

ROCKY ROAD: THE RISE AND FALL OF ROAD RUNNING IN AMERICA

TONI REAVIS (January 1994)

For the last 17 years Mr. Reavis has covered the sport of road running full time in broadcast and print, the last five years as host of ESPN's Foot Locker Road Race of the Month. The views expressed in this paper represent those of Mr. Reavis alone. In no way are they meant to reflect the opinions of ESPN, Elite Racing, Foot Locker, Runner's World, New England Runner, or any of the other media, events, or sponsors, with whom Mr. Reavis has or does associate.

LOSING MY RELIGION

As 1993 came to a close the sport of road running suffered two unrelated setbacks, which raise important questions about the state of the sport. First, ABC television pulled out of the New York City Marathon after a 13 year association, while in Portland, Oregon the Cascade Run Off 15K, founding event of the Association of Road Race Athletes (ARRA) circuit, pulled the plug after a run of 16 years.

Do these two reversals underscore a state of crisis within the sport? Or can they be seen as part of the natural ebb and flow inherent in any such broadly based, loosely confederated sport? These are questions worth considering as we head into what has been offered as *Road Summit '94* in Washington D.C. February 19.

New York's loss will likely be offset by another television deal, though whether it will emerge on one of the networks has yet to be determined. And in terms of a tit for tat major running event Cascade has already been supplanted by the Cobb 10K, the new \$75,000 event scheduled for Labor Day in Atlanta. What exactly then is the problem?

ABC executives categorized the NYC Marathon as a "financial albatross" before dropping the blade, even as New York Road Runner's Club (NYRRC) president Fred Lebow admitted to having been "shocked" by the decision, coming, as it did, one year before New York's twenty-fifth anniversary run this November.

But in order to maintain the labor and capital-intensive coverage a marathon requires ABC needed to see reflected in its ratings, and more importantly in its sponsorship base, the opinion that the marathon was worth their effort and risk. A review of 1993's numbers indicate the degree to which that effort and risk went unrewarded. ABC did receive a 10 rating in New York City itself. But nationally the rating hovered just over 3 (each rating point represents 942,000 households nation-wide). Why such a decline west of the Hudson? Perhaps some of the answer can be gleaned from the coverage itself: former football star Lynn Swann running with and interviewing back-of-the- packers, WFAN radio personality Don Imus contributing inert, out-of-his-element comments, a fireman to explain the course, and a wedding at eight miles. As you are watching this it dawns on you, has anything like a wedding ever been part of any other major sporting event's television coverage?

"Network officials believe running is inherently boring," says an ABC insider. "They feel you have to bring other entertainment elements into the broadcast to capture an audience."

Yet by introducing "entertainment elements" ABC not only failed to entice any new viewers, but they simultaneously lost the core audience of running enthusiasts who turn angry at such coverage.

"It just devalues the sport," says one major marathon athlete recruiter. "Athleticism isn't the focus any more. The guy from Milwaukee who just got back from by-pass surgery is. It's a bunch of human interest stories."

Now consider how other sports are covered. After CBS' final football broadcast, the Cowboys' blowout of the 49'ers for the NFC Championship, *USA Today* wrote, "Until the final moments, when (John) Madden noted Jimmy Johnson's hair didn't move after the Gatorade shower, *the game was the story, as it should be.*" (italics added)¹

Running, in contrast, remains susceptible to trivialization as everything but the game. But why? And should ABC be faulted? Or have they been left to fill the vacuum caused by running's abdication in advancing its own cause beyond that of a spectacle?

PREACHING TO THE CHOIR

If you only have one live, network broadcast to showcase your sport for the year, well, you are in trouble right there. Being seen is being known. Thus do names cross lips and heroes emerge. But road running is never seen by the mass media outside a local affiliate context.

Nationally, running exists only within the trade media: *Runner's World*, *Running Times*, *Foot Locker Road Race of the Month*, *Danskin Running & Racing*, etc. While well produced, these magazines and television programs arrive weeks or months after events have taken place. By that time coverage is yesterday's socks.

Without an agenda to unify and focus the public's perception in real time, there is no context for the sport, no immediacy of athletic achievement. So if ABC, or any subsequent network, isn't systematically forwarded promotable stars, what can they be expected to do? Is it even possible to showcase the sport through a one-time-only window to the general public?

Who was 1993 New York City champion Andres Espinoza to ABC? It became offensively obvious when the network put up a graphic listing 1991 champion Salvador Garcia as the winner before the post-race interview with Espinoza.

YOU CAN GO YOUR OWN WAY

The Road Race Management Guide to Prize Money Races and Elite Athletes lists 350 events offering prize money in its 1994 edition. That averages nearly seven events per weekend throughout the year. And during the prime spring and fall months the calendar looks even more like the starting grid of the New York City Marathon.

With so many events, each scheduled whenever it individually chooses, without any regulation of the calendar to avoid conflicts and competition for the same, limited talent base and media access, with each event receiving sanctions by national and international bodies without regard to level of importance, it reverts to the individual events and their sponsors to recruit a field and tout their own significance.

Again in 1994 the Boston, London and Rotterdam Marathons are all scheduled on the same weekend in April. Would tennis allow the U.S. Open, Wimbledon, and the French Open to be scheduled on the same weekend? Would horse racing, a notoriously unregulated sport, run the Kentucky Derby, Preakness, and Belmont Stakes on the same weekend? And this level of conflict exists in road running throughout the calendar domestically as well.

Consider the aforementioned Cobb 10K. Listed as having the largest 10K purse in the country, it has received sanctions by both USATF and ARRA for Labor Day. Yet on that same date the long-standing New Haven 20K in Connecticut will stage the USATF national 20K championship!

It can be argued that this individual event orientation, by its very nature, insures that no field will contain a gathering of the sport's top talent base. Stirring competitions and earning potential dilute even further when each event stages concurrent men's and women's races. Creating media-worthy moments out of this primordial stew is left to pure chance.

"Look what happens here every year," points out Ned Tate, a veteran television producer for WKYC-TV in

Cleveland. "You think you have a good field put together and two days before the race some other event steals three of your people. Then of the runners you still have, some come in late Saturday night, others early Sunday morning. How can you advance an event in the media that way? Yet at the Super Bowl if players didn't show up for media day they were fined."

Under the present laissez-faire system athletes are more often than not searching for the easiest payday, not the best competition. With the limited prize purses at stake in the first place it's in the best interest of the athletes to avoid one another, thereby protecting their slice of the static money available. This avoidance, in turn, insures the very type of races television deems boring, which leads to "entertainment elements" entering the coverage, which leads to channel surfing, and low ratings. Television pulling out all together merely completes the cycle.

"The days when ABC, or any other independent TV producer like TWI or ISL would be willing to plunk down dollars to produce coverage in the hopes of selling enough on the broadcast are over," says one such independent producer. "Now the owner of the facility, say ABC, is saying to the owner of the product, Fred Lebow, 'If you take the risk and pay us \$380,000 to buy the time and produce the show, and you sell enough ads to make a profit, God bless you. But we don't think we will be made whole for taking that risk ourselves anymore with road running!'"

