

National Marathon Championships

Kingston mills Roy

BY RICHARD GALLAGHER

On the second Saturday of last month (April) at two o'clock in the afternoon Bord Luthchleas na hÉireann (BLE) staged a road race on the triangle formed by Portlaoise, Mountrath and Abbeyleix. They publicised it (the race) as the 'National Marathon Championship and Fun Run.' In so doing, they promulgated some inaccuracies. Let me explain.

A 'national championship' is something involving the country's best athletes. Traditionally, it produces winners who then go and 'champion' our cause in foreign lands. In the context of Portlaoise, we would be talking about Stuttgart and the European marathon in August.

Without disrespect to *Kingston Mills* and *Roy Dooney*, our three best marathon runners were absent from Portlaoise.

And what about the 'Fun Run'?

A fun run is something in which a motley eruption of school-children, housewives, house-husbands, boy-scouts, girl-guides, out-of-season footballers and aspiring politicians get out in assorted plimsolls, sneakers, red socks, rugby shorts, gym-slips and green track-suits to cover a moderate distance in a spirit of collective euphoria.

The 'fun run' tag may even be appropriate where such diversity is lacking; sheer numbers can qualify, as in the Evening Press Mini-Marathon.

But to use the term in connection with a full marathon on a lonely road is to suggest endless possibilities: the Templemore 50 and Fun Run; the New York Six-Day and Fun Run; the Sahara Desert Suicide Trek and Fun Run.

Maybe I am being unfair. Perhaps someone in BLE has a



sense of humour; if so it is a wicked one.

In fact — and in fairness to BLE — we are talking about two different races. The 'national marathon' is intended for serious runners; the 'fun run' is only for joggers. There is a hint here of the ambivalent relation between BLE and the Jogging Boom, a love-hate affair full of misunderstanding and lost opportunity.

In Portlaoise only 90 runners (the smallest field to contest the championship in ten years) took part, a quantum drop from the 1,500 that ran two years ago, when the event was part of the Cork City Marathon.

Why this mutually beneficial association should have been severed I do not know, or have forgotten. This year, so I am told, the Cork sponsors (Adidas) were eager to restore the marriage and offered good money as a dowry — but BLE rejected it. Is the BLE offspring so desirable that they can afford to be choosy?

One thing is certain: at

present both events are dying for want of each other. The National needs Cork's numbers and atmosphere; Cork needs those elusive abstractions peculiar to the National, prestige and class.

That the joint event should be held on Easter Monday I have no doubt. The worldwide trend is to run two marathons per year — one in the spring and one in the autumn. Dublin is the autumn marathon; Cork should be the spring one.

No doubt, prize-money will have to rear its attractive head. I would put it up myself if I had it; unfortunately I haven't.

Let us get back to Portlaoise and join the race at ten miles, just outside Mountrath. The leaders are Roy Dooney (Dublin City), Kingston Mills (Civil Service) and *John O'Toole* (Tullamore), the reigning champion. It has been tough going so far — 53½ minutes against the hills and wind.

At halfway O'Toole runs up the white flag, letting the other two go. He will drop out before 20 miles. His explan-

• *Only 20 miles to go! Michael Griffin, Pdraig Killeen, Eric Crockett, Paul Delany and Derry O'Driscoll.*

ation: he had over-trained.

Dooney is now favourite. He ran last year's Hiroshima Marathon in 2:14.38 without special training. This year he has been logging 100 miles per week. The popular opinion is that he will win by several minutes.

Mills, however, looks ominously comfortable. He runs somewhat flat-footed, the bearded head slightly bowed, with a pronounced roll of his broad, angular shoulders. A fine film of sweat glistens on his neck and torso, but the style is economical and the face devoid of strain.

At 20 miles, on the road home from Abbeyleix, the issue is suddenly decided. Mills moves smoothly to the fore; Dooney cannot respond.

Kingston finishes strongly in 2:15.58; Roy struggles in, dispirited, four minutes later.

A question immediately presents itself: will Kingston get the one remaining place for Stuttgart? The selectors are said to have been interested in



• **Ailish Smyth and Joseph Cusack at Abbeyleix. Cusack finished strongly to break 2:35.**

only 2:14 or better. 'I will be extremely disappointed if I'm not selected,' he says.

