

A RACE HOT WITH MYSTERY

While, shockingly, the favorites
fell away, 37-year-old
Carlos Lopes of Portugal
defeated the deepest field ever
in the men's Olympic marathon

BY ERIC OLSEN

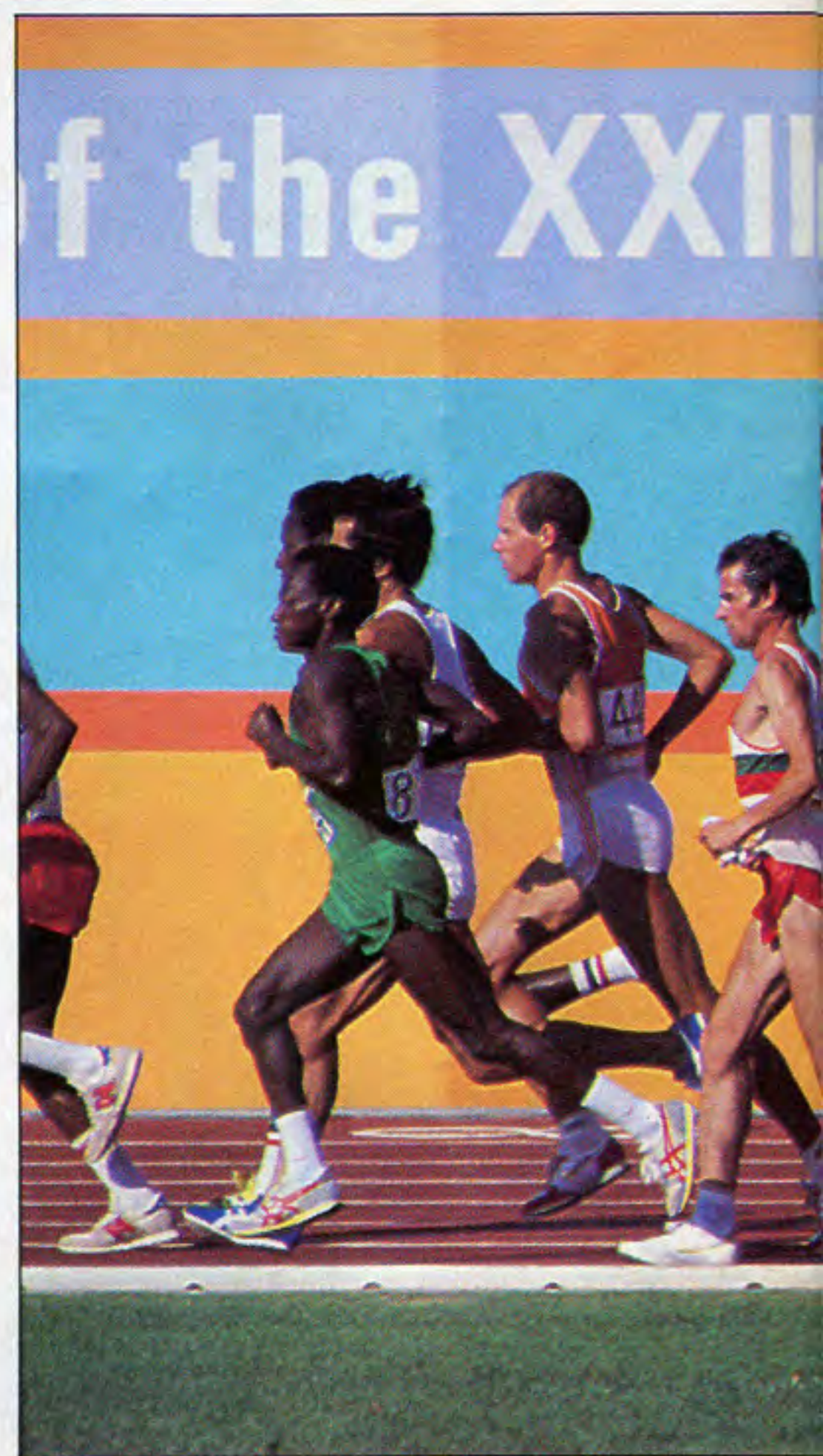
Very quickly, even before the last runners had crossed the finish line inside the Coliseum, people began to gather behind the press tents outside to talk it over and discuss what few clues there were that might explain what had happened, trading theories the way the Angelenos had been trading Olympic pins the past two weeks. It was that special, reflective time that always follows a big race, and those who did well or at least better than they expected paused to receive congratulations, and those who didn't do so well tried to figure out why. The sky was a peculiar iridescent lavender fringed with orange that settles from time to time over the L.A. Basin at sundown when the smog's been particularly vicious. The day's heat lingered, pulling at the skin around the eyes and shortening tempers. Athletes and coaches and team managers, reporters and photographers milled around, waiting, as if the answers would be forthcoming if only they hung around long enough.

Toshihiko Seko sat on a wooden bench in a dark, far corner with his coach and master, Kiyoshi Nakamura. Moments before they'd bowed to one another. Japanese newsmen surrounded them

protectively, all stunned by his impossible defeat, all as silent and still as if they'd just learned someone dear to them had died, and perhaps in a sense someone had, such is the intensity with which Seko strives for victory, and the intensity with which the Japanese demand his success. "I tried my best," Seko said softly through an interpreter. "I feel sorry I couldn't do my best. Now I need rest. I'll try again in four years."

Rodolfo Gomez of Mexico stood beside the low chain-link fence separating the journalists from the athletes, explaining in Spanish to a few reporters that sciatica had troubled him throughout the race just as it's troubled him throughout the past year. He hadn't finished. Juma Ikangaa of Tanzania had come and gone, quickly, as had the Soh brothers of Japan and Joseph Nzau of Kenya.

In one of the press tents, Alberto Salazar and Pete Pfitzinger offered tentative explanations. Pfitzinger was the less troubled of the two. Hoping to make the top ten, he'd finished eleventh in 2:13:53. "I ran as well as I figured I would today," he said simply. Salazar sighed, less sanguine. "I don't know. Maybe I'm just no good in the heat. I came here feeling I'd trained well, but then I said that before Fukuoka last year, too. Everything seemed to show I was in good shape. I can't explain it." No one could. No one, not even Salazar, could explain why, in excellent shape, he finished 15th in 2:14:19, his slowest marathon yet, six seconds behind Seko. No one could ex-



plain why Seko finished 14th or why Australia's Robert de Castella, the favorite, finished only fifth in 2:11:09, achieving a small victory by outkicking an exhausted Juma Ikangaa in the final 100 meters.

No one could explain Carlos Lopes of Portugal or John Treacy of Ireland or Charlie Spedding of Great Britain. Not that Lopes's victory in 2:09:21, a new Olympic record, came as much of a surprise. He'd long been picked as one of the favorites. It's just that his victory came without a challenge from Seko, Salazar, de Castella, Ikangaa or from any of the usual unknowns who always seem to surface every four years to run beyond themselves. Indeed, Lopes's victory, like Joan Benoit's the week before, came without a challenge at all.

Leading a small pack of about ten runners through the 35-km split in 1:48:23, roughly a 2:10 pace, Lopes had begun to pick it up, imperceptibly, almost effortlessly it had seemed. He ran the next five kilometers in 14:33, and the others simply dropped off one by one. "At 35 kilometers I took a drink of water," de Castella said, "and when I looked up, they were gone."

The Medalists

Gold:

Carlos Lopes (Por) 2:09:21

Silver:

John Treacy (Ire) 2:09:56

Bronze:

Charles Spedding (GB) 2:09:58



Olympiad Los Angeles 1984



FUTURE SHOCK

Above: At the start in Santa Monica, expectations were high for a number of men who could not fulfill them. Below: At the finish in L.A., Lopes, Treacy and Spedding, who'd run only five marathons among them prior to the Games, sent a message to those with numerous marathons behind them.

And Lopes was 37. He was ten years older than de Castella. He was nine years older than Seko and eleven years older than Salazar. He'd been competing at the world-class level for almost 20 years. Wasn't he even a little worn out by now? Granted, Mamo Wolde of Ethiopia won the gold in 1968 at the age of 36, and the bronze four years later, but he's an African and the Africans never seem to play by the usual rules, or succumb to the usual limits, and Wolde didn't have de Castella or Seko or Salazar or Ikangaa to deal with back in '68.

Coming into the Games this year, though, it seemed that Lopes, a former

shepherd from the tiny village of Viseu, was only now reaching his prime, only now after all these years, maturing into the event. In March he'd won the World Cross-Country Championship in New Jersey, and then in Stockholm on July 2, he helped pace his countryman, Fernando Mamede, to a 27:13.81 world record in the 10,000 meters. Along the way he picked up a 27:17.48 PR for himself, which was also well below Henry Rono's six-year-old record.

Still, this was the Olympic marathon, a race unto itself, and didn't you need youth and experience in the event to win the Olympic marathon? Lopes was tough, but he was hardly young, or what we consider young, and he wasn't at all experienced. This was only his fourth marathon, after all, and of the first three, he'd finished only one. That was in Rotterdam in '83, when Rob de Castella outkicked him. Deek ran 2:08:37. Lopes ran 2:08:39. He'd dropped out of his first one at 20 miles and in his last one before the Games, Rotterdam '84, he'd dropped out with cramps at 17 miles. Then just three weeks before the Games, Lopes had been hit by a car while training in Lisbon. "The car was going very fast," he said. Then he smiled and added, "And so was I." The impact was so hard that Lopes flew across the hood and smashed the windshield. He missed four days of training at a critical time, and just a week before his victory in L.A. he admitted his left leg and elbow were still a little stiff. "I still don't feel quite 100 per cent," he said, "but I think I'll be OK."

As for Spedding and Treacy, both ran courageously and at a level no one expected, except perhaps themselves and those who knew them best. Spedding, 32, a former pharmacist from Ferryhill who now lives in Boston, was running only his third marathon and took the bronze in 2:09:56. Treacy, 27, from Villiers in County Waterford and now settled in the States as well, finished second in 2:09:56. It was his first marathon. Maybe his inexperience helped. He didn't know enough to be frightened by the distance. At 20 miles he was wondering where the wall was, but he never found it. "I felt good all the way," he said afterwards. "I think if I'd run two or three marathons before, I might not have felt so good."

