



**Ted Corbitt, 85, will compete as a walker in Thursday's race.**

# Age, like race, no barrier to racer

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It seems that Ted Corbitt has been running all his life.

He was inspired to become a runner in 1932 when he watched William DeHart Hubbard, the first black athlete to win an Olympic individual medal, run in a track meet in Cincinnati.

He ran for the United States in the 1952 Olympics.

He helped break the color barrier in a road race at Coney Island.

And after health problems ended his running career, Cor-

bitt turned to long-distance walking.

Corbitt, who lives in the Bronx, will be racing again on Thursday when he competes as a walker in the 10K Thanksgiving Day Race. Corbitt, 85, is the oldest person regis-

## On foot

► The race starts at 9 a.m. Thursday at Paul Brown Stadium.

► Runners will trek through Newport and Covington before finishing at the stadium.

# Race: Competitor is 85 years old

From 1A

tered for the race.

While six miles might seem like a hike for an octogenarian, it shouldn't prove a problem for a man who has set American records for running and walking distances.

Corbitt was born in Dumbarton, S.C., — on the same day as future baseball great Jackie Robinson — and moved to Cincinnati at age 9 in 1928. He said he learned his work ethic from “no-nonsense” parents and seeing the rewards of hard work.

There was the time, for example, when he avoided taking an algebra final in junior high because he had raised his grade from 75 to 94-plus.

“Working extra hard paid off,” Corbitt said. “The habit came in and that set my pace for everything else I did.”

In 1932 at the age of 13, Corbitt watched the performance of Olympic medal winner Hubbard in a meet at Union Terminal. Inspired, Corbitt soon entered and won his first race — a 60-yard dash.

Corbitt went to Woodward High School and then the University of Cincinnati, running between the campus and his home in the West End. While a UC student, he ran and won his first road race — a four-mile course that began during the first half of a UC football game and ended inside Nippert Stadium at halftime.

Corbitt ran in the Thanksgiving Day Race in 1942 and 1943 before entering the Army in 1944. He was discharged in 1946, and finished his master's degree in physical therapy from New York University in 1949. He ran his first marathon in 1951.

Corbitt qualified for the U.S. Olympic team in the marathon for the 1952 games in Helsinki. He finished 44th. He barely missed making the team four years later, despite running a faster time at age 37.

With his Olympic career behind him, Corbitt began running even longer distances.

“I'd run a marathon, and I'd have something

left,” Corbitt said. “I'd heard of a friend that ran from London to Brighton, and he'd finished it.”

The English race was 52½ miles long. Corbitt ran it five times, finishing as high as second and no worse than fifth, completing every race in less than six hours, including a personal best of 5 hours and 38 minutes.

A 100-mile race was held a few weeks after that one each year, and Corbitt set an American record by completing that course in 13 hours and 33 minutes.

Corbitt also set an American record by running 134.7 miles in New York in the early '70s, despite being over 50 at the time. He finished fourth in a national 50-mile race in 1974, but was diagnosed with bronchial asthma the same year, cutting short his running career.

Never one to quit, Corbitt took up distance walking. He walked a six-day race in 2000, and logged an age-group record 240 miles at age 81. That record was broken later that year by one mile. So Corbitt hit the weight room. Then he walked 303 miles in 2001.

Corbitt said his running often led encounters with the police as a youth.

Police would often see a black man running through the streets and stop him because he looked suspicious.

Running “was not the common thing (back then),” Corbitt said. “Not many people ran through the streets. The only people running through the streets were boxers.”

Once in Cleveland, a motorist saw him running and called the police, who responded and drew their guns on Corbitt.

While running to work through Harlem, a cop once told him to stop or he would shoot.

Corbitt kept running.

## History

➤ The race is the sixth-oldest race in the U.S. The first was in 1908, and it has been run annually since except in 1918 and 1936.