Kingston is 31 and comes from a farming background in Mullingar; he now works as a medical-research scientist in London, where he does his running with Shaftesbury Harriers. He has twice represented Ireland in the World Cross-Country.

What does he think of the selection process, for which purpose Portlaoise was the cut-off?

'It would have been easier for me to run London and post a fast time. But, in retrospect, I am absolutely delighted to have run Portlaoise.' To win the championship meant more to him, apparently, than a fast time. Happily, he also got his well-deserved European ticket.

As for Dooney, there was little at the end but a silver medal, a carton of milk and a heavy load of disappointment: he had his outsized heart set on Stuttgart. He remains convinced that he still has a 2:12 marathon waiting to get out, that in Portlaoise he hit a bad day.

For Ailish Smyth there was no such disappointment. The Walkinstown runner won as expected, easing away from two-time former winner

Theresa Kidd (Ballinascreen) and finishing with a five-minute cushion.

For Smyth, winner of the Dublin City Marathon in 1984, her 15th-overall placing in 2:41.33 was a personal-best.

Ailish was delighted, and so was I: she is my favourite Dublin City Harrier. She benefited, according to herself, from the company of a group of four for much of the trip, including Denis Ambrose (West Limerick), who ran the hard closing miles with her. She, too, gained subsequent selection for Stuttgart; it was well earned.

The most impressive runner in Portlaoise was Noel Grace (Deise), the fourth-overall finisher (2:22.43) and winner of the veterans' category.

The amazing Grace is a comparative newcomer to the sport and is still improving at an alarming rate; he trimmed his PB by another three minutes here.

I could watch Noel running all day (no doubt he could run all day); he has the most elegant, fluid, easy style imaginable.

A native of Carrick-on-Suir and a former hurler, he is said to be aiming towards the 5,000 and 10,000 metres in this year's European Veterans Championships (Malmo, July). I

intend going there just to see him.

St. Finbarr's won the team category at Portlaoise; Ricky Burke (3rd), John Buckley (9th), Eric Crockett (10th) and Derry O'Driscoll (11th) were their best four.

Raheny Shamrocks, with Noel Hyland (5th), Rosaleen Hayden (26th) and Anne Reede (33rd) were second. The cynics will dismiss this as a reflection of the poor standard; I prefer to see it as a breakthrough for women and Noel Hyland.

Talking about standards, Dick Hooper still holds the championship record; he ran 2:12.56 on that excellent trefoil-shaped course in Limerick four years ago, the time when marathon-fever was at its most rampant in Ireland. Five hundred took part.

In contrast, only 140 finished in Letterkenny the following year ('83), when — disastrously — the event was staged eight weeks before Dublin. After a five-year Hooper dynasty (Pat won at Tullamore in '79), Danny

• **Mills and Dooney at 15 miles. Kingston looks the more comfortable.**

McDaid beat Ciaran O'Dwyer in 2:19.08.

The following year (1984) saw probably the best national marathon in terms of atmosphere, when the event was joined with Cork City. Jerry Kiernan (2:14.30) held on to win by nine seconds from Dick Hooper. John Griffin (Tralee) was ninth (2:23.26).

It is necessary to go back as far as 1977 to find a field smaller than this year's. Des McGann (Civil Service) beat 50 others on an out-and-back course at Loughrea (2:20.34). Bobby Buckley (Maynooth) was tenth in 2:30.20.

Finally, a story from this year's marathon.

Michael Wall (Tipperary) finished last (see Running Shorts). As he trudged painfully through Abbeyleix, a burly farmer emerged from the adjacent Abbey Arms and seeing Michael in need of some encouragement, gave him such a hearty slap on the back as to propel him momentarily several rapid paces in the direction of Portlaoise.

Moral of story: it was indeed rare to see a marathon spectator hitting the Wall.