Treacy had shown great talent early in his career. He won the World Cross-Country Championship in 1978 and again in '79 while a student at Providence College in Rhode Island. In 1980, though, he fell on hard times. In the Moscow Games

he placed seventh in the 5,000 meters and was eliminated in the 10,000 after collapsing with heat exhaustion in the early rounds. It was then, in fact, that he set his sights on the marathon.

But if there was any day that should not have been Treacy's day, or Spedding's, then August 12 was it. Conditions could not have been worse. There was no cooling overcast on August 12 as there had been for the women a week ear-

tigue. Trying to explain what happened to him at 35 km, when Lopes, Treacy, Spedding, Ikangaa, Takeshi Soh and Joseph Nzau made a break and he could do nothing but watch them go, he said, "My preparation was what I'd wanted. Everything was going well. I'll have to look back through my program and try to rationalize what happened." When asked about Spedding and Treacy, he admitted that he, too, was surprised.



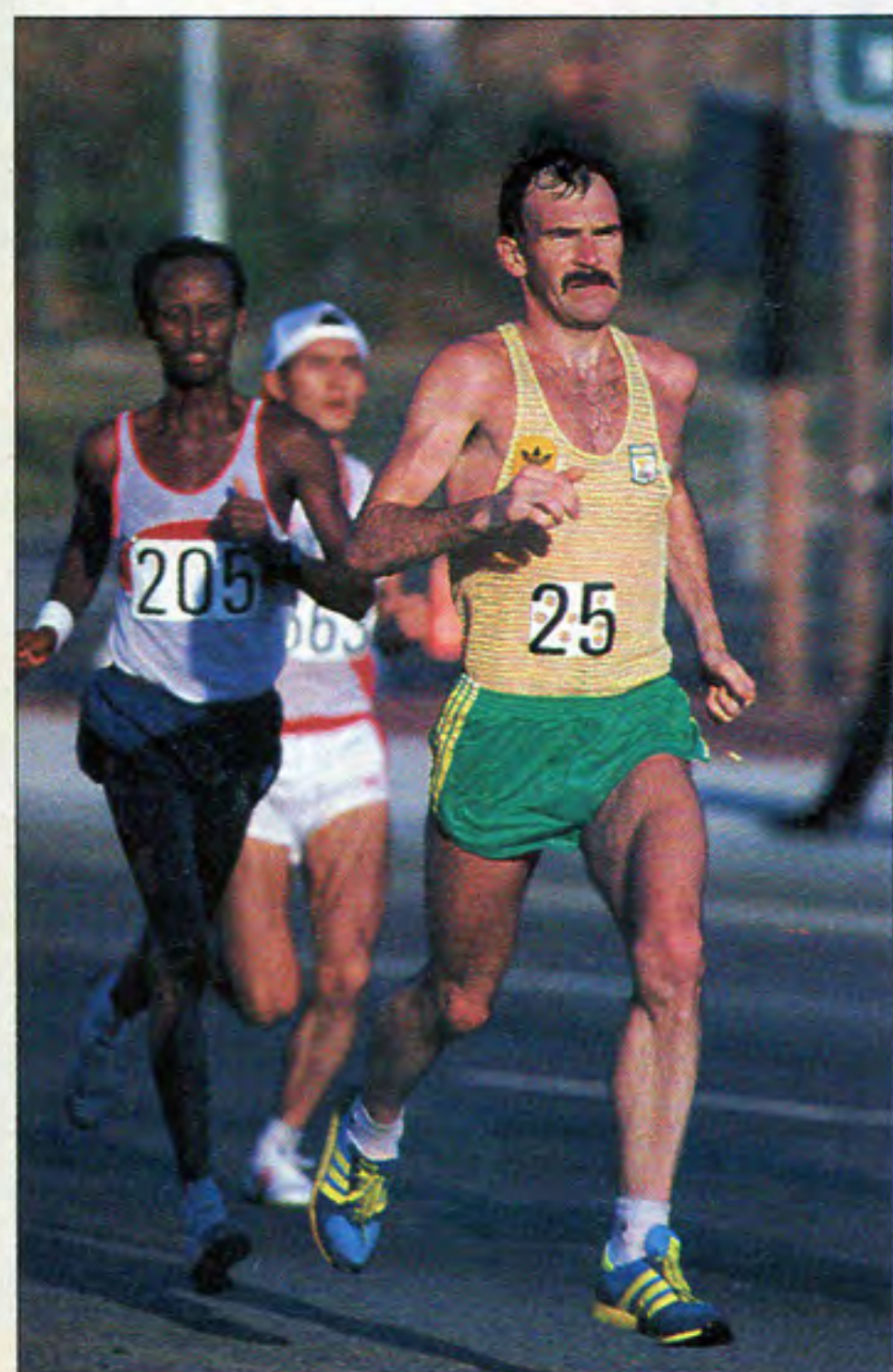
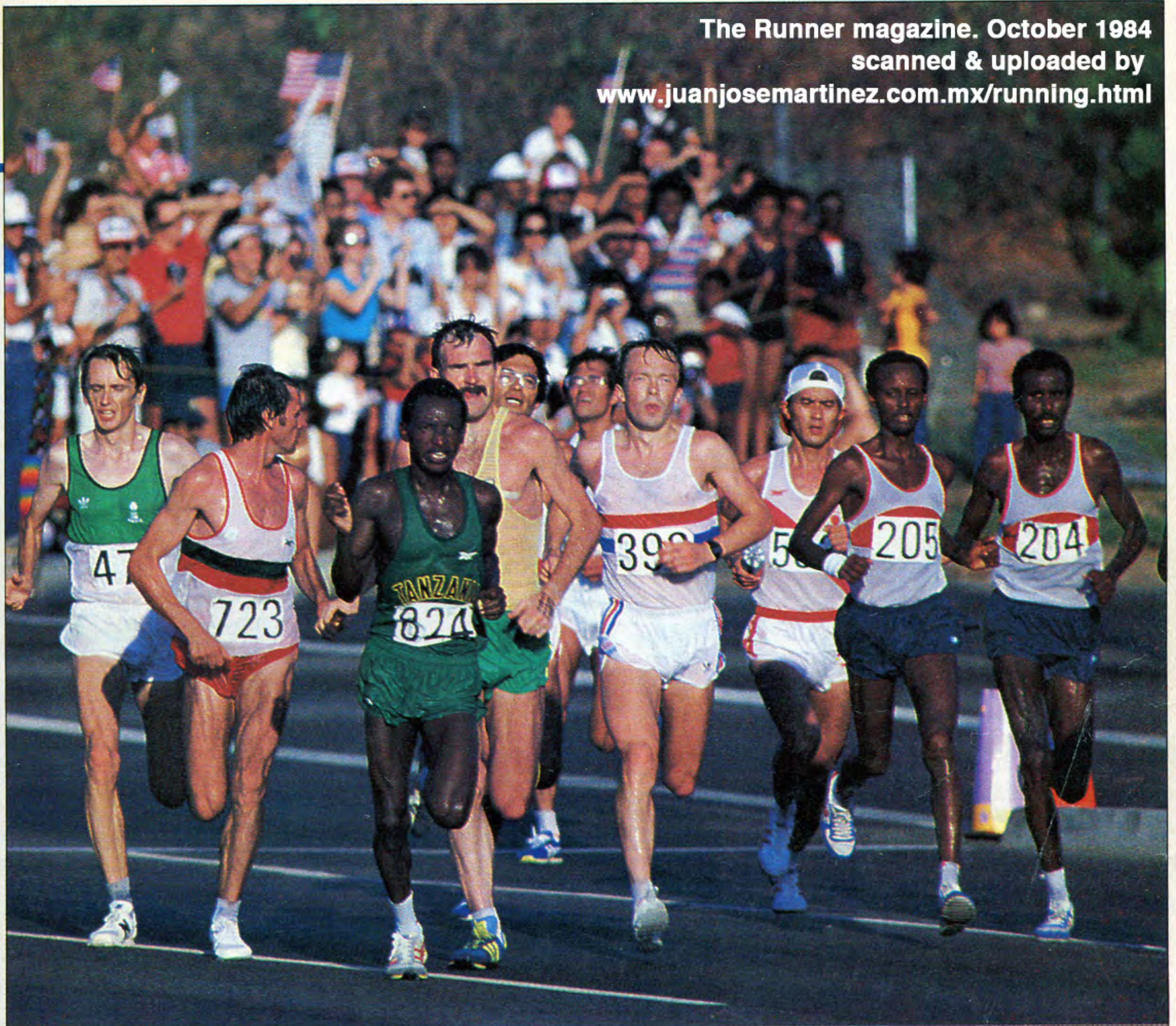
PHOTOGRAPH BY STEVEN E. SUTTON/DUOMO

lier. By the time the race got under way at 5 P.M. the temperature at the start in Santa Monica had climbed into the mid-80s, the prevailing sea breezes had failed and a tropical storm off the coast of Baja had flung a heavy mass of wet air to the north, blanketing the Basin with an oppressive and uncharacteristic dampness. Perhaps the heat helped Lopes. "I trained in Portugal," he said, "where it was just as hot." But what about Treacy and Spedding? The cognoscenti, not without reason, have long held that runners from the British Isles can't take the heat.

The British themselves concede the weakness. "Of course the major problem for a lot of runners in Los Angeles will be the heat," Spedding said a month before, "especially for us British."