Perhaps the biggest irony is that Fred Lebow, himself, had another view of how it had to work in this 1979 interview in *Runner's World*.

RW: "You recently proposed in an editorial a \$250,000 New York City Marathon Open. You suggested that the winner of the event should receive \$30,000, second place \$20,000 and so on."

FL: "I'd like to amend that editorial. Instead of \$30,000, the winner should get \$300,000. Why does ABC, CBS and NBC spend money televising golf and tennis matches? Not because they are so exciting to watch. Because the public accepts that the winner will receive \$100,000. If Billy Rodgers were assured that he would get \$300,000 if he won the NYC Marathon, I'd bet my sneakers the networks would be clamoring to telecast the NYC Marathon. ABC, CBS and NBC would pay a couple million dollars for the rights because the public would be ready to watch it."²

Yet for the last two years the New York City Marathon has guaranteed its champions no more than the \$20,000 Fred originally wanted to pay his second place finisher.

LET THEM EAT CAKE

This is not meant to be an indictment of Fred Lebow or the New York Road Runner's Club who have done as good a job of promoting running as anyone. It does go to show, however, the limitations of a single club, even if that club has a membership of 30,000 and is located in the world's media and advertising capital.

The reality is that the amorphous institution known as *The Sport* is the sole cause of its own descending destiny. As presently constituted, with running controlled at the international level by remnants of a Victorian era paternalism and class structure determined to protect positions of power and five-star lifestyles that would make Charles Keating blanch, there exists not one scintilla of overview by a professional body mandated to protect, enlarge and package the sport's assets within the marketplace.

When questioned last summer about the disparity of dollars awarded athletes under his jurisdiction vis-a-vis other sports, International Amateur Athletic Federation (IAAF) president Primo Nebiolo was unequivocal.

"Our goal is not to share with some great athletes the income that comes from our hard work and our efforts. Our goal is to use this income to reinforce our federations and develop athletes all over the world."³

Yet by assuming this anti-star posture, Nebiolo not only contradicts the market acknowledgement that the star system is what generates public and economic interest - be it in Hollywood or the NBA - but he hamstring his

own efforts to do that which he claims is his goal. The more you elevate your heroes the greater your own opportunity to expand grass roots programs as well. Stars pay a dividend. How else would figure skating reap the television coverage it has if not for the Nancy Kerrigan-Tonya Harding contretemps?

As a further consequence of this federation-versus-athlete atmosphere, the IAAF continues to unwittingly foster the preponderance of running's media via drug allegations and court battles as athletes revert to any means necessary to get their piece of the action.

The athletes, in fact, do not believe they have an advocate within the sport's current bureaucracy, but instead are confronted with a competitor in whom they place no trust.

"TO BE A GREAT AUTOCRAT YOU MUST BE A GREAT BARBARIAN."⁴

At the IAAF Grand Prix (track and field) Final in London last year a long jumper from west Africa was in position to win end-of-the-year Grand Prix bonus money. Since he lived and went to school in the U.S., had a social security number, and was registered with USATF, he asked that his potential winnings be sent to him through USATF. He was informed by a Grand Prix official that if he wrote out his request and listed the proper documentation his winnings would be so handled.

In spite of these assurances and a prize winning performance, his wallet ended up as empty as a campaign promise. Someone within his homeland federation found out about his prize purse request, and had it stopped. The athlete never saw his money. Now that the byzantine TAC Trust apparatus has been euthanized after 13 years of laundering money to athletes through their national federations, perhaps this type of injustice will cease. But don't count on it.

A Russian champion of a well-known American event was kept from competing in last year's New York City Marathon by her federation for refusing to pay their "licensing fee". Also recall 1987 when the head of an African federation served as Jeff Gillooly's role model when he hired thugs to beat up a world champion who refused to race where the *federation official* was receiving cash for the athlete's appearance. The athlete - foolish lad - wanted to select his own racing venue. This is the brush that tars all of running, though none of this is condoned or practiced within the U.S. road hierarchy.

With no one's job in jeopardy by the current invisible, if not negative, public image of track and field and road running, with individual governing federations acting as semi-autonomous rogue states tying athletes to a form of athletic serfdom, and events locked in internecine battles throughout the globe out of sight of media attention, the anticipated consequences are evidenced in the statistical data.

A *Runner's World* commissioned "Running Market Analysis"⁵ points to a small but gradual erosion in running's feeder base since a peak in 1989. For both frequent runners (120 days + per year) and occasional runners (25-119 days) participation in 1992, the last year surveyed, was the lowest in all years 1986 through 1992. However, infrequent running participation (6-24 days per year) in 1992 was highest of any year outside 1989. How does one read these data?

Older runners from the running boom generation of the late 1970's are running less as they age, and are not being replaced by the upcoming cohort. Total participation of 21.9 million in 1992 is down from 28 million in the late 1970's. Expanding fitness sport opportunities is one contributing factor, but running's own laissez-faire policy has been equally, if not more, culpable.

And yet there are numbers which point to improvement as well. The data indicate a steady increase in finishers in the 100 largest races⁶. Yet when scrutinized this reflects no more than the illusion of health.

Steadily increasing race participation, though good, masks the smaller and smaller feeder base looming behind the present aging racing population. If road running sits still and does not utilize the still robust assets at hand with

what remains of the running boom participants, and in doing so fails to promote next generation's racers and consumers, in time the reduced feeder base will be strikingly reflected in the once healthy race participation stats.

And if that time is allowed to eventuate, road running will be left without an adequate base to return the sport to its past glories. (THOUGH TOTAL PARTICIPATION NUMBERS IN 2005 SHOW AN INCREASE TO 29 MILLION, IT IS THE RISE IN CHARITY RUNNERS THAT MAKE UP THE VAST NEW SUPPLY. THE ONCE-STRONG CONNECTION BETWEEN THE AVERAGE RUNNER AND THE SPORTING RUNNERS HAS LONG SINCE BEEN BROKEN.)

Backing this theory are the consumer purchases statistics.⁷ Though more dollars are being spent on running shoes, those dollars are being spent on fewer unit pairs each year. More runners aren't buying more shoes, fewer runners are paying more for each pair of a decreasing number of shoes.

In spite of this hard evidence, the status quo is not only tolerated, but there exists no compelling push for change. Samuel Beckett wrote of this myopia In *Waiting for Godot*. "We are all born mad. Some remain so."

THE ENEMIES OF CAESAR SHALL SAY THIS

Here in America the finger has been pointed unendingly at Ollan Cassell, executive director of USATF (the governing body of road running, track and field, and race walking), as the main culprit in running's decline. In 1992 a preliminary ballot within its executive committee came within one vote of recommending to the USATF that Cassell not be retained for another term as executive director. But consider.

In 1978 the Amateur Sports Act was passed through Congress to disband the AAU and break all sports into separate, individually governed entities: judo, swimming, archery, skating, basketball, etc. Road running, track, and race walking were lumped into what was then called The Athletics Congress (TAC, now USATF).

In 1978 road running was still in its infancy as a sport, and most certainly still amateur. Today it has matured, spreading its influence throughout the world while carrying a relatively stable calendar of events, media and athletes on a de facto road circuit. Among these events and athletes are a significant number that are decidedly professional.

