



TED CORBITT

The Father of American Distance Running

When Ted Corbitt (No. 2 on your program) comes to the line for today's New York Marathon, he will be starting his 163rd run of 26 miles or more. 36 of these runs have been in the "or more" category, ranging from 30 to 100 miles. No one in the history of running has come close to finishing this number of long distance races.

This is only one amazing fact in the long and colorful career of a runner who has been increasingly recognized as "The father of American distance running."

This title has been earned, not only from his numerous victories, but also for his extraordinary work as one of the founders and second National President of the Road Runners Club. This organization has been the prime revolutionizing force in changing long distance running from a relatively obscure sport of a generation ago (where 5 marathons were held in the U.S. annually) to the major, highly competitive sport of 100 annual marathons that we have today.

Ted Corbitt also pioneered ultra-marathon running. When most athletes thought that the marathon was the absolute limit of human endurance, Ted demonstrated that men could run well beyond 26 miles without ill effects. To

prove his point, he journeyed to England five times to compete in one of the world's most punishing races — the London to Brighton 52.5 mile road race. Here, against the world's greatest specialists at this incredible distance, Ted finished second three times; once coming within a hair's-breadth of victory. During two of these trips to England he also competed in ultra-marathon track races and set American records for 25, 30, 40, 50 and 100 miles.

Ted's mind-boggling records in England were highly instrumental in gaining an official sanction for the first U.S. National 50 mile championship, in 1966. Ted finished second that year and won the title in 1968.

All Ted's ultra-marathon records have been set after he was 45. He is now 52. In this respect Ted has been a tremendous inspiration to many athletes who thought that international level competition was limited to the young. Many men returned "to the wars" after years of athletic retirement when they saw Ted winning races, although he was beyond 50.

In fact, Ted started running marathons at 31 (in 1951) an age when most athletes have already retired. Yet, within one year (1952) he qualified for the Olympic Games marathon at Helsinki, Finland. Four years later he was selected as an alternate on the Melbourne Olympic marathon team.

In addition, Ted won the 1954 American National championship. A year later he captured the Canadian National marathon, in 100 degree heat! That same year, (1955) Ted qualified for his second international marathon team — this time in the Pan American Games. Ted twice won the National 30 kilometer title (1956-1957) and between 1954 and 1963 he captured the Metropolitan marathon crown five times.

But this is far from telling the whole of Ted's story . . . He also pioneered the "commando" training that is common-place today. A generation ago, 50 miles of training a week was considered adequate for the marathon. But Ted showed that 100, 200 and even 300 miles per week was not an impossibility, even while he worked as the Chief Physical Therapist at the Institute for Crippled and Disabled. No man before him had ever contemplated such intense training. But when Ted showed it could be done, others gradually followed, and today's fabulous times prove the results.

All that Ted has done for long distance running has not gone unnoticed. On two separate occasions the Metropolitan A.A.U. awarded Ted the James J. Lee Memorial Trophy after voting him "Outstanding Athlete in the Metropolitan Area."

This year the Road Runners Club inducted Ted into its Hall of Fame, a position reserved for a handful of men who have made outstanding contributions to distance-running.

Today we salute this great innovating champion for showing us that the limit of human endurance lies, not in our legs, but in the limits of our imagination.