"It was very hot and humid here today," de Castella said afterwards. He looked drained, his face puffy, his skin very pale. There were dark circles under his eyes and his voice was tight with fa-





SHOWDOWN

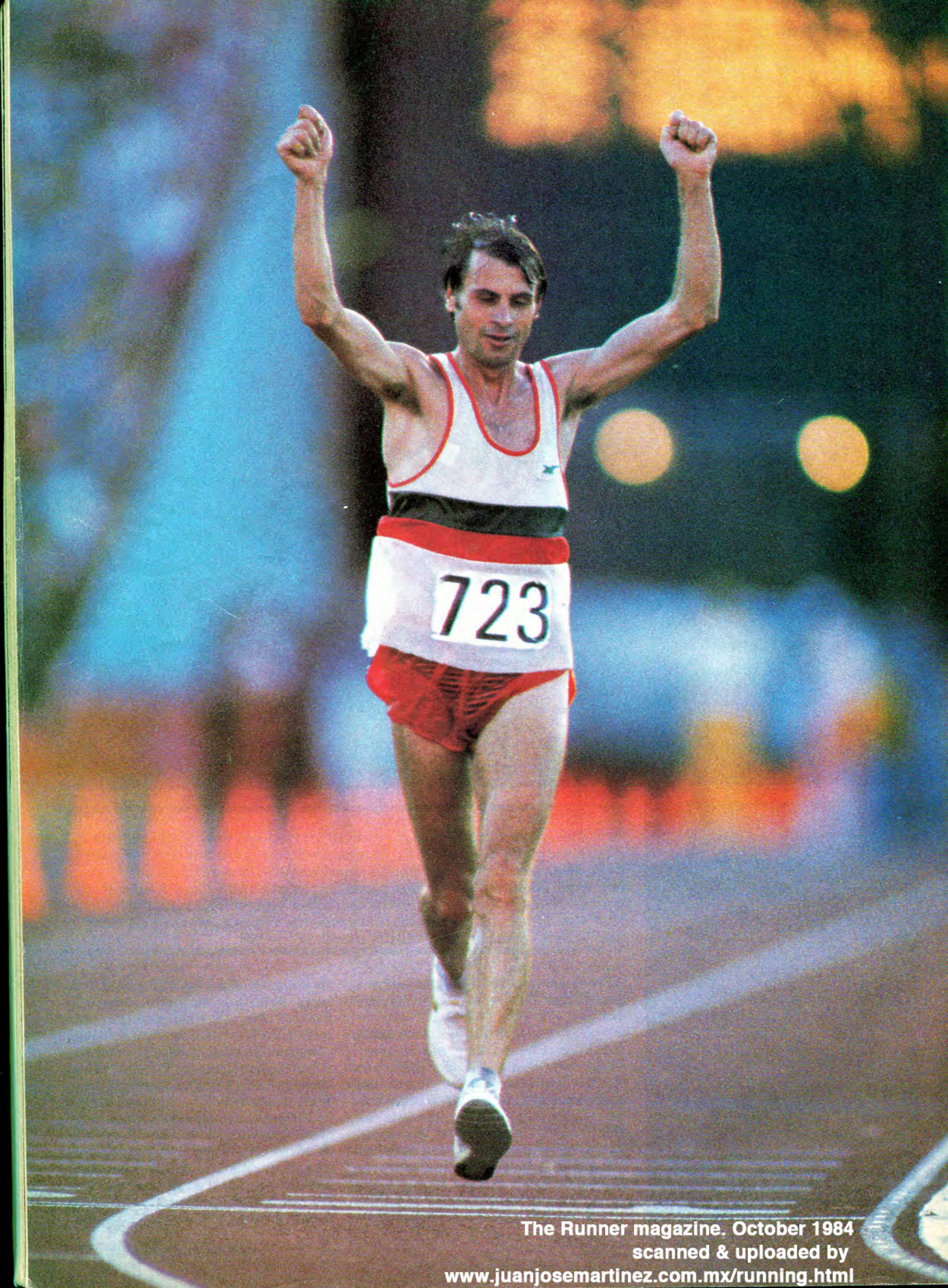
At 18 miles, past the freeway link, most of the favorites were still in contention. Above: From left, Treacy, Lopes, Ikangaa, de Castella, the Soh Brothers, Spedding, Seko, plus Ahmed and Robleh from Djibouti jockeyed for position. Top left: When Ikangaa pulled briefly ahead, Lopes tailed him. Far left: Salazar ran conservatively from behind, but the heat foiled him. He would finish 15th. Jones (374) was 12th. Left: The showdown between de Castella (25) and Seko (with cap) fizzled as neither could muster a fight.

"There was no way I would have anticipated they would be up there in the race. No way."

Rod Dixon, who'd finished tenth in 2:12:57, finally said what was on everyone's mind that night. Shrugging his shoulders, grinning, as buoyant as ever as he waited to go have a few beers with friends, he said, "The Olympics are like that. You just have your day sometimes, and sometimes you don't. You can't plan for a marathon like this. It's a strange bloody event."

The race began at precisely 5 P.M. on

the Santa Monica City College track. A large, tight, very busy pack of some 20 runners clung together coming off the track onto 17th, then up Olympic Boulevard through Santa Monica's low-tech industrial district onto Wilshire. They opened the race at a cautious 2:11 pace. The sun was fierce, the heat and humidity stifling, the crowds boisterous and enthusiastic. Gerard Nijboer of Holland, 29, silver medalist in Moscow and the European champion in '82, took an early lead, briefly, then turned it over to Cors Lambrechts, also of Holland. For a brief time beginning at about two miles into



the race Lambrechts tried to break away from the lead pack. Quickly, he built up a 15-meter lead, à la Benoit a week earlier. Until Benoit's victory, the consensus had been that if anyone went out early on the Olympic course, they'd pay for it dearly in the second half, when the route turned inland and began gradually to climb. Be cautious, everyone said, save something for later. Benoit was having none of that, though, and the "Benoit Strategy," as it was at once dubbed, suggested new possibilities.

"Her victory makes us take another look at the course," said Pat Clohessy, de Castella's coach, just minutes after she crossed the finish line. "She showed how it might be done. Certainly this will give us something to think about."

It was not the Dutch, however, but the Africans, the confirmed front-runners, who must have taken the most heart from the success of the Benoit Strategy. "It's a lesson for them, isn't it?" Clohessy said, a touch of concern wrinkling the flesh around his blue eyes. "They see now what you can do, that you can go out all the way." Lambrechts held his lead through five kilometers (15:34), but he succumbed to historical necessity soon after that, and the Africans cut his 15-meter lead to half a stride or less, allowing him to continue in front only as a matter of convenience. Kimurgor Ngeny of Kenya was up there sitting off Lambrechts's shoulder, along with Nzau, Ikangaa and Gidamis Shahanga of Tanzania. As they raced through the wealthy suburbs of Brentwood, along San Vicente Boulevard, a gentle down-slope to the ocean, the Africans had slipped a little past Lambrechts to share the lead at ten kilometers (31:15). Lambrechts would never attempt the Benoit Strategy again. Eventually he would drop out. So would Nijboer.

Lopes was up there with the Africans at ten kilometers, and further back in the pack de Castella and Seko ran side by side. Salazar had already begun to drift to the rear of the lead group. Dixon was in there, and Spedding and Treacy as well.

Everyone who was anyone in marathoning was in that pack. Everyone. This was the finest field ever gathered for a single marathon. This was it. The Olympics. There would be no holding back now, no saving a little for the next big marathon two months down the road. Win here and it didn't matter if you ever ran another again. All the runners had aimed for this for months, for years, all their lives. A lot of questions, it was



PHOTOGRAPH BY WARREN MORGAN

WHEN YOU'RE HOT, YOU'RE HOT

Left: Lopes, 37, made it look easy, drawing away in the closing miles to win by 35 seconds in 2:09:21. It was one of the greatest marathon performances ever. Above: Once free, Treacy (471) and Spedding (396) teamed up to preserve their medal positions, then Treacy kicked ahead for second on the Coliseum track. It was his first marathon.

'Greetings From the Bathtub'

BY PETE PFITZINGER

The Runner asked U.S. marathoner Pete Pfitzinger to keep a diary at the Games. Here is his report.

July 24

Today is processing. In the medical check my pulse is 54, my blood pressure, 120/72. I get so much gear, I have to send a lot back to Boston. I go with hammer thrower Ed Burke to get our IDs. Ed is fascinating, every move he makes is precise. He's 44, and he'll carry the flag in the opening ceremonies.

It's a two-hour bus ride to the Santa Barbara training camp. I get an apartment with walker Jim Heiring, then go for an eight-mile run with Brian Diemer, a steeple-chaser. Everyone is exhausted. I swear off the official candy of the Olympics until pre-race carbo-loading time.

July 26

Today I run 15 miles on dirt roads in 90-degree heat on a 40,000-acre ranch, with Craig Virgin, Pat Porter and Don Clary. Then swim with Bill Dellinger. Bill shows us how to do a "Hawaiian Surf Dive." The judges give him a six. My body is finally settling into the new time zone. Tuttle and I will stay in the Santa Barbara training camp until Aug. 10.

July 27

Run a few miles, get a massage and do 24 x 100 meters on the track. Part of the group here goes to L.A. for the opening ceremonies. Many won't be coming back. My marathon seems so far away.

I eat enough protein to feed a medium-sized third world nation. Ever since I was diagnosed in New Zealand as having a "second-degree" protein deficiency, I've been into yogurt, milk, turkey and even beef. Watched part of the Olympic Preview show. I think I'll minimize my TV watching. It gets me too excited too soon.

July 28

Go through my training log to get a feel for what I've done since the trials. Go out for a 20-miler but feel lethargic and do only nine. A fox crosses my path during the workout. I have a strong craving for sweets and bananas. Chocolate chip cookies help. John Tuttle shows me the Olympic Preview issue of *The Runner*, and we laugh when we read, "There's no pressure on Pfitzinger or Tuttle... unless they read this." Get a good luck telegram from Bill Rodgers. Watch the opening ceremonies and have a good laugh when the marathon favorite, Rob de Castella of Australia, is incorrectly identified. Pick up my wife Christine at the airport.

July 29

I run 20 miles, finishing with a mile on the track. I swim and do kicking drills to massage my legs. Meet with Betty Wenz, a sports psychologist, who advises me about relaxation and concentration and gives me exercises to practice "centering." It really seems to help. I'm very interested in this.