But USATF, through their component associations, though technically empowered to construct a cohesive structure of events and regulations, has to date avoided such a course altogether. Are they to be blamed? Or has the road running community itself yet to advance a system which would be compatible with both the federation and the road's component parts?

The military has a catch-phrase philosophy: "Centralized planning, decentralized execution". Without a coherent system - much like an athlete requires a system of training to produce results - to create a schedule, institute rules of eligibility, coordinate media, levy fines, and promote the sport, one has nothing more than a running world's version of *Harper Magazine's* scathing description of public television.

"Properly understood, public television (running) is not a network (circuit). It is an anthology of 351 stations (races)...envious of one another, loyal to their own interests, their own board of trustees, their own definitions of the public good. If the system were to be represented on a geopolitical map, it would resemble the Holy Roman Empire during the last years of its decaying hegemony - 351 petty states and dukedoms, each with its own flag, court chamberlain and trumpet fanfare."⁸

Is it coincidence or irony that the *Road Race Management Guide to Prize Money Races* lists 350 running events in its 1994 edition? The sport is, in fact, an amalgam of local promotions, some healthy, some ill, some large, some small, some coming, some going, but all treated equally, and none working in concert with an involved national governing body.

The sport is missing out on the power that a synergistic approach among events and institutions could generate in the marketplace. Without the ability to control the calendar, or the eligibility of athletes, the sport remains susceptible to the vagaries of the local marketplace alone. Thus do events like the Cascade Run Off fold.

HOME, HOME ON THE ROAD

We have catalogued television's reservations, as well as come to understand the position of static governing bodies. It would serve well to return to the roots of road running's modern era to find where things went right before they began to go wrong, because in reality the problems of road racing lie much closer to home than in the gilded office of the IAAF president in Rome.

Like all social constructs road racing has evolved into its present state. Though it has become axiomatic that Frank Shorter's gold medal performance in the marathon at the Munich Olympics in 1972 and Dr. Kenneth Cooper's invention of aerobics were the precipitating factors of what became known as "The Running Boom", Shorter's victory and Cooper's book alone do not explain such a phenomenon. Many other forces were also in play.

Born in late 1947, Frank Shorter grew up on the leading edge of the post-war baby boom. By the 1970's this largest, healthiest, wealthiest, best-educated generation in American history was out into the world and beginning to come to grips with the onslaught of age. With Shorter's televised example of excellence, and Cooper's data backing the anecdotal evidence, motivated baby boomers took to physical fitness as their fountain of youth as they replaced their collective resolve to change the world with personal agendas. Shorter begot Bill Rodgers, whose guileless Peter Pan personality and dominant performances through the middle and late 1970's took road running to the next level, becoming the first self-acknowledged road racer to appear on the covers of *Track & Field News* and *Sport's Illustrated*.

Shorter versus Rodgers on the roads, along with impresario Fred Lebow in New York City, begot road racing as a public spectacle embodied in the 1976 five-borough New York City Marathon. From there running exploded on the national consciousness with road races dotting the calendar and the country, from Peachtree in Atlanta to Falmouth on Cape Cod to the Crescent City in New Orleans to Bloomsday in Spokane. Soon not just Americans, but Brits, the Irish, Europeans, Mexicans and finally Africans joined the fray (though most of the foreigners racing the roads lived in America on college scholarship). Road racing for dollars was centered in America where it all began, and dominated by American-based runners.

But by 1981 the sham of amateurism, which began in the late 19th century as a means to segregate sport along social and economic lines, was too obvious to ignore and too constricting to let stand. Road running's promise was great, but the athletes were frustrated by the hypocritical status of their "shamateur" sport which looked the other way as appearance fees among a very few highly paid athletes, notably Shorter and Rodgers, continued while the majority of contending runners, even if they won, took home little or nothing. For their part, Rodgers and Shorter were unable to cash in on their deserved recognition via open market forces. So the athletes began to meet at events around the country in order to formulate a plan of action.

A NEW ARRA

After numerous such gatherings in 1980 and '81, the Association of Road Race Athletes (ARRA), the so-called athlete's union, was created to challenge TAC's prohibitive control of their career opportunities. The first race where this challenge was openly exercised came in June 1981 at Cascade Run Off in Portland, Oregon (of all places).

In the wake of the Cascade breakaway, TAC suspended some sixty athletes, and threatened suspension for any other athletes competing in subsequent, TAC sanctioned events against these professionals. This was the federation's stick, eligibility. But the athletes hung together, accepted their suspensions, and worked to attract allies to their cause.

WHERE WOMEN BLOW AND MEN CHUNDER

An important battlefield in this political campaign played out inside the New Zealand federation, the NZAAA. Three New Zealand women, Anne Audain (the Cascade winner), Allison Roe (the '81 Boston Marathon champion), and Lorraine Moller, all won and accepted prize money at Cascade. All three were subsequently banned internationally by their federation for doing so, though Allison Roe turned back her money and was reinstated at that time. Anne Audain picks up the narrative from there.

"The U.S. athletes were only suspended, because of their constitutional rights," says the now-retired Audain from her home Down Under. "We, on the other hand, had no such rights in New Zealand, and Ollan Cassell (who bragged about this to me at the Stapleton Airport in Denver in 1982) got the NZAAA to ban Lorraine and me internationally. We weren't allowed to run. So Lorraine and I returned to New Zealand and had a go at the federation. Lorraine brought a lawyer with her.

"We threatened that if the federation didn't stand by us in this matter we wouldn't run for New Zealand ever again. Remember, that the Commonwealth Games were scheduled for Christchurch, New Zealand in 1982. We told the NZAAA that if they didn't reinstate us for domestic competition we would go to the track and run the necessary qualifying times for the Games in front of all the media. Then if they didn't put us on the team they would look like a bunch of fools, because we were by far the best women runners in the country with the best chance for medals, and the public was very much behind us. It was basically a bluff, but within ten minutes they did reinstate us for New Zealand competitions, and that forced the IAAF eventually to reinstate us as well."

Back in the United States the next major test for the ARRA athletes came, as if by providence, in Flint, Michigan at the Bobby Crim 10 Miler. Flint had mid-wifed the birth of the United Auto Workers Union (UAW) in 1935. Consequently in 1981 Crim officials took the position that the ARRA athletes were, in essence, trade unionists coalescing around a right to work issue. Crim linked ARRA's fight to their own as a union town, and ARRA had another ally in its corner. The suspended athletes were allowed to run.

With sixty athletes, two major events, and the lifted the ban in New Zealand lining up behind the ARRA challenge, TAC executive director Ollan Cassell received a clear directive from the IAAF to clean up the mess on the roads in the USA. In response Cassell hired a Long Island-based lawyer and recreational runner, Alvin Chriss, in July of '81. Chriss wrote, and then was hired to administer, TAC Trust, a semantic money-laundering device developed to combat the Eastern Bloc's state support of athletes. TAC Trust dispensed prize money acceptably to both the ARRA-led road racers as well as to the worldwide federations, even as the world remained bifurcated along the super-power axis.

