

The Question Of Clayton's Course

Outside of 4 World Records set in the helpful thin air of Mexico City during the 1968 Olympics, the longest-surviving global best is the 2:08:34 marathon run by Australian Derek Clayton on May 30, 1969, in Antwerp, Belgium.

Even with the tremendous explosion in distance running around the world, and the presence of such towering talents as Shorter, Rodgers, Thompson, Cierpinski and Moseyev, no one but Clayton has ever broken 2:09. Gerard Nijboer came closest this year with his 2:09:01.

Observers have questioned the accuracy of the course over which Clayton recorded his time ever since the effort was first reported. In a copyrighted article in the fall edition of *Footnotes*, the official publication of the Road Runners Club of America, Michael Chacour has taken a deep look at the situation.

"When the news of the Antwerp Marathon (which was originally planned as a bicycle race) reached the rest of Europe, road racing authorities and experts started asking questions. Many of them conducted investigations to find out if the distance was indeed the full 42,195m. The end result was non-acceptance of the 'record' claim."

John Jewell, general secretary of the Road Runners Club of England, is quoted by Chacour: "I spent 2 years endeavoring to find out about this race, but drew a complete blank in Belgium; only a very cursory newspaper report with little factual information. . . As far as I am concerned, I cannot accept this performance on the basis of what information is available."

Manfred Steffny, head of West Germany's Spiridon club and publisher of the magazine of that name, told Chacour, "Belgian courses are always the shortest in Europe. I don't believe any times in such races. I am sure the Antwerp course was measured by a car."

Noel Tamini, publisher of the Swiss *Spiridon*, also conducted investigations with associates of the Belgian Spiridon club. A key revelation came in a letter from V. Goyers, head of the Belgium track federation, who admitted that marathon courses in Belgium were measured via car—4 of them—and that the average was considered to be the "exact distance."

Chacour commented, "Any arguments about the accuracy of the course ought to end there, since car odometers are totally unacceptable for measuring courses."

Goyers also candidly pointed out that what was important to him in a marathon was the finishing positions of the runners, not the distance.

Chacour himself tried to get some substantive information from the Belgian federation recently. The essentials of the reply were: 1. More than 11 years have passed since Clayton's mark was run; 2. Federation offices have moved twice since 1969 and no documents on that marathon are to be found. (Chacour notes, "What many running observers consider the World Record is not even on file in the country where the mark was allegedly set!"); 3. A club organized the Antwerp race, not the Federation.

Chacour was able to contact Luc Gycecily, a professional sports photographer in Belgium who measured the course the same day as the race. He commented, "Without 2 laps of the track (1 at the start and 1 at the finish), the odometer did not go over 40km at the end of the course. Adding the 2 laps on the track, we estimate the runners ran just 40,500m, even 40,700m. I estimate the course was short, certainly by 1 kilometer."



R. W. Frost

Derek Clayton—1968.

Chacour dutifully points out that Gycecily measured the course by car, again an unacceptable method of achieving an accurate measurement. Chacour concludes, "It appears that the only question remaining is, not that the course was short, but by how much."

Footnotes contacted Clayton, now an executive with *Runner's World* magazine in Mountain View, California. "I'm as certain as I can be that my record is accurate," he said. "I never thought the record would last this long; otherwise, I might have measured the course myself."

Clayton claims he warned Belgian federation officials and the sponsoring *Antwerp Gazette* of his intention to try for a record in the '69 race. Those officials told Clayton the course had been measured with a calibrated wheel attached to a car, both before and after the race. Both times, the distance measured 6m short, he was told.

Clayton also pointed out that his split times were not unrealistic and that the 2nd and 3rd placers (Japan's Akio Usami 2:11:28, Britain's Jim Alder 2:16:35) recorded times which weren't PRs.

The Australian scoffed at the idea that he lacked sufficient speed to run 2:08:34. "My 10,000 best was not fast at 28:45.2, but I ran the event only 4 times and always under less-than-ideal conditions. I could have broken 28:00 with no trouble," he said.

Finally, Clayton claimed that the volume and intensity of his training far exceeded that of other marathoners of his day. If he was training then as hard as Bill Rodgers does now, why shouldn't he run as fast, or faster? He also says it took him months to recover fully from his record effort.