I run another five miles along the water. Those returning from the opening ceremonies tell us how great it was. Still, Tuttle and I are happy to have done our 20-milers. There's been a pinching in my hip ever since the plane ride, and I go to the trainer for electric muscle stimulation and ice massage.

July 30

Meet with Tuttle and Dellinger to review our training. Get chiropractic treatment, which helps my hip, though the spasm in my "glutes" has not entirely gone away. Get a haircut and meet Brendan O'Connell, an Irish canoeist. We discuss Eamonn Coghlan's injury and John Treacy's upcoming marathon debut.

Get more chiropractic treatment, which helps some more. Just to keep from getting too relaxed, I find my right calf is now inflamed and must ice it. I wish these leg problems would go away. Today was only a ten-mile day. To add to my problems my stomach acted up during a workout—guess I'll have to avoid the guacamole I had for lunch today. The Santa Barbara beaches are lovely for running, except for the oil and tar residue. I wouldn't recommend running barefoot.

July 31

The hip and calf are almost better. I time Chrissie for her 600-meter repetitions on the track. At the apartment I listen to a relaxation cassette. It takes a while to acquire the ability to relax, but I think it's useful. Run eight miles with Pat Porter. He thinks he's in better shape than he was at the trials. We move along at 5:30 pace. I pretend to be running easily.

August 1

It seems only a short time ago that I was running with the sheep in Cornwall Park in Auckland. Put in seven miles, then get whirlpool, ultrasound and chiropractic care. Happy to see my high school track coach Tom Cole and his family show up unexpectedly. To simulate the marathon start, I drink six glasses of water, then run nine miles at the track. Have barbecued shark for dinner. I'm thoroughly impressed by the women gymnasts we see on TV. They have to be so "up" mentally, so repeatedly.

August 2

Got eleven hours sleep and feel better. I call New Balance and find out my special racing shoes are ready. The pair I wore at the trials is wearing out. Find some DMSO to help my calf along. Now that my physical problems are clearing up, my mental outlook is better.

August 3

I stink of DMSO. Big news of the morning is that Chrissie suddenly measures 5'1/4" and therefore no longer holds the world 3,000 record for women under five feet. I have a final talk with Dellinger about the marathon

course and decide I should stay outside the Village because some athletes are staying up late, keeping others awake. Went out for 15 miles after watching the women's 800 heats. More stomach problems; it's starting to get me down. Disappointed in the lack of coverage of the 10,000 trials.



PFITZ

Almost ecstatic.

August 4

Talk with my coach Kevin Ryan. He's in L.A. and has been through all this before as a New Zealand Olympian. I've had to alter my training a little, and both Kevin and Dellinger feel my reduced mileage will do me good. Since the trials my weekly mileage has been: 47, 112, 146, 152, 141, 121, 130, 129, 109, 101, with, all told, ten workouts of 20 to 26 miles. It's only in the last two weeks that I've cut back. Next week will be 60-65 miles.

August 5

I'm up early, thinking about the women's marathon. The weather is good for it. The crowded start on the track makes me concerned about our race, which will have twice as many runners. I find John Tuttle to compare notes on Joan. We don't know what to say. At twelve miles she's got a minute lead, but it's still too early to tell. Julie Isphording is not on the screen. We hope she's in the second or third bunch.

After it's over we're thrilled. Joan was unbelievable. This keys us up for our race. It's also a good way to see the course. I'm happy to see Lorraine Moller finish fifth with a PR.

Run eleven miles with Chrissie, in two in-

stallments. Tomorrow I start the depletion phase of my carbo-loading so I have a fat desert as a farewell to sweets for a few days.

August 6

Surprised to learn only six women dropped out of the women's marathon. I guess there's so much pressure just to finish. I nap, watch the Games. John and I run a 9:37 two-mile to test our legs a little. John shows better pace judgment than I do.

When I don't see the 10,000 final on TV, I get really mad. I was hoping for solid reporting of the Olympic events, not just cheering for the home team. The ABC framework should allow for showing the 10,000, even though no Americans figure prominently in the outcome.

August 7

Have to read the paper to get the 10,000 results. Happy to see Mike McLeod get the bronze. He was over at our place in Boston for a barbecue a couple of weeks before. I run twelve miles as a depletion run. Tomorrow we'll find out whether John Walker is running the 1,500 or 5,000. Overt's lung disease sounds like a smog allergy reaction to me.

August 8

Not running this morning, so am at a total loss as to what to do. The TV coverage hasn't started yet. Pick up four hitchhikers, Rumanian rowers, on my way to the trainer. I try to explain that I'm running the marathon, but they don't understand. One points to himself and says, "Gold," then points to the woman next to him and says, "Silver." They give us Rumanian Olympic pins.

Inspired by Alonzo Babers's fantastic 400 victory, I go out for eight miles. This is the end of carbo depletion—I always end it after an evening run. I eat fruit and ice cream, then pizza. In the women's 3,000 heats Zola Budd looks very vulnerable. My predictions: Decker, Kraus, Puica, Budd...

August 9

Have yogurt and a little cold pizza for breakfast. I've heard Bill Rodgers eats cold pizza with mayonnaise, but I don't recommend it. I don't think that's what made Bill run 2:09.

In the distance events the Americans make the finals in droves. ABC wants to interview me. I politely decline; it's too close to marathon day. I need to relax.

I run six miles in my racing uniform and new shoes to try them out. The cut-down singlets for distance runners are great. I feel like Frank Shorter. Speaking of Frank, John and I read an article by him on the men's marathon in *USA Today*. He says don't run the downhill section in Santa Monica too hard because it'll pound the quadriceps. That's a good piece of advice, as anyone who's run Boston will tell you.

We can't figure out why Daley Thompson didn't try to sprint to get the world record in the decathlon. Tomorrow we leave for L.A.

August 10

Though we're not staying at the Village, I stop by to look at it. There are eight people assigned to a two-bedroom apartment. Brian Diemer is in his room reading shortly before his steeplechase final. It makes me ner-

vous just to look at him.

All the running around and coordinating and shaking hands wears me out. I talk with Julie Isphording. She trades me her expertise on the marathon for my expertise on plantar fasciitis. Chris and I check into a motel, hoping tomorrow is more peaceful.

August 11

I get an acupuncture treatment, which helps my hip, and can almost touch my toes again. We drive the course from eight to 17 miles. Lots of traffic. Back at the hotel I drink Sustalyte, the New Zealand equivalent of ERG. I eat spaghetti, then drive the last nine miles of the course. There's a big "GO DEEK" billboard with less than a mile to go. Tomorrow's weather forecast is for 75° to 80° on the coast, 90° inland. It'll be warm, even when we start at five. I drink, eat, get a massage from Chrissie. The marathon is so unpredictable, especially in the heat. At least I don't have to run against Joan Benoit.

August 12

Sleep well, with dreams. Dream One: I spend four nights in jail—don't remember why. Dream Two: I'm moving to Dartmouth College; there's a lot of snow. Dream Three: Jack Meagher, the sports therapy magician in Boston, is working on my hip. The night before I dreamed that Derek Froude of New Zealand won the marathon.

I call Dellinger. He says my water bottles are on Table Seven. "Make sure to drink eight ounces at each stop," he tells me. He also says Alberto is cutting little holes in his singlet. Good idea. Where are my scissors?

Breakfast is French toast. My hip feels fine. I drink. I cut holes in my singlet, cut down my race number, drink some more. I try to relax. Two hours till the start.

August 13 (3 AM)

Greetings from the bathtub. Eleventh place, beating Shahanga, Seko, Jones and Salazar in the final miles. I didn't feel right until we got on the freeway; then I started passing people. I was getting a stomach cramp and a runner from Somalia showed me how to blow the air out of my lungs to make it go away. I hugged him after the race.

I'm still trying to decide whether I ran well. Eleventh is good, although I really hoped for the top ten. The time, 2:13:53, was slow, but it was warm. I guess I'm satisfied but somewhat short of ecstatic.

The crowd was amazing along the route. It was strange to hear so much support and not be near the lead. My biggest thrill was passing Seko at 25.6 miles, then hitting the tunnel and popping out onto the track with a runner from Puerto Rico I was able to outkick.

I feel bad for Al. He wanted a medal so much and trained like a madman. The marathon is so unpredictable. I feel bad for my close friend John Tuttle, too. John rushed back to hard training too soon after the trials and had a series of nagging leg problems. He got a cramp and had to drop out at 21 miles. After the race I swapped singlets with Jacky Boxberger of France, then joined Al for a press conference. Most questions went to him, which was fine because my blood sugar was way down and I couldn't concentrate.

thought, would at last be answered. At last they had all come together, all the best, in one place at one time on the same course under the same conditions. The stakes were enormous, the pressures all but unbearable.

De Castella has said more than once that the marathon is the most honest of events, in the sense that it relies less on natural ability and genetic accident, and more on training and preparation and thus reveals more of the athlete himself, the depth of his commitment and will. The race itself is so long and grueling that eventually it strips away all pretension, revealing what is at the core of each athlete.

It's the most honest event as well in what it reveals about the cultures and traditions in which the athletes have trained. In the race each runner must eventually expose not only himself—what is in his heart and at his core—but also something profound about his own heritage and people. Much has been made of the loneliness of the long-distance runner, but no athlete operates in a vacuum, isolated from the influences of the society around him, especially those who compete in the marathon. In the final most painful miles of this longest race, when each athlete is drawing on his last reserves, the victor will be the one who can draw not only on his own strengths, but on the more subtle strengths he derives from the social conditions which shaped him, the support he might derive from knowing that others from his culture had been there before him, showing the way, revealing the possible.

This perhaps reveals itself as a weakness in the Americans. Perhaps Salazar, intensely individualistic, needed more to sustain him than a brilliant coach and a supportive team. Are American runners too competitive, even with each other, to create traditions that nurture and support young talent? Even Frank Shorter and Bill Rodgers failed somehow to create a sense of American destiny in the distance events. They were too much the Yankee individualists. They ran for themselves, not for something larger. "The Americans all seem to train alone," de Castella has said. "They all seem so intensely competitive, and that's unfortunate for them, since the only experiences they can learn from are their own. When you're with a group, you can share and learn from others' mistakes, which is certainly better than making them yourself."