Such was the evolution of the sport in America, and thus did the modern era of semi-pro road racing begin. From there prize money spread worldwide through these national trust systems and into track and field. However since those heady days of ARRA's conception and birth there has been no further evolution whatsoever save the end

of TAC Trust in late 1993 - mind you nearly five years after the disintegration of the Soviet Union whose state system mandated its creation in the first place!

In the ensuing years while hybrid sports like synchronized swimming, mountain bike racing, triathlon, mogul skiing, and women's softball pushed and shoved their way onto the Olympic agenda, the sport of road racing - in which athletes have spent entire careers without concern for the track or marathons - has never even made a case for distinction as a separate sport or Olympic entry. It is one more circumstance that has kept road running under the cloud of illegitimacy as track and field's weak cousin.

One of America's greatest distance runners, a two-time world cross country champion, and former American record holder at 10,000 meters, Craig Virgin, only once put his talent together at the marathon distance. In 1981 he finished second to Japan's Toshihiko Seko at the Boston Marathon. That race took so much out of Craig that he never again reached the world-class heights which defined his career.

"I realize now that there are four kinds of distance running," asserted Craig after Boston. "Track, cross country, roads, and the marathon. Once you go over 30 kilometers it's a whole different sport, from the preparation, to the racing, to the recovery."

If there is a distinction between the 800 meters and 1500 meters on the track, certainly there must be an intermediate point of discrimination between 10,000 meters on the track and the marathon. This one step alone - instituting a road race at 21K as an Olympic sport - would immeasurably assist in creating a marketable commodity on the roads. The stamp of Olympic credibility would enable road running to find sponsors much more easily, because people know and understand the Olympic designation. At the same time, it would enhance the viability of track, as both disciplines would feed off one another's equal standing and increased medal count. The Olympic clout such an imprimatur would bestow would end once and for all the weak-cousin relationship the roads have always labored under vis-a-vis track, while unfettering the road market to work toward the benefit of all.

Track athletes are mostly young, and without disposable income. Such is the time of life that intersects with track excellence. But once that time is passed most track athletes do not continue with their sport, because of the very nature of its youth-dependence. Road runners, on the other hand, are involved in a lifetime activity. As a result they, as a group, are a more mature, affluent people. And Of the 100,000 TAC cards in circulation, 50,000 are designated as Long Distance Running. Yet road racers remain an untapped national market anchored to hundreds of local events.

As a consequence of the present condition, as happens with any status quo, over time entropy begins to exact its decaying due. Institutions, like people, evolve. Road racing has now reached a stage of maturity where its evolution must congeal around a national program.

GATT TO GET YOU INTO MY LIFE

Today technology is blurring the borders once drawn by enlightened mapmakers. We have reached a point at which unilateral nation-state decisions are no longer viable. The move toward a unified Europe, the passage of the NAFTA trade agreement, and the ongoing GATT negotiations to rescind trade barriers around the world point to the direction of man's future social contract.

Simply put, there comes a time when you must unify in order to sustain or grow. And within that unity must exist a system and structure through which people can interact coherently. Without such a system in place to administer those interactions, you have no more than the impending anarchy sweeping segments of the Third World where the artificial borders established by the European colonial powers have begun to vanish as a practical matter, leading to the "withering away of central governments, the rise in tribal and regional domains, the unchecked spread of disease, and the growing pervasiveness of war."⁹

Not to stretch the analogy to thin, but the sport of road running has, in 1994, reached that evolutionary point at which it must congeal beyond its tribal and regional domains and form an interdependent trading bloc. The next step must be taken for sake of its own health. (END PT. 1. CONTINUED IN PT. 2 BELOW.)

ROCKY ROADS: PART 2 of 3

PLAYER'S UNION, OR MANAGEMENT COUP?

The early 1980's was a critical time, and one from which we should take both heart and lesson. ARRA was in a position of power. They had overturned a century of amateur hypocrisy through the sheer will and unity of their purpose. However, though under the guise of an athlete's union, ARRA was in fact directed by a cadre of race directors who spun it into a management organization to regulate fiscal operations. Their allegiance was primarily to events, not to athletes.

ARRA, as the athletes, was "the product" and could have set standards. They were the only body in position to do so. Touring athletes were the only component shared by all the different venues. That shared element could have been utilized as a linking tool, especially in its infancy when the leading lights were American stars. But in transforming into a race director orientation, ARRA's focus of attention turned from the circuit of races as a whole, and centered instead on the individual events. TAC then parried ARRA's original thrust the best way possible by co-opting its leadership. The heads of the sport's opposition party were named to positions inside TAC's newly established Long Distance Running (LDR) Committees. But though now on the inside the opposition was, as a practical matter, neutered as an adversarial relationship remained intact between the LDR's and TAC, proving detrimental to both sides and especially road racing.

Change never did occur on the roads, and ARRA's leadership, and by extension TAC's Long Distance Running committees, calcified as an internal opposition to TAC's executive leadership. Without new blood pushing for change from the outside, or effective central command coming from within, the sport stagnated at the event level and never rose to the status of a true circuit.

In fact Alvin Chriss retired from road racing altogether as Special Assistant to the TAC Executive Director when his services were no longer deemed necessary by Ollan Cassell. Chriss had done his job well. The rebellion had been quelled from within.

Regardless of what people may have thought of Mr. Chriss or his tactics, the position he held indicated the status of the roads to the governing body. Today the absence of a successor sends out its own message.

DIS-APPEARANCE FEES

With the athlete's union evolving into a race director's alliance, and its leadership folding back into a contentious status quo, ARRA became known not for what it did do, i.e. advocate on behalf of professional runners, rather for what it didn't do, which is advocate appearance money - a concern primarily of event managers who would have to pay those fees if they remained. ARRA's idea was to distribute money in the open via performance alone. Though laudable in theory, this did not take into consideration the realities of the unregulated running marketplace. Then again maybe it did.

When the Boston Marathon, through the John Hancock Clinic program, initiated appearance money to insure that strong fields would return to Boston each spring - a necessity when confronted with the competition for athletes from the London and Rotterdam Marathons - ARRA threw Boston out of its circuit. Notwithstanding that

marathons should be a separate entity from shorter road races as requirements of training and scheduling are significantly different, here was the oldest, most prestigious event in the sport being asked to leave a fledgling circuit in search of credibility!

In a perfect world where there were no schedule conflicts among races one could understand this no appearance money policy. Or if prize purses continued to grow, thereby making appearance money less of a factor, it would have made sense as well. But prize purses, rather than growing, became fossilized at early 1980's levels. As a consequence this no-appearance fee agreement among the race directors turned, as a practical matter, into price fixing. And with no union of athletes or federation leadership to fight this policy, purses stagnated.

The athletes, or their agents, must accept blame (so too the running media or any other institution within the sport you can name). When the top runners allowed ARRA to be taken over by race directors, and then accepted the trust fund as the final solution to monetary dispersal rather than as an intermediate step toward open professionalism - and in doing so forged in the public's mind a neither-fish-nor-fowl, 'are you amateur or professional?' confusion - the chance to create a sport of national scope, understood by the masses effectively ended. Then ARRA decided its *raison d'etre* was to outlaw appearance money, and there went what little control there was of race fields.