"I ran the record for myself only, not for fame, money or endorsements," Clayton concluded. "Most courses weren't certified back then, but I'm fully satisfied the course was correct. I certainly believe in certified courses. I only wish it could be proven that my record is accurate."

A Transcontinental Marathon

Plans have been announced for a proposed million-dollar Los Angeles-to-New York marathon to be run in 1982. The race will cover 3500M and the winner will pick up a cool \$250,000.

The sponsors, Transcontinental Marathon, Ltd., explained that the 2nd-placer would earn \$100,000, the 3rd-placer \$75,000 and each finisher would receive at least \$3500.

In addition, lap prizes are to be awarded, ranging from \$5000 to \$35,000, for best times between principal cities on the route. Besides the starting point of Los Angeles and finishing site of New York, these cities include Phoenix, Dallas, Fort Worth, Kansas City, St. Louis, Chicago, Cleveland, Pittsburgh and Philadelphia.

If a runner leads from start to finish, he could earn \$250,000 to go with the winner's purse and total a net winning of \$500,000.

Runners in the race, to be run from April to July, will cover a specified distance each day—an average of 45M daily. Their times will be recorded and the runner with the lowest cumulative time will be the winner. □

1980 WORLD LIST

These are the world's leading 1980 marathon marks, as reported to *T&F* by November 5. * = U.S. performer; † = mark made on point-to-point course. Note that for the first time since 1974 (when he ran 2:19:34 and was only No. 15 in the U.S.) Bill Rodgers isn't near the top of the world list. At 2:12:11, he is currently No. 26, one position off our listing here.

MEN

2:09:01 Gerard Nijboer (Hol)
2:09:41* Alberto Salazar (GBTC)
2:10:14† Rodolfo Gomez (Mex)
2:10:19* Tony Sandoval (AW)
2:10:20* Garry Bjorklund (UCTC)
2:10:41* Benji Durden (Ati TC)
2:10:47 Dick Quax (NZ-AW)
2:10:52 Chun Son Goe (NK)
2:10:55† Kyle Heffner (adidas)
2:10:58 Vladimir Kotov (SU)
2:10:59* Bob Hodge (GBTC)
2:11:03 Waldemar Cierpinski (EG)
2:11:09* Dave Smith (YFC)
2:11:16 Sat, Dzhumanazarov (SU)
2:11:22 Dave Cannon (GB)

2:11:37 Garry Henry (Aus)
2:11:40 Oyvind Dahl (Nor)
2:11:42 Gerard Barrett (Aus)
2:11:47† John Graham (GB)
2:11:50 Anatoliy Aryukov (SU)
2:11:53 Anatoliy Akkusin (SU)
2:11:56 Joachim Truppel (EG)
2:12:00* Jeff Wells (AW)
2:12:03* Jon Anderson (AW)
2:12:09 Jouni Kortelainen (Fin)
Wind aided:
2:11:01* Ron Tabb (unat)
2:11:23* Rick Callison (SCL)

WOMEN

2:25:42† Grete Waitz (Nor)
2:29:34* Patti Lyons (AW)

2:30:57 Lyons
2:31:23* Joan Benoit (LAC)
2:31:42 Lorraine Moller (NZ)
2:31:43 Jacqueline Gareau (Can)
2:32:29 Marja Wokke (Hol)
2:33:32 Joyce Smith (GB)
2:34:25† Ingrid Christensen (Nor)
2:34:29 Allison Roe (NZ)
2:35:06† Carol Gould (GB)
2:35:57 Vreni Forster (Swi)
2:36:02† Nancy Conz (US)
2:36:47 Christa Vahlensieck (WG)
2:37:39 Linda Staudt (Can)
2:37:56† Gillian Adams (GB)
2:38:04 Charlotte Teske (WG)
2:38:10* Laurie Binder (KCBQ)
2:40:35* Kiki Sweigart (WSSAC)
2:40:36† Dorthe Rasmussen (Den)
2:41:01* Marty Cooksey (US)
† Oddrun Mosling (Nor)
2:41:33† Gayle Olinek (Can-FTC)
2:41:44† Beth Guerin (RAA)
2:41:50* Kathleen Samet (US)
2:41:52† Karen Fitz (KCTC)
Wind aided:
2:35:13† Olinek
2:41:08† Jane Welzel (LAC)