Lopes, all along

BY FRANK SHORTER

Why was it such a surprise? Maybe because Carlos Lopes is 37 years old. Still, shouldn't we have seen his splendid victory in the world cross-country championships just this past March as an omen? And shouldn't we have taken a clue from his 27:17.48 10,000 meters on the track (making him the second-fastest performer of all time) barely a month before the Games? In 1976 Carlos Lopes won the world cross-country title and went on to capture the silver medal in the Olympic 10,000 behind Lasse Viren. Why was it so difficult to see the pattern this time around?

It seems that no matter how hard we true track fans try to be objective, we're still susceptible to the ubiquitous pre-Olympic handicapping of the media. Form charts must be compiled. A favorite must be named. We never learn. Before L.A., Carlos had proved himself to be in the best shape of his life. Rob de Castella had recently finished far behind in a 5,000-meter race in Oslo, running 13:44; a decent time, but hardly indicative of world-beating fitness. Yet everyone called de Castella for first or, at worst, second. My only consolation comes from two points: One, I held on to enough objectivity before the Games to tab Carlos as a dark horse, and two, Lopes is a year older than I am.

As the race itself unfolded, everything seemed to be following the predicted scenario. Ikangaa, the quintessential front-runner was up front, Seko and de Castella were tucked patiently in the pack, along with several other contenders—including Lopes. I anticipated that it would take several more miles before things sorted themselves out and the pretenders began to drop off.

About six miles into the race, though, it occurred to me that Lopes looked very good. Treacy and Spedding also appeared surprisingly strong. At this point, the lead pack was averaging about 4:58 per mile, normally not an excessive pace. But conditions are different in every marathon. I was convinced the heat would be the major factor of the race. I also had a feeling that in the face of the heat those runners who relied on strength, including de Castella and Salazar, would suffer more than the "form runners," such as Seko, Ikangaa and, yes, Lopes. In hot weather marathons, form runners, who are more efficient, generate less internal heat, thereby using less energy to stay cool. I studied the runners in the lead pack, trying to see who was running easily and who was forcing. Spedding looked very smooth. In fact, on the Coliseum infield just after the race, Rob de Castella told me, "Spedding looked so good from the start that I knew he was going to get a medal." Halfway through the race, though, nothing seemed certain.

The pace remained solid, if still not world-record. The pack was still together, and it was becoming evident that Lopes was running in a very relaxed manner. I couldn't help thinking, though, that he'd dropped out

of two of the three marathons he'd started. Would he last?

Farther back in the pack, Alberto Salazar seemed to be running a wait-and-see race. I watched the sweat pour off Alberto's body as he struggled to stay near the leaders, and I realized then that he wasn't going to close the gap. On this day the best heat runner would win. The race for the medals would be one of attrition.

At about 35 kilometers it began to happen. First Seko dropped off, then de Castella slowed for a drink and the leaders suddenly had 50 meters on him. Nothing fancy. The two favorites simply couldn't take the pace in the heat and humidity. Spedding, looking stronger and stronger, forced the pace, with Treacy and Lopes beside him. Soon, Ikangaa and Nzau were gone, and any visions of a storming comeback by Deek over the last five-km disappeared.

About a mile later Lopes surged a little, and the race for medals was over. No one made any tactical mistakes. It was simply a matter of three runners—Lopes, Spedding and Treacy—being better able to handle the heat than the rest of the field. Now the question was, Who had any race left in him? The answer was, they all did. Lopes just had more. He ran the five kilometers between 35 and 40 km in 14:33, and the race was over.

To surge like that—4:40 per mile—at the 23-mile mark in a marathon in the heat, is a stunning performance. Treacy and Spedding were running about 4:50 per mile themselves at that stage, and it simply wasn't good enough.

In a long drive for the finish, Lopes is unmatched. In the world cross-country championships he had surged with a mile to go, and he had won. Here, he went with four miles to go, and no one in Olympic history could have gone with him.

Between them, Lopes and Treacy have won four world cross-country championships. To do well at cross-country requires the ability to run well under adverse conditions. The Los Angeles Olympic marathon was not a cross-country race, but I think that somewhere out there the athletes found a similar degree of difficulty. The race put a premium on form. Treacy, for instance, may look at first glance as though he's forcing his way along, but in studying his low stride we can see just how efficient he is and how well he maintains momentum. Spedding flows very well, and Lopes has simply the finest form I've ever seen in a distance runner.

Never again will I mistrust my instincts when it comes to an Olympic marathon. In Montreal I ran the Olympic race not sure who the man ahead of me was. He was dressed all in white and I had no idea it was Waldemar Cierpinski of East Germany. The East Germans usually wore blue. I ran for the silver thinking I was being beaten by Carlos Lopes. I should have taken it as an omen.

Frank Shorter was among several former Olympic marathon medalists honored in the Coliseum before the start of the race. He watched the marathon on the stadium's giant screen TV from a seat next to the finish line.

Nowhere is our lack of tradition, of a sense of destiny, more apparent than in the bureaucratic disarray that forced our best marathoners to run a grueling trial just eleven weeks before the Games. Certainly the small, close and tightly knit contingent of Portuguese runners had no such problems. Since the government there set out to develop an Olympic team in '76, they've gone at preparing for major meets with great care and deliberation.

The distance tradition there may not be old, but it's no less intense for that. "The people got very excited from the race I made in Montreal in '76 [when he won the silver in the 10,000]," Lopes said, "and the athletes began training more and more. And it was the same with the women, after Rosa [Mota] appears, they see they can run more and more, as long as the men can. Now it is developing very much in Portugal."

Almost every top contender coming into the Games arrived with something from home to sustain him, wherever home might be. The problem some of them had was that they did not fully adhere to those traditions. They lost faith and looked for an edge elsewhere.

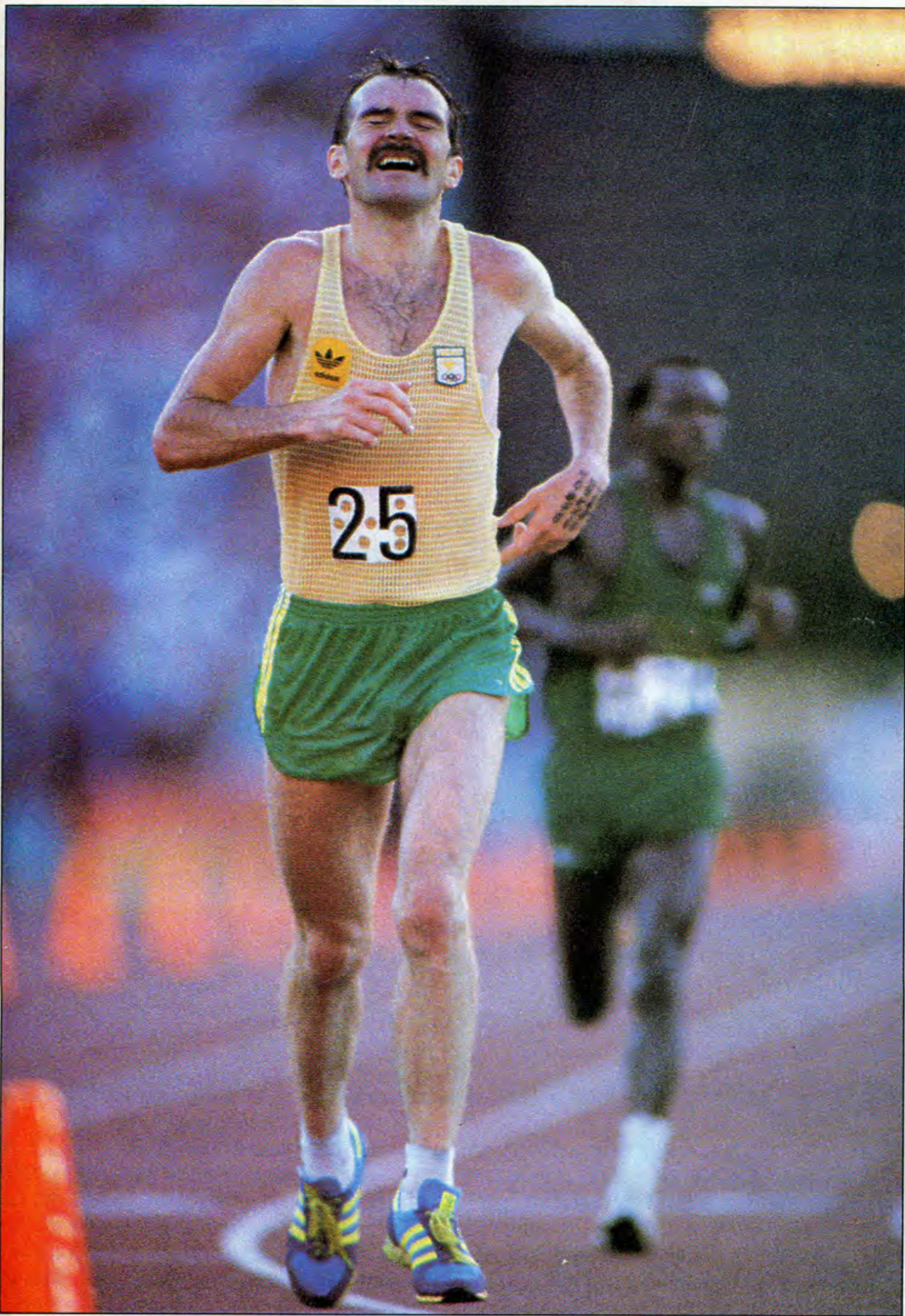
The Japanese operate in an entirely different milieu than we do, an intense, ascetic, modern samurai tradition in which death is always preferred over failure, or at least a failure to fight to the end. It's a tradition that prizes total dedication to the task at hand, whatever that task might be, a centuries-old, well-proven tradition that took shape when such total dedication was a matter of life or death.

