

# Marathon race is a painful endurance test

By ROSS FREAKER

The marathon... images of knotted thigh muscles, memories of euphoria and pain... 26 miles of blistering agony, with 385 yards thrown in for good measure.

Tim Nukuslainen, 2nd Year, Physical Education, galloped to a six place finish in the Canadian National Championship Marathon in Kitchener on October 9.

"There is so much more to a marathon than just racing," Ukusulainen said. "There is a mutual respect, a common bond between the runners that you don't see in the 100 yard dash, and other short distance events."

There is a mystique that pervades marathons... the loneliness, the aloneness... a man, the elements... the strength, the endurance.

The first marathon was staged at the revival of the Olympic games at Athens in 1896, and the winner, appropriately enough, was Greek.

The race commemorates the legendary feat of a Greek soldier, who in 490 B.C., is supposed to have

run from Marathon to Athens, a distance of 22 miles, 1,400 yards to bring news of his countrymen's victory over the Persians.

The distance of the marathon varied from Olympiad to Olympiad until it was standardized at the present distance in 1924. The 385 yards was initially added in 1908 when the British Olympic Committee decided to start the race from the royal residence at Windsor Castle and finish in front of the royal box in the stadium in London.

October 9 in Kitchener was biting cold when approximately 150 runners left Seagram stadium. The runners settle into position... the body clicks into gear... they are oblivious to the countryside, listening to the breathing... the chit-chat... the responses... the rain of feet on the wet pavement... the rush of the knifing wind... eyes watering... lips anesthetized by the cold... sleet freezing the thighs, stiffening the muscles.

Miles go by, one stride at a time, joints mercilessly grinding

together, and after 20 miles they "hit the wall" — the system starts to slow down... the runner becomes aware of his body... his concentration wavers... legs tight... body drained of energy... the weariness... and a small, still voice that says "stop".

But the small, still voice is ignored... on he goes, reaching down, deep down inside he pulls up the courage, and the will, to run even harder, attaching the course with a revitalized desire to finish and better his best time.

Ukusalainen started running, to get in shape, after a five-month sojourn in hospital with tuberculosis. Then he joined the school track team, participated in meets, running more to get better in order to run more.

Two years ago, in Vancouver, he ran in his first marathon, and since then he has run in seven others: and he's hooked.

"There is unlimited potential in the marathon, unlike the 100-yard dash where one might work five

years to improve two seconds. In the marathon one can see oneself improving constantly.

"Also, a marathoner doesn't hit his peak until he reaches his late 20's or early 30's. Art Taylor, did his best time when he was 49 years old".

Ukusalainen's first marathon took 2:47:00; his best time is 2:32:28 and he hopes to improve enough to get it down to 2:25:00 or better, and join the ranks the top ten marathoners in Canada.

But he stresses that consistency is the key, running, running fast, slow or anyway as long as one keeps running. From May until the day before the race he ran every day. Seventy-four miles a week. Consistency.

When he ran in Kitchener he stayed with the leaders for 16 miles, when, from the jarring impact of the downhill, and the cold, his thigh muscles knotted and "it was like running on stilts to the end."

Runners were dropping out from the cold, but even with knotted thigh muscles, when he "hit the

wall" Ukusulainen was still able to reach down and come up with the will and the determination to finish, and to finish well.

One supposedly "hits the wall" around the 20 mile mark, when the body is tired beyond comprehension, all the energy has been burned, and there isn't any fuel left, except the will which says fight on.

A proper diet eases the impact of hitting the 20-mile mark and gives the marathoner the energy to keep going on the first day of the week before the race, Ukusulainen ran a slow — seven minute miles — 20 miles and then breakfasted on protein. He ran less each day and ate little except protein foods until the muscles he would use were depleted of carbo-hydrates. Then he overloaded the famished tissue, eating little except carbohydrate filled food.

This diet works. But it is only a supplement which aids the runner in a feat which pushes the human spirit to the brink, and then pushes it a little further.

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