Following the retirement of the original, American-based athletes who forced running into an open era has come an endless, uncontrolled stream of foreign athletes. Who can blame them? They disembarked to race on the United States road circuit whenever they wanted, without any obligation to the circuit as a whole regarding participation, to win what turned into stagnant prize purses local promoters were all too happy to maintain rather than build.

Though *Running Stats* lists improving purses at the Boston Marathon (\$455,000 from \$440,000), the Redondo Beach Super Bowl 10K (\$1500 from \$1000), and Boulder Bolder 10K,¹⁰ these increases, though welcomed, still reside within parochially extracted purse limits that have been in place for years.

From the director's vantage point there was no need to increase purses. Local participation and sponsorship were their litmus tests for success, not size of prize purses or amount of national exposure, notwithstanding that in this culture how much one makes for an endeavor is the very validation of that activity to the general public via the media.

ALL IN ALL YOU'RE JUST ANOTHER BRICK IN THE WALL

Today, 13 years after the establishment of open prize money racing, the average major 10K first prize in road racing still languishes around \$5000, even as some events take in hundreds of thousands of dollars in entry fees. This low level prizing, as Fred Lebow understood years ago, does not engage the public interest.

Road running has become institutionalized at a regional event level, wherein it continues to fare well in many places. But it has never risen to be part and parcel of the general American sporting scene. And this, in its extension, threatens the individual event health as well. Cascade is but another brick in the wall of road racing. Allow enough bricks to crumble and the wall itself collapses.

For their part, the professional runners never punished or forced directors into addressing the topic of stagnating purses. Nor once the original American-based athletes retired could they be expected to.

Today many, if not most, of the elite athletes who come to race are from poor countries where the purchasing power of the existing purses is far beyond their earning options at home. They just keep coming and being welcomed from around the globe at their whim. And as long as they run fast the disgruntled voices of American

runners are effectively silenced.

"You're just not working hard enough," is the constant refrain to their complaints of an unbalanced playing field.

This buyer's market for Third World athletes is similar to "a global economy allowing multinational companies to escape developed countries' hard-won labor standards. First World components (read races) are assembled by Third World workers (read racers) who often have no choice but to work under any conditions offered them."¹¹

This is not meant to suggest protectionism. But this lack of a managed, national policy to breed champions and championships within an intelligible design has led to a numbers-only definition of event success.

When was the last time you heard people discussing a race, the competition, itself? Who knows, or cares, who wins these events anymore? In the past "Who won?" was the question on everyone's lips as they ran. And when they heard Bill had won another, or Joan, or Grete, it picked up their stride all the way home. Nowadays if anyone does ask "Who won?" the answer generally comes back, if at all, as "I don't know, one of the Kenyans?" Race champions aren't even individuals anymore, much less heroes.

The problem went from chronic to acute in 1988 with the splurge of emphasis on Bill Rodgers and Frank Shorter turning 40. Rather than concentrate on developing new names in the open division, the sport took the expedient path of recycling last generation's champions. All it accomplished was to extend the vacuum in the open division as interest in the masters petered out with Frank and Bill's anticipated aging.

THE PROFESSION OF BEING AMATEUR

Road running in the United States, though filled with all the necessary elements, is not conducted like a single business, like an industry. Yet the history of the modern Olympic Games themselves underscores the importance of just such a business approach even within an "amateur" context.

For most of its history the Games were staged by and for essentially a parochial audience, which served its cause rather well before the advent of television expanded the exposure and prestige of the Games. But as they grew, the Games also began to get out of hand. Beginning with the student unrest and Black Power demonstrations in Mexico City in 1968, followed by the Munich Massacre in '72, the massive financial losses and African boycott in Montreal '76, and the Super Power-led political boycotts of 1980 & '84, the Olympics were beginning to suffocate under their own weight. They were a financial and political cross that cities were voting *not* to bear. Remember, Los Angeles initially voted not to hold the games in 1984.

Not until Peter Ueberroth came along and showed that by running the Games as a commercial venture, as a business (and not draining his budget with huge capital expenditures), did the Olympics turn around, turn a profit, and become the powerhouse they are today.

Running and its races are treated much the way the early Olympic Games were, as some dewy-eyed love affair within a constricted parochial setting. Love is honorable and fine, but rarely is flinty-eyed and practical.

All one need do is look to the athletic endeavor itself. Athletes must perform in order to be compensated. Yet events have no such performance standards to meet. Self-sustaining is the goal, or raising money for charities within the community. But as the maxim says, charity begins at home. And in this case home refers to one's industry, not one's community.

Road running cannot, in its present state, afford to give away that which it needs to grow itself out of the present doldrums which threaten its very existence. Look at other sports that contribute to charity. See how much they gave before coalescing around the idea of industry-wide cooperation. Now look at how much greater the contributions have been since they began working in concert. Grow the events by working in coordination with

one another at the national level, and the local charities will benefit as well. Support us, because us is you!

Most race directors are successful professional people, intelligent, committed, ideal for event management given the time spent. The fact that major event participation numbers continue to grow in the face of runnings shrinking base is ample evidence of event manager's skills. But what isn't in evidence is a national sales force selling to the next level on behalf of a unified field of collected events. Road running has yet to market a true national product. Instead every event tries to lure the same base of clients to their particular race, rather than binding together into a powerful market force. Sponsors at the national level will not conduct business with hundreds of individual events.

THE LAST HURRAH

Road racing as a profession began in America, as did indoor track. In fact the Europeans used to scoff at indoor track as "America's circus". But in 1989 when the IAAF instituted the inaugural World Indoor Championships, European cities began constructing indoor ovals throughout the continent.

In recent years more and more of the major competitions in both indoor track and road racing have moved to Europe where the new economic blood is flowing. In response to indoor track's dilemma USA TF has announced the formation of an indoor track circuit of six meets in 1995 to help bring that which was once American back to America. The question is, what needs to be done for road racing?

Not too many years ago one of running's most sacred institutions, the Boston Marathon, was suffering as well. How it was resurrected points to one external method of approaching running's present condition.

For years the patricians of the Boston Athletic Association held out against prize and appearance money in the face of a furious local running community which couldn't get them to budge even as the numbers and quality of Boston's fields continued to slide to saddening levels.

Who could forget Englishman Geoff Smith literally walking across the finish line in Boston in 1985. His 2:14:05 led only one other man under 2:20.

Not until Boston Mayor Ray Flynn came on the scene as an avid runner himself, and was shown the nosedive in local business on marathon weekend due to the BAA's intransigence did the event get turned around.

"POWER NEVER TAKES A BACK STEP - ONLY IN THE FACE OF MORE POWER." Malcolm X

Through the spring and summer of 1985 Mayor Flynn had commissioned a report to gauge the prize purse level necessary to return Boston to the top of the marathon world. With that report in hand he called a meeting on Beacon Hill for the president of the BAA as well as representatives of all seven cities and towns through which the marathon ran.

At that meeting the BAA leaders remained intransigent, refusing to even speculate as to how much prize money they might be willing to offer in '86. They would move, they said, but only at their own pace. They wouldn't be pushed. It was a delaying tactic that had worked for years against the running community.

