

"All the News
That's Fit to Print"

The New York Times

Weather: Partly cloudy and windy with strong northwesterly winds today; clear, cooler tonight. Partly sunny tomorrow. Temperatures: today 58-67; tonight 49-53; yesterday 59-72. Details on page 45.

Late Edition

VOL. CXXXI... No. 45,287

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NEW YORK, SUNDAY, APRIL 18, 1982

11.95 per copy (10¢ more from New York City).
Flight to air delivery zones.

ONE DOLLAR

VIEWS OF SPORT

The Boston Marathon Runaround

Jock Semple has been involved with distance running since he was a teenager in Scotland. For the last 53 years he has been involved with the Boston Marathon, first as a competitor, now as a trainer and for the last 29 years as co-director of the race, to be held tomorrow.

The following article was excerpted from the introduction and from Semple's recollections in the book, "Just Call Me Jock, the Story of Jock Semple, Boston's Mr. Marathon," by Jock Semple with John J. Kelley and Tom Murphy, published by Waterford Publishing Company, Waterford, Conn. Copyright © 1981 by Jock Semple, John J. Kelley and Thomas A. Murphy.

Jock Semple is perhaps best known for his altercation with runner No. 261 in the 1967 Marathon, K. Switzer.

Semple's shove that day boosted women's running more in two seconds than any editorial writes since. Kathy Switzer, a Syracuse student, decided to run Boston when women were still banned from competition, the assumption being in 1967 that distance running could hurt women. She applied for admission by signing "K. Switzer." Semple, who screened all entries (often between periods while working as a trainer at the Bruins and Celtics games), assumed that "K." was male, and he sent her a number.

I grabbed a program from one of the newspapermen, "K. Switzer," the program said "Number 261." She had tricked me by sending an application with only her initial, instead of her first name. I had to deal with so many cheats that no wonder my eyes had begun to go blurry.

When I tried to stop her, some big bruiser batted in. He later became Kathy's husband, but that doesn't change the fact that he wasn't much of a football player or that he couldn't knock down an overworked old man.

Today a runner's entire assortment of equipment weighs less than one of our old shoes.

I remember running Boston Marathons over dirt roads when the chipmunk's station at the finish line in front of the Lenox Hotel looked like a butcher shop.

Sam Ritchings, a local shoemaker, approached me one year and asked if I'd participate in an experiment. I was lying on a cot at the finish of the Boston Marathon when he asked to examine my feet. He said he had an idea to

reduce friction and prevent blistering. I told him if he could do that he'd be everybody's hero. Bob Campbell, the former National Amateur Athletic Union long-distance chairman, tells the story of a guy who put a dollar bill in his shoes before the Boston Marathon. When the guy took his shoes off at the end, the bill had been changed into 10 pieces. If Sam could save us that pain, I told him I'd volunteer.

Over the next few months, I tested shoes Sam made for me, but they fell apart. Never one to quit, Sam who wore a black cape and labored at night with his hands, redesigned the shoe and produced another pair.

This time he used white hockskin. The white surface reflected the heat, whereas the standard black shoes we all wore absorbed the heat. Sam estimated that white radiated 38 percent less heat than the black shoes. In addition, the white hockskin was more durable. He put elastic into the inner sole to allow freer movement for the foot, and he left out the stiff heel counter to prevent abrasion. The sole was crepe and had a masticarpal pad.

Importantly, he added perforation to the sides of the shoes, which allowed ventilation.

The shoes were a dream and soon I sent every fellow runner who was on cots with bleeding feet. Soon everyone wanted a pair, and within weeks Sam was swamped with orders. Old John Kelley and Clarence DeMar received Sam's second and third pair.

By the mid-1930's, every top marathon runner in America was wearing the "S.T.A.R. Streamlines." Sam used his own initials: "Sam T.A. Richards." To this he added "Streamlines," because that's what the shoes were.

Interestingly enough, Sam did not apply for a patent until a year after introducing his shoe. He was in no hurry he said. It took him 16 hours to make one pair, for which he charged \$7.50, but money did not matter to Sam.

"Somebody may make a shoe that looks like mine," Sam said. "But nobody could ever duplicate my S.T.A.R. Streamlines because there's too much of me in my work."

