play 17 innings in Brooklyn. Managers Southworth and Sukeforth used 14 pitchers, who passed 27 and hit three batters in the two game series. . . . Both the Braves and the Dodgers looked very "sugar bush," especially Billy Southworth's boys, in both contests. . . . Ebbetts Field is in terrible condition. The entire playing field has been resodded and the recent rains made it very treacherous, particularly the outfield, which was so slippery the boys couldn't get started.

Max Macon, who hasn't pitched in the majors since 1943, did a very creditable job yesterday. He was in trouble in both of the innings he pitched but the Dodgers didn't score. And, but for one pitch to Johnny Jorgensen, Glen Elliott also gave a fine account of himself. Glen's "darber" has been down since the Detroit Tigers nicked him for seven runs in one inning at Lakeland, Fla. He was pitching himself out of a tough spot when the Dodgers' rookie third baseman slapped one of his serves out into Bedford ave. for a three-run circuit clout. Incidentally, Jorgensen who wasn't signed to a Brooklyn contract until last Monday, batted in six runs.

Mike McCormick, who came up with three hits in the opening game, was still hot on his only appearance at bat yesterday. With the bases loaded in the sixth, Mike was sent in to hit for Dick Culler and he came through with a two-run single.

Al Bartick, the umpire with the fog horn voice, put on one of his best acts, when he called Bob Elliott out on strikes in the first inning. He snapped off his mask, whirled around and bellowed "Ya hou!" at the top of his lungs. It was too, too dramatic.

Before yesterday's game. Billy Southworth and Johnny Cooney put Earl Torgeson through a long grounder drill. "Torgey" has fumbled most of the balls hit to him on the ground but apparently the clinic he had with his bosses didn't produce any improvement. He let Gene Hermanski's grounder roll up his chest and, when he retrieved the ball, he tossed it over Mort Cooper's head.

Billy Southworth is priming Sissy Sisti and Mike McCormick to be ready to take over the first base job, in the event that "Torgey" doesn't show immediate improvement.

GRIMES.

YESTERDAY'S STARS

By the Associated Press
BATTING, John Jorgensen, Dodgers—Rookie third baseman batted in six runs with two doubles and three-run homer and scored twice in 12-5 victory over Braves.
PITCHING, Kent Peterson, Reds—Relieved Everett Lively in first inning and held world champion Cardinals to three hits the rest of the way in earning 9-4 decision.

Chief Wild Horse, who will be accompanied by his son, Squanto, was invited to come up from Mashpee and spend today with Chief Billy Southworth of the Braves. But, after what happened in Brooklyn, Chief Southworth will not be a genial host.

In fact, when Chief Southworth learns the opening day ceremonies will feature four bands, a female soloist and a chorus of 7500 male voices, he isn't going to offer his congratulations to the instigator of the pageant. He's had just about all he can stand since last Tuesday afternoon.

On the way home from New York last night, Billy Southworth locked himself in his drawing room. Then, just before the train pulled into the Back Bay station, he announced he had decided to make some drastic changes in the Braves' lineup.

The two major changes were the benching of Earl Torgeson and the return of Tommy Holmes to right field. Mike McCormick will be at first base this afternoon.

According to the batting order announced by Manager Southworth last night, the Braves will have three left hand batters at the top of the list; Johnny Hopp, Bama Rowell and Tommy Holmes. Now, we understand that Oscar Judd, a southpaw, will do the pitching for the Blue Jays. On his own admission, Southworth will not play Rowell against left hand hurlers. So, Danny Litwhiler may draw the left field assignment.

Unless they get organized during this eight game home stay, the Braves will be in a bad way. They hit well enough in Brooklyn to have come up with two wins instead of as many defeats. But, a porous defense let them down badly in both contests.

The Braves cannot possibly win when they make as many mistakes as they did at Ebbetts Field. They haven't the power available to offset as many misplays. And, if the defensive weaknesses are not corrected immediately, the

entire personnel of the club will do a flop.

Johnny Sain and Mort Cooper were not at top form in Brooklyn. But even so, they could have stopped the Dodgers if their mates hadn't let them down. Sain and Cooper are veterans. They are not the types who allow themselves to be disturbed by errors but if innings are prolonged by miscues, they are bound to get hurt.

Naturally, Manager Billy Southworth is worried over what he witnessed in Brooklyn. He saw his club kick away a two run lead late in the opening game. He was chagrined no end when his charges yielded ten runs yesterday in the first four innings. He appreciates the seriousness of the situation when his club scores six runs and still is beaten.

At the present writing the most harmful stand for any critic to take would be to name names in explaining why the Braves blew two games to the Dodgers. Yet, it is amazing how lightly costly errors affect players, who kick away all games.

But, today is another day. Manager Southworth will send Charles "Red" Barrett against Ben Chapman's Blue Jays of Philadelphia this afternoon.

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