The BAA, however, had also released a statement to the press before the meeting impugning "Johnny-come-latelys" who had entered the marathon mix for political gain.

As the meeting extended and the BAA remained intractable, the mayor finally read a copy of the BAA press release. It became the BAA's own press release on which the future of the Boston Marathon turned.

Shortly after the meeting adjourned - without resolution - Mayor Flynn herded Frank Swift, the BAA

president, aside for a private chat.

"You want to go head-to-head with me on this, that's fine," said an icy Flynn, his hand scaling Swift's lapel. "I get paid to go head-to-head with the city council everyday. But if you don't think we're partners in this, or if you ever try to embarrass me again, you can take your marathon and run it eight (expletive deleted) laps around Wellesley Square. Because you won't get anywhere near Boston."

By the time the two leaders emerged onto Beacon Street across from the Boston Common the future course of The Marathon had been realized. Ashen-faced, the BAA president stood beside Mayor Flynn backing all his announcements to the press in quiet acquiescence.

Though kicking and screaming the whole way, the BAA had finally been dragged into the light. Only then did John Hancock Financial Services come fully into the picture as the saving sponsor. And even then Hancock had to institute their own "clinic program" because the BAA would still not recruit the world's athletes with appearance fees.

FROM ROZELLE TO RONO

While the world recovered from the devastation of World War Two, and the nations of Africa, except for Ethiopia and Liberia, were breaking the colonial bonds that had tied them to European powers since the Conference of Berlin in 1885, the First and Second World athletes dominated world competitions. Throughout this time African nations weren't involved in organized sport whatsoever - again with the notable exception of Ethiopia in the person of Abebe Bikila, 1960 and '64 Olympic marathon champion.

The First and Second Worlds competed within a closed loop, much like American football does to this day. And organic heroes developed naturally from within this system. Besides, sport in general wasn't treated as a business by any sport.

However, since the end of colonial rule in Africa in the 1960's, even as the athletes from the newly independent nations began to emerge onto the world stage, back in America a young advertising man, Pete Rozelle, was hired in that same year of 1960 to be commissioner of the National Football League. The following year Rozelle designed federal legislation that permitted the sale of television broadcast rights to a single network for the entire league's schedule rather than to numerous local broadcast outlets as individual games.

In the ensuing years these two forces, the emergence of Third World athletes into running, and the application of business and marketing practices in American sports, conspired to separate running from the mainstream of American sporting life.

In 1988 at the Seoul Olympics, the emerging nations' athletes, especially those from Kenya, came fully into their own even as the Ben Johnson steroid case detonated public opinion in the face of track and field (and by extension all of running).

While the athletes continued to improve the standards of excellence set by previous generations, the natural star-building system of the pre-1968 Mexico City Olympics faltered. And with no institutional support available from the homelands of these new champions to salute and promote their accomplishments, the need to forward this cause should have reverted, as a matter of course, to the sport's umbrella organization, the IAAF.

But rather than stepping forward to buoy the international promotion of excellence while the acceptance curve caught up worldwide, nothing was done. As a consequence these opposing shifts in athletic and marketing trends have resulted in a devastating void in the public recognition of running (except for drug use).

Back home where the institutional elements have always been in place, though utilized solely at the local level, road racing has gradually slipped into a recreational status with the advent of unpromoted (though not unpromotable) foreign champions.

For this road racing must accept full responsibility; for not pushing its own agenda, for allowing a laissez-faire open door policy, for not putting into use those systems and models that are available with or without federation assistance.

MASSING AT THE MEDIA

By the time basketball and football players get to the pro ranks many have already been developed into national personalities. We've been watching them for years on cable. But how many of the general public know Lynn Jennings, three times a world champ in cross country? Or Mark Plaatjes, winner of the World Championships marathon in 1993 in an only-in-America story?

Tennis, golf, football, hockey, baseball, basketball, you name it, in every successful sport accessibility to the media is the key. If an event is taped, not even broadcast, just taped, highlights can be up-linked to stations everywhere for no more than a few hundred dollars on that same day. If something compelling happens it can make ESPN's *Sportscenter* or CNN's *Sports Tonight* or hundreds of other sportscasts around the country looking for video for that evening's broadcast.

"On September 8, 1993 Wang (Junxia)'s 10,000 meter world record came off the three o'clock CBS News feed after Clinton and all the political stuff that day," says one independent television producer who also works at a large, metropolitan network affiliate. "Mixed in with all those other stories was forty-five seconds of Wang crossing the finish line and then some slow motion of it. Anyone could put together a thirty-second piece using that footage. It came down the ABC and NBC feeds as well off Sat News Service (SNS). I know four stations in Los Angeles and three in Boston who used it."

How many of the hundreds of road races on the calendar are made available to the satellite feeds? Answer, zero. Why? Partly because each event is locally defined without a budget for national promotion. And no national board exists to fill that vacuum and forward the interest of the sport as a whole through this proven, inexpensive, and available mechanism.

While no individual event can afford national promotion, a coalition among events can lead the industry toward generating the funds to seed road runnings media access. Only with that access in hand can we then approach our clients with product in hand.

(END PART 2. CONTINUED IN PART 3.)

ROCKY ROADS: PT. 3 OF 3**"THE POWER OF VESTED INTERESTS IS VASTLY EXAGGERATED COMPARED WITH THE GRADUAL ENCROACHMENT OF IDEAS."¹²**

Given that new direction is called for in road racing, where should the sport look for its paradigm in setting a new course? Certainly events can begin feeding the media beast, but without a structure on which to pin those pictures, a context, the public will remain as attentive as Congress debating campaign reform legislation.

The Professional Golfer's Association (PGA) was formed in 1916 to distinguish itself from the United States Golf Association (USGA) which governed the amateur wing of the sport. Then in 1968 the Association of Professional Golfers, an autonomous tournament players' association formed a breakaway from the PGA when their best interests were perceived as being neglected. As a compromise the Tournament Player's Division of the PGA was formed under the heading of a 10-man policy board.

Today the PGA, its Tournament Player's Division, and the USGA work separately from one another where appropriate, distinguishing between jurisdictions and goals. But they work hand in hand with one another at events that overlap sanctioning like the U.S. Open, The Masters, and Ryder Cup.

Though there are also differences, both road running and golf have amateur and professional elements, both have an international cast of athletes competing in individual events on multiple continents throughout a fixed calendar year. However, as opposed to running where everything is presented under the imprimatur of a single, amateur body, in golf there exist separate authorities for each element of the sport, professional and amateur. And the professionals are further segmented into club and touring categories.

Therefore, while the event directors manage the on-site nuts and bolts, i.e. parking, ticket sales, the local sponsors, and charities, the policy of the sport, the architecture, is designed, constructed, and coordinated by professionals at a national level looking out at the entirety of their sport's assets within the limitations of the calendar.

In golf that body is the PGA TOUR, a non-profit corporation which "shall govern the operation and administration of cosponsored and coordinated PGA TOUR golf tournaments."¹³

The PGA TOUR office sends its tour director and team to all tour events to insure continuity. It also sets eligibility and qualifying standards for the athletes. In order to play in any one tournament, a qualified golfer must commit to 15 tournaments for the year, thereby insuring that the public relations department will have something to work with. This also insures a stable field of competitors that public will grow to root either for or against as the tour progresses throughout the year.