Coffee cost 19 cents a pound when I first came to Boston in 1929. Milk cost 10 cents. A new Packard automobile went for \$2,275 at Steven Fuller's on Commonwealth Avenue. Sears charged \$39 for a suit. A cotton shirt went for \$1.85. Gentis who walked up Beacon Street in top hats, put down 13 cents for their Rockefeller cigars at a smoke shop on Beacon Hill. A year later, when I hitched from Philadelphia for my second Boston Marathon, I found that the prices of these items



Jock Semple trying to stop Kathy Switzer from running in the 1967 Boston Marathon; Semple, right, with his mother, circa 1930, when he was a distance runner.



Jock Semple: As a runner, trainer and co-director, he has been associated with the Boston Marathon for 53 years.

had, if anything, gone down. The Depression hit, and everything deflated, especially people's hopes.

Running helped me keep my spirits high. I remember I had wanted to win the 1934 Boston Marathon so badly. A rumor circulated that the Finest Food Stores were hiring, and I believed that winning would have given me stature enough to walk into the boss's office and propose to build him a championship running team. I was tired of working for \$11 a week. I was tired of sleeping on my brother's day bed. All people want their own lives, and I wanted mine.

Les Fawcett and I talked recently about the changes we've seen. Les had gone down to New London to fire the starting gun at the annual John J. Kelley race the people in New London put on for Johnny. Since I have gained a measure of notoriety myself, they invited me and gave me a clean hotel room.

Pawson and I talked to think back over the days when motorists would lean out their cars and holler, "Hey,

you're gonna drop dead!" In those days, we went for weeks sometimes without seeing another runner. But it's changed, and I support expansion of the sport.

It's so good to see people take an interest in remaining fit, and nothing works better than sticking to a regular running schedule.

But I do believe that nearly all men and women can run. And I believe guidance can be very helpful to those who wish to improve. Since I introduced qualifying times for the Boston Marathon — men must run below 2 hours 50 minutes, women below 3:20, masters 3:10, and grand masters (over 50) must run below 3:20 — it is only fair that I offer hints on how to beat the times.

Lesson One: All runners should use their heads as well as their legs. If you're only 2:50 material, or 3:20, or four hours even, run at that speed and enjoy it. Leave the 2:09's to the 2:09 runners. Don't go busting up your family because you want to be Frank Shorter or Alberto Salazar. Do that

and your wife will get frustrated with you after the beans have burned on the pot too many evenings. You'll be pushing your body through the wall, whatever new lingo they use, while the lady's expected to have a Ph.D. in carbohydrate loading. Look, I'm no model, but I do know what will get the wife's blood pressure up over 200. Run for the love of running — period. Amateur comes from the Latin word amator, which means lover. Run because you love to run. There should be something left in the world where winning the race is prize enough in itself.

That brings me to my next point: amateur versus professional running. The money is pouring into this sport, and only a man with his face buried in his training flats can miss it. I sympathize with the runners. When you compare the salaries that athletes in other professional sports make in a year, it's a sin to think that a world-class runner would have to live on food stamps. But at the same time, I believe limits should be imposed, and I draw my line at Boston.

I will never support tinkering with the character of the Boston Marathon. We have never had to pay a nickel to anybody to get him or her to come to our race, yet still they come. Something must pull them. I say it's the tradition, the prestige that comes with competing in a race that has been run over the same course since 1887. With so many things changing today, I think the boys with their fat money pockets should invest in other races, if other race directors will have them, and have bloody well enough alone at Boston.

So that's my stand, and if anybody disagrees, fine. But if you still think I might be a halfway nice man, you can come by my clinic for a rub. I charge \$10 for the full treatment: that's massage, diathermy, hot box, whirlpool, shower, and that includes the towel. But if you can't afford it, then you pay me what you can spare. And if you're a runner, you might want to join the Boston Athletic Association, which I'm helping the younger fellows rebuild. That way you get the rubs for free.

Just call me

JOCK



The story of
Jock Semple,
Boston's
Mr. Marathon by
Jock Semple
with
John J. Kelley
and
Tom Murphy

WOLFSON COLLEGE, OXFORD, OX2 6UD

5th May 1982

Dear Tom Murphy

Your letter of 8th April just reached me, so I apologise for replying so late.

I am both grateful and delighted to receive a copy of *Just Call Me Jock*. Jock Semple is one of the great characters of the running world and I think you've caught his unique essence. It will be a book greatly enjoyed by his many admirers and by running buffs in general.

I was sorry to have missed Boston this year, but I'm afraid my running days have ended owing to an injury which, a permanent handicap by an insect operation.

Please give my best regards to both Kelleys and tell them I'll be back at Yale in the fall.

Yours sincerely

Erich Segal