The British and Irish all grew up running in compulsory school cross-country programs. "Everyone runs there in school," Spedding said before the Games. "You learn early on whether you're good at it and whether you like it." And beyond school, there are the harrier clubs. "My involvement with my running club, the Gateshead Harriers, has been extremely important in my development to this level," Spedding said. "I was in that club throughout the successful decade of Brendan Foster. I trained with him and he gave me the idea that to be that good, you didn't have to be a freak, that you could aspire to it if you had the ability and determination. It made me set my sights high, and that always kept me working hard and striving for better things."

Down Under there is a strong tradition that values the endurance and

GREAT DEBATE

By the time favored de Castella had run down Ikangaa for fifth, many were wondering what had gone wrong. Notice the strategic markings on Deek's left hand.



toughness needed to survive in the out-back so far from Europe in the 19th century. "We do have this tradition of distance running," Clohessy has said. "There's Cerruty, of course, and John Landy, who set the world record in the mile in '54. He was very popular among the public. He had charisma and inspired a lot of us with his good will and effort. He set us on the way. And then there were Herb Elliot and Derek Clayton and Ron Clarke. We came to believe that we could be very good."

And then, of course, there are the

Africans. Almost by definition to be an African is to be a runner. Running there goes beyond tradition to necessity. "People say that for the Africans, running is natural," Ikangaa has said, irritated by the thought, "but that is not true. There is nothing natural for the Africans in the marathon. We have to work very hard. The only natural thing is our training. This is because most Africans never use cars. When we are in school we go on foot, to and fro, to and fro, and some of the schools are ten kilometers away, so that's 20 kilometers. Six days a week.

That's how I was. This sort of thing makes one accustomed to running. I learned to run without getting sick or limping or getting trouble around the legs."

The runners turned off San Vicente onto Ocean Avenue, the broad palm- and hotel-lined boulevard that flanks the edge of the cliffs over the Pacific. This was the most level part of the route, with the shade from the palms and a slight crosswind off the ocean helping to cool the already overheated runners. The leaders, now Shahanga and Ikangaa, with Lopes tucked in behind, along with a handful of other Africans, Treacy, de Castella and Seko, were clocked at 46:01 at 15 kilometers. Their last five kilometers, down the fastest part of the course on San Vicente, then onto Ocean Avenue was a quick 14:46. It seemed then that the Africans might be making a move, but their next five kilometers slowed to 15:37, and all the rest settled in behind them again.

Nearing the halfway point in Marina del Rey, a fairyland of yachts and Porsches, singles bars, condos and hot tubs, Salazar was over a minute behind the lead pack. He'd said before the race he was prepared to let the leaders get up to a minute ahead. Perhaps it was a fatal decision. After the race, he explained his strategy. "Jack Daniels at Athletics West figured out that the average conditions during race time would probably make the race anywhere from two to three minutes slower, so we figured if anyone was in 2:08 shape they probably wouldn't run any faster than 2:10. So my plan was for me just to run a five-minute pace as long as I could. We figured even if I fell behind in the early going most people would fall back and I would catch up." Salazar did keep to his five-minute pace most of the way. But Lopes didn't slow down. "You can't plan for a marathon like this," Dixon had said. "You start to think about it, you'll just screw up."

Seko was still up there at the half, though, looking strong, wearing a white cap, first with the brim forward, then with the brim turned back. At that point it looked good for him. The Africans had yet to make a move out of the pack, the pace was still conservative and it was shaping up to be a kicker's race, Seko's race. He could match anyone in strength, and no one could kick with Seko. Or could they?

It was hard to say. The last time he

ROD'S RULE

Tenth-place Dixon was right: The marathon is a strange bloody event.

had raced de Castella was in Fukuoka in '80, before de Castella had reached his prime. So how would he fare against the Australian now? At last we would know. Troubled for almost two years by a knee injury after he won the Boston Marathon in '81, Seko had come back in February '83 and run a 2:08:38 in the Tokyo Marathon, the fifth fastest marathon ever run and, his competition feared, perhaps merely a tune-up for greater things. In Fukuoka last December he outkicked Ikangaa with 100 meters to go to win in 2:08:52. But Seko had run a serious marathon only twice outside Japan, both at Boston, and his ability in the heat was questionable. And there was the matter of his awesome intensity, which some saw as a critical flaw in a race as unpredictable as the Olympic marathon. "He's a fanatic," Salazar said flatly eight months earlier. "He's not very versatile."

"We hear a lot about the intensity of the Japanese," Clohessy said, "and I respect that, but at the same time where's the line between fanaticism and personal initiative? Nakamura does everything for Seko, thinks for him, tells him what to do. He even lives with Nakamura. It's an attitude we don't have in Australia. I don't believe in restricting a person's initiative. That individual is making the commitment. You can't make it for him. In the marathon, ultimately, you're on your own."

But at 20 kilometers Seko was far from on his own. There was Ikangaa, still flanked by Nzau and Shahanga, running smoothly but sweating heavily, his dark-lined face showing strain. Ikangaa is at once brilliant and reckless. A lieutenant in the Tanzanian Army, an artillery officer, he's either 22, 23 or 28, depending on your source. He won't say. He ran his first marathon in August of '82 in the African Championships in Cairo and won in 2:21:05. Six weeks later he took de Castella to the limit in the Commonwealth Games in Brisbane, finally finishing second in 2:09:30. Troubled by sciatica, he was fifth in the Tokyo Marathon in early '83, and in Helsinki in August, still plagued by back pain, he was 15th. Then in December in Fukuoka he ran a PR of 2:08:55, three seconds behind Seko. Two months later he won the Tokyo Marathon in 2:10:49. Arthur Lydiard once called him the best marathoner competing today. "I think the Africans can be a big threat," Pat Clohessy said before the race, "Ikangaa especially. He's the best equipped marathoner there is. If he can



channel all that talent into one good race in L.A. . . ." But there was this reckless front-running, a fatal flaw it seems, common to all the Africans. "The Africans run the way they feel," Ikangaa's teammate, Gidamis Shahanga has said, somewhat irritated by all this talk of African recklessness, "and sometimes they feel like taking the lead and sometimes they don't. People should not look at us as stereotypes."

"Now that I have good experience in the marathon," Ikangaa said a week before the Games, "I know what is to be done in running the marathon. Now I understand pace."

"I think in Helsinki, Juma was told to run Deek's race," Clohessy surmised, "and he looked uncomfortable doing it. If he looked at that race and how he felt there, he'll run his own race in the

Games; he'll run naturally."

And of course there was de Castella himself. He was still running right beside Seko, eyes firmly to the front. He looked very relaxed. How could he lose? Did he have any weaknesses? "When I ran against him in Rotterdam in 1983," Lopes offered with a tiny smile, "I didn't see any."

"He looks like the winner," Shahanga conceded beforehand, "but you cannot tell. The one who looks like the winner often will not be." De Castella himself had conceded that for whatever reasons the favorite usually doesn't win the Olympic marathon. It's the sort of race that makes handicappers a little crazy. A strange bloody event.

In winning his last four marathons before the Games, de Castella, 27, had shown himself to be the consummate

Never a sure thing

BY BILL RODGERS

marathoner. He had done it all. He won Fukuoka in '81 and showed there he could run as fast as anyone, winning in 2:08:18, the second fastest marathon ever, to Salazar's world record of 2:08:13. In the Commonwealth Games in '82 on the hot, difficult Brisbane course, he showed his great patience and poise. Running a steady pace, de Castella let Ikangaa and Shahanga get so far ahead he could no longer see them at 30 kilometers, but he never panicked, and reeled them in, running 30:31 over the last ten kilometers on the hilliest part of the course. Until he won in Rotterdam in '83, de Castella had been considered a strength runner, not a kicker, but he showed there he could kick with the best of them by outsprinting Carlos Lopes with 100 meters to go. Finally in the Helsinki World Championships, his last marathon before the Games, he revealed the final weapon in a complete arsenal, his ability to sit and wait in a pack, and then sustain a steady surge well back from the finish. He had speed, strength, poise, a kick, self-confidence and proven toughness in the heat. Everyone would be keying off him in L.A., watching him. He could control the race, right? So how do you beat a guy like that?

"De Castella has no weaknesses," Ikangaa said a week beforehand. "I appreciate his running." Then he smiled and added, "But it will be easy to defeat him." His smile broadened. There was a cryptic twinkle in his dark eyes. "It will be easy," he said, "and it will be difficult." When asked to explain, Ikangaa's smile broadened even more and his dark eyes twinkled even more cryptically. "Ah," he said, "now you have asked me to reveal something I do not wish to reveal."

The runners were strangely restless as the race progressed, running from shade to shade, cutting across the course and one another for sponges and drinks or to run under the showers spaced every five kilometers. The heat and humidity were clearly taking a toll. The fine Swedish runner, Kjell-Erik Stahl, dropped out in Marina del Rey. Rodolfo Gomez hung on only a little longer, as did Nijboer and Lambrechts. Geoff Smith of Great Britain didn't make it much beyond the half. John Tuttle left the race in Culver City, coming off the Marina Freeway, surely the ugliest and most unpleasant three miles in any marathon course in the world. But the restlessness that seized those who remained in the race stemmed

From my seat on the back of an ABC camera car, I watched the men's Olympic marathon unfold. As we rolled through the sun-drenched streets of L.A., sometimes just in front of the leaders, sometimes working our way back into the pack, I came to two conclusions. First, the United States must change the selection process for its Olympic marathon teams. Second, the marathon is the hardest event in track and field to "dominate"—and to prepare and peak for. This is especially true for hot-weather marathons.

This year's Olympic trials race helps illustrate both of these points. The field in Buffalo was one of the finest men's marathon fields ever assembled. Every runner there had been pointing for the race for as long as four years. Not only was the competition deep and extremely fierce (and I ought to know; I ran much harder in '84, placing eighth, than I did to make the team in '76) but the weather was very tough, with high humidity and a taxing head wind. Only four runners in the entire field scored PRs, and only one of the favorites, Alberto Salazar, managed to make the team.