The TOUR also controls distribution of purses, assigns and protects calendar dates for events, as well as guarantees a focused approach for its sponsors and the media by separating tours among men, women, seniors, and up-and-comers (the Nike Tour).

Therefore while there may be hundreds, even thousands, of golfers with the *ability* to compete in a PGA TOUR event, there are only 156 players on any given weekend who have the *eligibility* to play. And while there may be seven golf events produced on a given weekend, only one has the designation of being a PGA TOUR event.

A sport must control access in order to control its destiny and marketing. Yet when waves of Kenyan runners won every race in sight on the American roads in 1992, some competing in as few as one or two events, and winning in mind-boggling runaways devoid of any competition, a survey of race directors indicated this was not a problem in their estimation. Why? Because each was glad to have the Kenyans at his/her event. And you couldn't blame them.

However, from a national perspective nameless, faceless, interchangeable champions, fast though they might be, created in the public a growing disinterest in the elite, professional element of the sport, to the point where ABC-TV has pulled out of the New York City Marathon, WFLA-TV in Tampa has ended years of coverage of the Gasparilla Distance Classic, KGO-TV in San Francisco dumped out of that city's marathon, KCOP-TV in Los Angeles has scaled back coverage in 1994, and on and on it goes.

"The best example is NASCAR," says a broadcaster working inside motorsports. "They have one man sitting on top making decisions. As soon as Ford starts pulling away from the competition, NASCAR slaps restriction plates on their engines. The Ford people screamed, 'That's not fair,' but the NASCAR commissioner replied, 'Yes it is. We are putting on a show!'"

The undeniable fact is there is no such body in running on par with the PGA TOUR or NASCAR, a body which looks at the best interest of the professional element of the sport across the board. We still live in the era of city-states where all decisions are made within the individual city walls, even as an absentee king (Ollan Cassell) ignores the plight of 50% of his constituency.

As John Maynard Keynes said about economies: "They are just as likely, if not more likely, to stabilize at a high level of unemployment as they are at a low level."

Laissez-faire, self-regulating economies do not always self-regulate in the best interest of the system. Some form of government regulation is warranted and desirable.

When the Cascade Run Off announced its demise at the end of 1993 sighting "a glut of events in Portland competing for sponsorship dollars in a sluggish economy" - can you imagine any other sport allowing the founding event of its only "circuit" to die without calling an emergency meeting to resuscitate it, because its end presages our own? And when one of the few professional promoters in the sport, Tim Murphy of Elite Racing in San Diego, offered to pick it up, Cascade officials said it would be too difficult personally for the event to go on without them. It's an understandable sentiment. But doesn't Cascade represent something important and worth saving for the sport as a whole?

"IT IS FOR MEN TO CHOOSE WHETHER THEY WILL GOVERN THEMSELVES OR BE GOVERNED."¹⁴

It is worth remembering that TAC (now USATF) was created by an act of Congress to oversee an amateur sport, a significant portion of which has now turned professional, due, in large part, to the birth of ARRA. Professional road racing has emerged after twenty years sufficiently mature and distinct from track and field and participatory road running to require a separate governing body as well, one that can build interest through

engaging those aspects of the sport which have always been there, but which, to date, have gone untapped and unstructured.

But let us be practical as well. Not everyone is a revolutionary, nor may revolution be necessary or desirable. As Keynes suggested to FDR in the middle of the Depression "...to mend the evils of our condition by reasoned experiment within the framework of the existing social system.", the best case scenario for road running is to work from within the USATF because under the present statutes USATF holds the franchise.

Besides the bitterness a breakaway fight would engender, there remain so many elements of cross over, i.e. world cross country, world championships, Olympics and their Trials, access for qualified foreign athletes, etc. that an acrimonious break would be to no one's advantage. This legislative action should be based only on the logic and merits of road running's needs to administer its own fate.

With our federation as an involved advocate instead of a threatened adversary, we can make the leap to the Olympic level where our parity and future lies. Even USATF executive director Ollan Cassell is on record as being amenable to such a turn in the roads, if the roads take the lead.

"I think the race directors, those directly involved, should make up a strategy, and then engage us to determine its viability," says Cassell. "But road running people have always been very independent. Each feels he knows what is best, and they haven't depended on anyone, or the governing body. We can't mandate anything, because the law (Amateur Sports Act of 1978) says we have to sanction events. If we want a circuit where everyone lives together and grows, we can do that. But the only way is for the race directors to sit down and create a system."

BUILD IT, AND THEY WILL COME

The road racing community itself needs to step forward with an aggressive plan to unite along the lines of a structured tour, with all the by-laws, accompanying regulations, promotions, calendar protections, charity affiliations, qualifying and eligibility standards required of any athletic tour. This is not to say, however, that if the attempt to work with USATF proves elusive, road running must shy away from adopting governmental action that detaches the professional element of the sport from the confines of the legislatively impotent USATF.

If road running became attached to USATF by an act of Congress, then it is by another act of Congress that it should separate itself. U.S. laws have proven at least preliminarily effective in dealing with sports federations by way of the Butch Reynolds' and Tonya Harding cases. Much of the business these federations conduct is with American companies.

"(Road) Running is a capital intensive business, and it is going that way more and more," says Los Angeles Marathon head Bill Burke. "The economics demand it. Reorganization, downsizing, reallocation of resources, these are catchwords in every industry. No longer is this fun stuff. Financial liabilities and demands make you look at it (as a business)."

SLAMS AND JAMS

There was once a mystique attached to running, especially the marathon. What attracted television at first was the idea of running 26 miles. TV saw it as a phenomenal achievement. But as the years passed, hundreds of thousands of people proved that just about anyone could do it. Yet somehow the idea of a man running that 26 miles in under five minutes per mile pace - or less than five-thirty pace for a woman - was never put in the same appreciative light vis-a-vis the regular jogger as was the difference between a regular bunch of guys in a pick-up game of basketball and men seven feet tall playing with the grace and agility of a Baryshnikov.

No one would televise a bunch of middle-aged men in a pick-up basketball game. Or if they did no one would

watch it. Yet the NBA Finals have been marketed into one of the greatest spectacles on earth. And that did not come about because of the intrinsic beauty of basketball, but rather from shrewd leadership and the application of marketing skills.

Remember that in the late 1970's the NBA was suffering from a horrendous public image, that of a bunch of drug users. There was no national television contract and attendance was slipping throughout the league. It wasn't until the NBA hired an unknown lawyer named David Stern ten years ago, and vested in him dictatorial powers as commissioner, that the NBA began to turn around.

Stern initiated a tough drug testing policy to combat the negative public image of the league. Then he convinced the franchises to accept revenue sharing for the athletes so the players would feel invested in the financial health of the league, and thereby be willing to accept the stringent regulations set before them. A cap on salaries to protect the owners' investment completed the equation.