BLE NATIONAL MARATHON

April 13

1. K. Mills 2.15.58, Civil Service; 2. R. Dooney 2.20.14, DCH; 3. R. Burke 2.22.09, St. Finbarrs; 4. N. Grace 2.22.43, Dewe AC; 5. N. Hyland 2.24.22, Raheny Shamrocks; 6. P. Heffernan 2.27.55, Thurles Crokes; 7. M. Griffin 2.28.01, St. Nicholas; 8. P. Mulholland 2.29.11, East Cork AC; 9. J. Buckley 2.30.22, St. Finbarrs AC; 10. E. Crockett 2.31.50, St. Finbarrs AC; 11. D. O'Driscoll 2.34.30, St. Finbarrs AC; 12. J. Cusack 2.34.53, Nih. Ossory AC; 13. P. Delaney 2.36.46, St. Abbaus AC; 14. J. Murphy 2.37.05, Leevale AC; 15. A. Smyth 2.41.33, DCH; 16. D. Ambrose 2.42.33, West Limerick AC; 17. T. Kidd 2.46.13, Ballinascreen AC; 18. P. Killeen 2.46.21, Roscommon Hrs.; 19. T. Fitzgerald 2.47.15, Kilmallock.

20. T. Murphy 2.48.52, Skibbereen AC; 21. M. Fennell 2.49.33, Civil Service; 2. P. Harding 2.50.56, Nih. Ossory; 23. P. Gowen 2.51.01, Foxrock; 24. A. O'Flynn 2.54.53, Rathfarnham; 25. P. Holohan 2.55.01, KCH; 26. R. Hayden 2.59.28, Raheny Shamrocks; 27. B. Collins 3.00.21, Reenavanna Hrs.; 28. D. Fox 3.00.24 Crusaders AC; 29. M. B. Ryan 3.02.19, Dundrum/Sth Dublin.

30. D. O'Carroll 3.02.51, Shankill; 32. P. Rushe 3.03.03, Ballinascreen; 33. A. Reede 3.03.55, Raheny Shamrocks; 34. B. Carmody 3.04.18, St. Johns; 35. T. Dollard 3.04.40, St. Senans; 36. T. Horrigan 3.05.54, KCH; 37. A. Dunne 3.07.50, Ballyfin AC; 38. G. Supple 3.08.12, Cork; 39. M. Lyons 3.08.20, St. Finbarrs AC.

40. D. Nugent 3.08.27, GCH; 41. N. Lyons 3.10.16, West Limerick; 42. K. Jordan 3.12.57, Cork Road Runners; 43. P. Carmody 3.14.25, St. Johns AC; 44. A. Carroll 3.15.53, Cuchulainn AC; 45. P. Nelligan 3.16.25, Inmiscarra; 46. M. Frayne 3.16.52, Enniscorthy; 47. E. Dalton 3.17.02, Abbeyfeale; 48. J. Hallissey 3.17.42, Bishopstown; 49. L. McDonald 3.18.16, Portlaoise AC.

50. W. Ryan 3.18.46, Croom AC; 51. T. Glynn 3.20.28; 52. T. Keane 3.23.30; 53. S. Kearns 3.26.05, Crusaders AC; 54. J. Hariford 3.26.13, Portlaoise AC; 5. P. Magner 3.28.26, Thomastown; 56. W. Flynn 3.28.34, Newcastle; 57. M. Wright 3.29.44, West Limerick; 58. M. Deegan 3.30.02, Ballyfin AC; 59. G. Phelan 3.30.02, Ballyfin AC.

60. P. Buckley 3.30.37, Bishopstown; 61. S. Skillington, 3.32.42, Cork RTC; 62. D. Ryan, 3.33.27, Greystones; 63. J. O'Donnell 3.34.31, West Limerick; 64. J. Harinett 3.34.31, West Limerick; 65. D. Maher 3.36.33, Cork RTC; 66. C. Carroll 3.36.34, Dublin; 67. J. O'Reilly 3.42.48, Stillorgan; 68. W. Kelly 3.44.27, Dungarvan; 69. F. Nelligan 3.46.24, Abbeyfeale.