Some observers seemed to believe that the men were running a tactical race, that they had a tail wind, or that perhaps they just weren't gutsy enough. That's hogwash. Take it from someone who was there. It was, purely and simply, a very tough marathon. Some speculated that Alberto Salazar ran a certain way in the trials to save himself for the Games, thus his "slow" time and his "loss" to Peter Pfitzinger. I can't agree with that theory. Of course Alberto ran to make the top three, not to "win"; he ran a smart race, just as Pfitz and Tuttle did. But no one can tell me those three didn't pay for it in L.A. Such an effort in the trial, coming only eleven weeks before the Olympic marathon (another hot weather race), severely limited the performance of our men's team in the Games. It's time that U.S. Olympic officials face this fact of marathoning life, and change the process of selection.

As for the unpredictability of the marathon, I believe that the hotter the temperature in a race, the greater the odds are that the form charts will fail. Heat throws a marathon wide open. I have also come to believe, contrary to popular wisdom, that racing many marathons (say, over half a dozen hard efforts) does little to improve one's chances for a better race next time out. More and more it seems that a marathoner's best efforts come very early in his or her career. The Los Angeles Olympic marathon certainly bore this out.

As I watched the race take shape, I studied the faces of the runners, trying to read beyond their masks of concentration. In the lead pack, de Castella, Spedding, Lopes and Treacy all kept their gazes riveted ahead. Seko, on the other hand, kept looking around, changing position, adjusting his cap, shifting his water bottle from hand

to hand. Yet his body form seemed as fit and controlled as ever. I remembered, though, that this was his first marathon in the heat.

By the halfway mark, I noted that some of the favorites had dropped off the pace. I could no longer see Rodolfo Gomez or Geoff Smith. Alberto was just visible perhaps 150 meters behind the leaders. I was aware that he was trying a new, come-from-behind strategy, and I thought for a while that it might work. He would close on the leaders over the shaded parts of the course. But by the 25-km mark they were running entirely in the sun and I knew Alberto had given up too much and that he was paying for his Buffalo effort. I never saw Pete Pfitzinger. I assumed he was attempting to race as he did in the trials, pushing the second half hard.

The momentum of the lead pack was very strong, because of the depth of quality in the race. Rod Dixon, sweating profusely, but looking strong as he had in New York last year, moved briefly to the front. Juma Ikangaa, his cheeks puffing in and out, continued up front, always at or near the lead. Joseph Nzau, too, remained at the front, running well, though the effort showed in his bared teeth. The two runners from Djibouti, Djama Robleh and Salah Ahmed, were running with carefree looks on their faces. It was difficult to tell who would emerge on top. Very soon, though, things began to happen. First Seko, and then de Castella, dropped off the pace, and with them went the form charts. I could only wonder whether some runners have an innate ability to handle the heat well. Then, how did John Treacy, who collapsed in the 10,000-meter semifinals in the Moscow Olympics—from heat exhaustion—run so well in Los Angeles? Treacy ran right through the middle of every shower station and said after the race that he made sure to drink plenty of water before the marathon. That answer seems too pat. Others took plenty of water throughout the race and still folded from dehydration. The heat is an unknown variable.

By 35 km it was Spedding, Treacy and Lopes—three men with a total of three completed marathons among them—racing for the medals. In another mile or so, Lopes took over, looking ready to explode. Once he made his break he never looked back, save for one quick glance just before he entered the tunnel leading to the Coliseum.

We need a different perspective for a race such as the marathon, with so many great runners and so great a distance to be covered. Though one-fourth of the Olympic field failed to finish, most of the favorites actually raced well, ending up in the top 20—not as bad as it sounds given the uncertainty of the event.

Yes, the finish order of the Olympic marathon was a surprise, but that should be no surprise—hot weather marathons have a tendency to turn out that way, especially hot weather marathons in the Olympics.

Bill Rodgers watched the Olympic marathon from one of ABC-TV's electrically powered camera cars. He served as an expert commentator for both the men's and women's races.

Results

1. Carlos Lopes	Por	2:09:21	44. Art Boileau	Can	2:22:45
2. John Treacy	Ire	2:09:56	45. Samuel Hlawe	Swa	2:22:51
3. Charlie Spedding	GB	2:09:58	46. Baikuntha Manandhar	Nep	2:22:51
4. Takeshi Soh	Jpn	2:10:55	47. Ahmed Mohamed Ismail	Som	2:23:27
5. Rob de Castella	Aus	2:11:09	48. Chae Hong-Nak	SK	2:23:33
6. Juma Ikangaa	Tan	2:11:10	49. Joseph Maisiba Otieno	Ken	2:24:19
7. Joseph Nzau	Ken	2:11:28	50. Bruno Lafranchi	Swi	2:24:38
8. Djama Robleh	Dji	2:11:39	51. Dick Hooper	Ire	2:24:41
9. Jerry Kiernan	Ire	2:12:20	52. Derrick Adamson	Jam	2:25:02
10. Rod Dixon	NZ	2:12:57	53. Claudio Caban	PR	2:27:16
11. Peter Pfitzinger	US	2:13:53	54. Marc Agosta	Lux	2:27:41
12. Hugh Jones	GB	2:13:57	55. Wilson Theleso	Bot	2:29:20
13. Jorge Gonzalez	PR	2:14:00	56. Alejandro Silva	Chi	2:29:53
14. Toshihiko Seko	Jpn	2:14:13	57. Chen Chang-Ming	Tai	2:30:53
15. Alberto Salazar	US	2:14:19	58. Kim Won-Sick	SK	2:30:57
16. Mehmet Terzi	Tur	2:14:20	59. Ruben Aguiar	Arg	2:31:18
17. Shigeru Soh	Jpn	2:14:38	60. Sabag Shemtov	Isr	2:31:34
18. Ralf Salzmann	WG	2:15:29	61. Vincent Rakabaele	Les	2:32:15
19. Henrik Jorgensen	Den	2:15:55	62. Marios Kassianidis	Cyp	2:32:51
20. Salah Ahmed	Dji	2:15:59	63. Amjad Tawalbeh	Jor	2:32:53
21. Agapius Masong	Tan	2:16:25	64. Ismaiel Mahmoud	Jor	2:33:30
22. Gidamis Shahanga	Tan	2:16:27	65. Alain Bordeleau	Can	2:34:27
23. Eloi Schleder	Bra	2:16:35	66. Tau Tokwepota	Ngu	2:36:36
24. Karel Lismont	Bel	2:17:09	67. Patrick Nyambariro-Nhauro	Zim	2:37:18
25. Allan Zachariassen	Den	2:17:10	68. Kimurgor Ngeny	Ken	2:37:19
26. Michael Koussis	Gre	2:17:38	69. Amira Prasad Yadav	Nep	2:38:10
27. Pertti Tiainen	Fin	2:17:43	70. Adolphe Ambowode	Caf	2:41:26
28. Alain Lazare	Fra	2:17:52	71. Carlos Avila	Hon	2:42:03
29. Vincent Ruguga	Uga	2:17:54	72. Jules Randrianavelo	Mad	2:43:05
30. Armand Parmentier	Bel	2:18:10	73. Adbullahij Ahmed	Som	2:44:39
31. Cesar Mercado	PR	2:19:09	74. George Mambosasa	Mal	2:46:14
32. Charmarke Abdilahi	Dji	2:19:11	75. Marlon Williams	Isv	2:46:50
33. Oyvind Dahl	Nor	2:19:28	76. Johnson Mbangiwa	Bot	2:48:12
34. Derek Froude	NZ	2:19:44	77. Leonardo Illut	Phi	2:49:39
35. Giovanni D'Aleo	Ita	2:20:12	78. Dieudonne Lamothe	Hai	2:52:18
36. Jesus Herrera	Mex	2:20:33			
37. Lea Hong Yul	SK	2:20:56			
38. Juan Camacho	Bol	2:21:04			
39. Cor Vriend	Hol	2:21:07			
40. France Ntaole	Les	2:21:09			
41. Johan Geirnaert	Bel	2:22:00			
42. Jacky Boxberger	Fra	2:22:38			
43. Marco Marchei	Ita	2:22:43			

DNF's include:

Geoff Smith	GB
Kjell Erik-Stahl	Swe
Gerard Nijboer	Hol
Santiago De La Parte	Spa
John Tuttle	US
Rodolfo Gomez	Mex

from more than just a desire for shade and water. It went deeper than that, and extended further back in time, long before the start of the race. Perhaps if any single clue might explain the curious outcome of the race, then it's this restlessness, this inability of so many of the top contenders to settle down and focus on what needed to be done, this fitful seeking for an edge rather than a steady return to roots. Perhaps it was the pressure of the Games that caused it, the pure magnitude of the Olympics.

"Being at home is what gets you there," Pfitzinger said after winning the trials in Buffalo. But many of the best seemed to forget where home was in the months before the Games and squandered their energies searching for something they'd had all along. Salazar was among the most peripatetic. After the trials, he went to Gainesville, Florida to train in the heat. Then he returned to Eugene. Then he went to Houston for more heat. Maybe he got too much. Sure, if you're going to race in the heat you need to acclimatize yourself to it, but there are limits. "I think a lot of the marathon's unpredictability is that, to be good at it, you have to train so hard, and that puts you right on the edge of not training enough, or overtraining," Salazar said. "I think

it's very easy to overtrain and go into the race a little stale."

"I believe the best way to counter the hot weather is not necessarily to train in hot weather," said Pat Clohessy, trying to explain de Castella's trip to Oslo in July to train for the Games. Oslo is not the hottest place he might have sought out. Perhaps de Castella's acclimatization was incomplete. Perhaps he had other problems, as well. He once observed that his success as a runner derived in part from his isolation in Australia. Down Under, he wasn't so tempted by the prize money circuit to overrace. Yet in the months preceding the Games he seemed to forget the source of his own victories and came to the States where he ran often and increasingly poorly. "Deek made a few mistakes," Clohessy conceded. "He ran too many races and traveled around too much. He's pretty keen and likes his racing. After [Mark] Nenow tore him up in New Orleans, I took a look at his diaries and it was pretty plain. He was worn out."