DIVIDED WE STALL

What we've witnessed in road running since 1981 is very much the same lack of focus that bedeviled other sports decades ago. As mentioned earlier, *The Road Race Management Guide to Prize Money Races* lists 350 events in its 1994 issue, 244 of which are less than marathon distance road races. Those 244 events dole out nearly two and one half million dollars in prize money. Two and a half million is not an inconsiderable amount. And it is out there right now. And more. But spread, as it is, over 244 events dillutes impact completely. The average comes out to \$9,976 per event. Divide the same total purse by 32 and the average heads up to \$78,000, which is the largest present road purse on the circuit (Falmouth). And this doesn't take into consideration the appearance and travel fees, bonus checks, or merchandise awards that presently exist in running as well.

REAL LIFE, REAL ANSWERS

The key to the furtherance of running's stature lies in real time media attention. This is another cost which present day local events would find impossible to fund. A same-day coverage on cable would cost in the vicinity of \$35,000 (1994 figures - plus the purchase of the air-time). A live broadcast over \$100,000. Thirty events with a prize purse of \$100,000 each, plus TV would run around \$5 million dollars. Add administrative costs and salaries, profit sharing, promotions, and the like and the figure would crest over \$6 million. Yet when placed beside the costs of other sport franchises in single cities, Super Bowl :30 TV spots, bowl games revenues, etc., running would in fact be an inexpensive buy for the numbers and demographics offered.

In analyzing why John Hancock Financial Services bought into the Boston Marathon in 1986, executive David D'Alessandro said because Boston was cheap for what he got. A national sport with the demographics of running, which are superior to all other sports, available for under \$10 million with a structure already in place is a terrific buy.

The number one obstacle is running's lack of cohesion. Stacked on shelves like lumber, windows, and faucets at Home Depot running is just waiting to be taken out into the light and built. When considered in this light, we are not that far away.

What is now required is the same confederation of efforts which has transformed other sports into success stories. Preeminent among the requirements is the acquisition of an autonomous marketer, hired from the outside, who is untainted by the politics of the last twenty years of running, who can plug a proven system into running's powerful existing base of assets.

But whoever is chosen, road running needs events (management) working in concert with its governing body and one another who can then share with athletes (labor) in order to sell to the public and the sponsors (the clients) by providing to the media (the messenger). Yes, share. In January 1994 Major League Baseball owners met in Fort Lauderdale, Florida to discuss revenue-sharing among themselves before beginning collective bargaining talks with the player's union.

Previously, baseball owners shared only gate proceeds and national TV money. However this year they have expanded that base to include local television revenues as well, which are far greater in the large markets than in the small. The level of sharing exhibited by Major League Baseball, the have subsidizing the have-nots, arises out of a need to insure stability among the teams in the current economic climate. This strategy of sharing is instrumental as well in producing parity of competition, the sine qua non of a successful presentation to the fans and media.

"For an industry that has been portrayed as rudder-less, aimless, it did something it had never done and never even contemplated," said Bud Selig, president of the Milwaukee Brewers and the chairman of baseball's executive council. "We're now confronting issues that were left to lie around for many years. Does that reflect an industry that's wobbling, or does that reflect an industry that's confronting things that in many cases should have been confronted years ago?"¹⁵

Those same words sound eerily like those which must now be said within the road running community as well. In our case, what sharing is required many times can be reduced to sharing the access to the markets of runners. Only then can we hope to transfer what we all know to be the best of road running to the larger, general public, and a newfound base of sponsors. And in doing so we elevate the grass roots growth of the sport at the same time. (Let's at least do enough to re-attract the shoes companies.)

YOU WANT FRIES WITH THAT?

"**You** know," said a friend in answering some of the central points brought up in this paper, "the sport is all about being free for that half an hour or forty minutes a day. Doing your thing out running. What you do every day."

And I had to stop him right there, because his understanding was, in fact, at the very heart of running's present state of affairs.

"No," I told him. "What I do every day has nothing to do with the *sport* of running. It has to do with the *activity* of running. There is a clear distinction between the two. But it's a distinction we have yet come to terms with."

As it presently stands we rest like a bunch of fast food restaurants spread all over the place doing our separate purchasing, advertising, promotion and sales. And what we are making and selling is mostly french fries. In point of fact, the activity of running at the event level is still in relatively fine health. Numbers are up in many places (though deceptive as pointed out earlier). Fred Lebow points to an increase in membership in the New York Road Runners Club, the Honolulu Marathon continues to draw record fields, just this January the inaugural Disney World Marathon sold out entrees at 8200, and the Peachtree Road Race has announced plans to open its field to a full 50,000. This activity wing of the sport is in fact the market for the sporting wing. Consolidate the market through a membership drive – every 50 year-old in the nation receives a membership card from AARP, the powerful retired persons' lobby. Why doesn't every person in the U.S. who runs a road race also be sent a card rather than USATF forcing certain participants to buy its card for which nothing is received in return? Once this vast membership is gathered, we can sell that membership goods and services directly even as you market access to this membership to your list of corporate clients. Bronze, silver, and gold level memberships could also be offered guaranteeing race entry, discounted hotel, and travel, etc.

Numbers alone, however, are like fries within the racing world itself. They represent a side order, not the main course. We already have runners, but we are aging. To attract the next generation we must extend our sites into the public arena that is drawn to the human face of sport, not to the faceless numbers of it.

Our present dilemma lies solely, and must be addressed from within the realm of the sport of running, not the activity of running. Where's the beef!? It's time we started making up a few Big Macs and Whoppers again, because road racing as a sport is failing. ABC's pullout from New York and the demise of the Cascade Run Off are just the omens.

END

ENDNOTES

-
1. Rudy Martzke, CBS takes final ride on Maddencruiser, (USA TODAY, 24 Jan. 1994), pg. 3C
 2. Runner's World Exclusive: Fred Lebow discusses the New York Marathon, money, sponsors, run-to-work. Sept. 1979, pg. 27
 3. Ian Thomsen, Slicing the IAAF Cake: Nebiolo gets the Big Piece, (International Herald Tribune, June 1993)
 4. Joseph Conrad, *The Mirror of the Sea* (1906, pg. 29
 5. Runner's World Running Market Analysis, *A National Perspective for a Marketplace On the Run*, Charts 1-6.
 6. Ibid, chart 7
 7. Ibid, charts 10-14.
 8. Lewis H. Lapham, *Adieu, Big Bird, on the terminal irrelevance of public television*, (Harper's, Dec. 1993), pg. 35
 9. Robert D. Kaplan, The Coming Anarchy, (Atlantic Monthly, Feb. 1994)
 10. *Running Stats, Feathers From Mercury's Wings*, Issue No. 400 - 1 Feb. 1994, pgs. 3-4
 11. Terry Collingsworth, F. William Goold, Pharis F. Harvey, Time for a Global New Deal, (Foreign Affairs, January/February 1994, pg. 9
 12. John Maynard Keynes, *General Theory of Employment, Interest, and Money*
 13. PGA TOUR, Tournament Regulations and Player Handbook, 1992, pg.1
 14. Henry Ward Beecher, *Proverbs from Plymouth Pulpit* (1887).
 15. Ronald Blum, Owners vote 28-0 to share the wealth, (Associated Press, 19 Jan. 1994)