70. P. O'Donoghue 3.46.45, Fermoy & Dist. Hrs.; 71. M. O'Donoghue 3.49.04, Fermoy & Dist. Hrs.; 72. J. Mohally 3.50.28, Cork Road Runners; 73. J. O'Keefe 3.50.42, New Ross; 74. C. Harinett 3.50.48, Abbeyfeale; 75. J. J. Kelly 3.59.27, Carlow; 76. P. O'Callaghan 4.00.49, Cork RTC; 77. D. O'Regan 4.00.50, Cork RTC; 78. M. Coffey 4.12.47, Dungarvan; 79. J. Lyons 4.13.13, West Limerick.

80. M. McCarthy 4.13.13, Abbeyfeale; 81. D. Harnett 4.13.23, West Limerick AC; 82. E. Barry 4.19.18, Cork; 83. T. Grennan 4.24.12, Drimnagh; 84. N. Wall 5.27.13, Tipperary.

Ladies: 1. A. Smyth, DCH, 2.41.33; 2. T. Kidd, Ballinascreen AC, 2.46.13; 3. R. Hayden, Raheny Shamrocks, 2.59.28.



MILK RUN

April 27

By Martin Joyce

This year's Milk Run, principally in aid of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, was held countrywide on April 27th and (whether or not the good Saint had anything to do with it) the day turned out to be one of the best to date of the "summer."

All told, about 200,000 ran this year with the target of raising £1 million for charity. The principal run in Dublin, from O'Connell Street to the Phoenix Park and back, attracted about 2,000 participants, most of them enthusiastic youngsters who set off at an unmerciful gallop.

The Milk Run Media Team, of which I was a member, had one of the best turnouts yet. Noel Carroll was in excellent form, covering the six miles in under 35 minutes, while Cyril Byrne, photographer

with the Irish Press, was first home in an excellent 34 minutes. I ran part of the way with Jerry Kelly of RTE's 'Get Fit Stay Fit' and he certainly looked as if he was practising what he preaches. Jerry finished about a minute in front of me, in 39 minutes, and looked well pleased - as indeed he might - with his effort. Frank Khan of the Irish Independent was another who looked extremely fit. In fact, everyone who entered the men's dressing room afterwards reported a PB - for 10K! The unconfined joy was somewhat tempered when race organiser Sally Ryan assured us afterwards that, of course, it was only six miles (not 6.2) and, what's more, it had been measured twice.

RTE notables who turned out in force on the day included Pat Kenny, Cathy Parkes, Uiltan Macken and Jimmy Greeley, while Lindie Naughton of the Evening Press is certainly to be commended for her run - she had competed in the Irish Orienteering

• Shot of Dublin Milk-Run '86.

Championships earlier in the day. Once again the NDC Milk Run was an outstanding success and the funds raised are already helping to alleviate a great deal of hardship.

Dundealgan 10k

April 27

By Richard Gallagher

John O'Toole (Tullamore) bounced back from his dramatic failure in the National Marathon two weeks previously (he had dropped out at 20 miles) with an apparently comfortable win here.

Tony Hartigan (Army and Dundealgan) proved that he is in excellent form by finishing second, well clear of Martin Kelly (Dundrum/South Dublin), who is not running at all badly himself.

Deirdre Nagle (Dublin City) made her usual leisurely start and

FIRST ANNUAL JIM ROCHE 10K MEMORIAL ROAD RACE

Kilcullen, Co. Kildare (BLE permit)
Sunday, 22nd June 1986 at 3.00 p.m. sharp.

Awards to all finishers. Many spot prizes.
Free refreshments after race.

Entry fee £3 (On race day £4).

Entries to: L. Dunne, 42 Bishop Rogan Park, Kilcullen, Co. Kildare.

Enclose S.A.E. before 10th June.

Fast accurate course, wheel measured.

BALLINASCARTHY GAA FESTIVAL

Stock Health 10K
22nd June 1986 at 7.30 p.m.
(BLE and NACA permits).

Prizes: First 8 Men. First 5 Women. First 2 Veterans (M & F). First 3 local runners (M & F). First 3 West Cork finishers (M & F). First Junior. First two male and first female interfirm/ pub teams.

Spot prizes:

Certificate and plaque to all finishers.

Special draw for those entered before 19th June.

Entry fee £3 to: Liam Fleming, Mounteen, Ballinascorthy, Clonakilty, Co. Cork.