In early March, de Castella had finished second in the Continental Homes 10 km to Zach Barie of Tanzania in a PR of 27:48. Three weeks later at the Cross-Country Championships, however, he finished 21st in 34:08, well behind

Lopes's winning time of 33:25. Then in the Crescent City Classic 10 km in New Orleans April 1 he placed sixth in 28:03. After that, he went back to Australia to regroup, but perhaps by then the damage had been done. "It's tough to be a marathoner in America," said Rod Dixon, now a permanent resident of Reading, Pennsylvania. "There are so many distractions and opportunities here. That's why America hasn't produced that many great marathoners. You have to live a very simple life to be a marathoner, a life filled with routine in an environment that's comfortable, so that life just goes on in that very restricted sphere. It's not my personality to live like that, unfortunately."

Seko lives a life that is simple and filled with routine, and he seems to thrive on the limits, the restrictions and order; yet he was perhaps the most unsettled of all the favorites, both during the race and before. "I ran beside him quite a ways," de Castella recalled, "and he seemed very distracted, always looking around, nervous. I remember when I raced him in Fukuoka back in '80 how intense he was and focused on the race. Here, he wasn't. I don't know what was wrong." Seko, carrying a water bottle, kept fiddling with his hat, turning it one way, then another. Finally, just short of the 30-km split in Culver City, he took the hat off and threw it into a surprised crowd.

The course had turned inland, and from here on there was nothing to distract the runners from their weariness and the heat but grey warehouses, oil rigs, gas stations, faded bungalows and empty lots. The Japanese had been terrified by what they heard about the heat in Los Angeles, Takeshi Soh (fourth in 2:10:55) explained after the race, so of course they sought out heat to train in. They went to Guam briefly, but it was too hot. So they returned to Tokyo, but Tokyo had been seized by one of its hottest summers in memory. There was no escape. Heat training's one thing, but in Tokyo it was impossible. It was too hot for intervals and at night they couldn't sleep. Time was running out. Then they went to the northern island of Hokkaido, where it's usually cooler and dry, but even there it was too hot.

Both Seko and Nakamura said it had been 100 degrees in Tokyo in late July, and that out of overconfidence Seko overtrained. "He ran 40 to 50 kilometers twice a week," said Nakamura of Seko's heaviest single workouts. "This tired him." So much so that Seko, according to

Nakamura, then tapered off too much in August before the race. For one so disciplined it was a jarring inconsistency.

The Sohs arrived in L.A. just three days before the race and were amazed at how cool and dry it was, at least compared with Tokyo. "I think we all would have done better if we'd come earlier," Takeshi Soh said through an interpreter. As it was, they all arrived worn out by travel, by heat and by their terror of the Southern California summer.

The Africans' restlessness in the months before the race derived more from monetary causes than nervousness or uncertainty. For months they'd been fixtures on the big-money road racing circuit in the States, racing every week or every two weeks, picking up victories where they could, but always finishing well up in the money. It's little wonder that once in Los Angeles for the Games most of the top African distance runners did not fare well. Only Ikangaa stayed in Tanzania to live and train in the team compound at altitude in Arusha, then in the heat in Dar es Salaam. He arrived well rested and serene in Los Angeles a week before his race, but he had other problems once the race started. "I was getting dehydrated," he said angrily afterwards. "I had only water to drink. I had arranged to have bottles of orange juice at every stop, but they were not there. I had nothing to replace my energy with, and at 37 kilometers I began to fall back. This has never happened to me before."

We will never know what happened to Ikangaa's orange juice, but in a way his problems in the race were just part of the general disorganization plaguing the Africans. They're brilliant runners, and over the long haul their brilliance shows, but when it comes to peaking for the big races, the political and economic problems at home, coupled with the economic pressures here to overrace, leave them floundering when they should be triumphant.

Ikangaa claimed not to have known what time the marathon started until three weeks before the Games, when it was too late to sufficiently adapt his training to the proper time of day. "I thought it was in the morning," he explained afterwards. "I trained in the morning." Another contender, Simeon Kigen of Kenya, failed even to get to the starting line. While in L.A. preparing to race, he was kicked off the team by Kenyan officials, who claimed he had left training camp in Nairobi without permis-

sion, to come to the States to train. "We do have to maintain discipline, don't we?" said a Kenyan official. Kigen, who ran 2:10:52 at Chicago last year, was replaced by a 2:15 runner.

If there is any common theme that unites Lopes, Treacy and Spedding and explains their success, it's their steadiness, both during the race and in the months before. Lopes stayed in Lisbon, racing judiciously and training well, if somewhat recklessly, in the city's heavy traffic. Spedding moved to Boston. "I picked Boston because this time of year it's hot, and also because I've been there before," he said a month before the Games. "I lived in Boston for a year in '81 and enjoyed it. I've got a lot of friends there and know my way around. I've got routes I run and people I train with. It's like home for me now." Spedding had moved to Boston the first time when it appeared his career was winding down. Having failed to make the British Olympic team in the 10,000 in '80, he wasn't sure what was left. "I needed a complete change," he recalled. "I had some friends in Boston so I decided to give it a whirl. I quit my job, sold my house, moved to Boston and never looked back. It was one of the best things I ever did." After that, his career began to turn around. He decided that whatever talents he possessed lay in the marathon, and he began a steady buildup to that distance. He won his first marathon in Houston in January of this year in 2:11:54, then in May he won his second, in London in 2:09:57, and secured a spot on the British team. He came into L.A. determined to run a steady pace. "I've only run two," he said before the race, "and I ran them conservatively, and that's how I'll run in the Games. I'll pick a time I think is best for me and basically ignore everyone else. If I can run the time I think I can, then I'll finish up well."

Treacy had his biggest successes as a runner while at Providence, and so to prepare himself for the Games he moved back there with his wife and two children last October. "I'd gone through two or three years of bad form," he said, "so I came back to my base and brought my family with me." It was there that Treacy regained his form and nurtured his talents, helped along by friends from the college. "I was running 23-, 26- and 29-mile runs, and some of the guys would go with me. One would run the first eight and another the next. All of the guys joined me through the year. I like to have a chat when I run. When I'm running with the guys, I don't feel the

miles."

The runners had just passed an aid station at 35 kilometers when Lopes began to put on the pressure. De Castella had taken his untimely drink and looked up too late. Seko had begun to fail and Salazar was well out of contention. Only Ikangaa, Spedding, Nzau, Treacy and Takeshi Soh remained in a position to challenge Lopes. They were on Rodeo Road now, a bleak stretch of cinderblock factories which should not under any circumstances be confused with Rodeo Drive in Beverly Hills. The heat was the worst, and the crowds were sparse and able to offer little support. "I thought at 37 kilometers I could win," Lopes said afterwards, offering a small smile, "but it's hard. You can feel good at 37 kilometers in a marathon and then not so good at 40."

"It was tough," Treacy said, "I tried to go with Lopes but couldn't." Both Treacy and Spedding began to slip back. Soh did as well, along with Ikangaa and Nzau, last year's Chicago champion. But Treacy and Spedding ran side by side, united now by their position as well as their underdog status. They'd conceded the gold to Lopes by then, but the silver and bronze were within their grasp if they could just hang on. It was only a matter of sticking in there to preserve the medals—who would get which was secondary. It's hard to imagine de Castella and Salazar sharing the work at this point in a race. Perhaps if Spedding and Treacy had gone after each other, they would have run themselves out of the medals. As it was, they cruised through the next five kilometers as uneasy allies. "It helped to have Charlie there," Treacy said later. "That way we could run away from the field. But still, he was my number one enemy at the time."

Lopes continued to widen his lead. Ikangaa and Nzau, Seko, de Castella and Takeshi Soh continued to lose ground, while Treacy and Spedding neared the track and began, subtly, probing one another. "Charlie made an effort," Treacy recalled, "and faltered. Then I tried to break him and couldn't. I was hoping to come onto the track alone, but he was on my heels. I had to sprint." Coming down the final stretch, Treacy began to pull away from Spedding, gaining two seconds on him to take the silver in 2:09:56. By then Lopes had already begun his victory lap. The closing ceremony was cranking into gear. Before long the lasers and fireworks and break dancing

would begin. Blimps and helicopters circled overhead. Lionel Richie warmed up his vocal chords and Peter Ueberroth practiced his speech one last time. It was almost over.

Crossing the line in 2:09:21, Lopes broke Waldemar Cierpinski's '76 Olympic record by 34 seconds. Given the conditions, the pressures this year and the depth of the field, it was one of the finest marathon performances ever. And yet the questions that followed on its heels concerned not so much the race and how it had been won as the man himself, this enigmatic, quiet, occasional bank loan officer, now the finest marathoner in the world. Pressed to explain, Lopes displayed his understandable weariness. The translator was tentative, the answers terse. "The Portuguese are predestined to run distances," Lopes suggested at one point. "We work hard." It always seems simple immediately afterwards, when the exhaustion finally catches up with the exhilaration. On this particular day in this particular race, Carlos Lopes simply ran faster than anyone else. In the next race, who knows? Perhaps then de Castella or Seko or Salazar or Ikangaa will run faster.

But a week earlier, Lopes, less weary and also less relaxed, had offered a more analytical and somewhat prophetic explanation. He'd been sitting in a hotel coffee shop in Santa Monica, right off the marathon course. It was almost midnight. He'd just arrived in Los Angeles with his wife and now he was trying to talk while he idly rubbed his still-sore left leg with one hand and fiddled with the silverware with his other.

"There are two ways you can arrive at the marathon distance," he said then. "There is the direct way, when a runner at the age of 20 or 22 decides to be a marathoner. Then most probably he will be good, but perhaps not the best. The other way to arrive at the marathon is for runners to come from the shorter distances, like I did. They run the 5,000 and then they run the 10,000 and then finally after many years, when they are 30 or 32 or a few years older, they discover they can try the marathon. That way, gradually, they lose speed in the shorter races but they become stronger and stronger in the marathon, and when they arrive at the marathon they stay a long time. You see, I am not tired from the marathon, because I ran my first only two years ago.

"In the marathon," he concluded, "I am still a very young man."

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