

Senior C/Country C'Ship
1924 Winning Team

Senior C/Country C'Ship
1926 Winning Team

Second Prize, Marathon
2 Hrs 52 Min, 22 Secs - Native Record

Senior C/Country C'Ship
1926-27 Winning Team

Senior C/Country C'Ship
1927-28 Winning Team



DOWN MEMORY LANE

BY NOEL HENRY

THE TIMMINS TRADITION

Irish Distance Running Pioneer

DUBLIN City Harriers Athletic Club was formed in 1918 and affiliated to the Gaelic Athletic Association. The other athletic body in Ireland at that period was under the auspices of the Irish international championship club. The Dublin City Harriers Club suffered the loss of many of its athletes due to internment and it was not until 1922 when the new athletic body (N.A.C.A.I.) was formed, that the club began to prosper. All Irish athletes were at last together under the one banner. Sadly, this was not to last long!

The first of Dublin city clubmen to show promise was John Timmins who would become one of the club's legendary figures. A real "Dub" John, at the age of 23 led the club to their first Co. Dublin Cross Country Championship victory in 1924 with John winning individual title, showing a clean pair of heels to upwards of 200 runners. That same year he won the inaugural race for the Metropolitan Shield club championship and again in 1925 he repeated this feat. In that year also two of the club, John O'Connor and Willie Brown took silver and bronze medals in the National Marathon, the winner being Des McKeown of Blackrock A.C. in the time of 2 hours 57 minutes 25 seconds.

In 1926 Timmins won his first cross country green singlet for Ireland, and was again to represent his country in Ayr, Scotland (1928), Paris (1929) and Leamington Spa in 1930. During this period John took time out to win a few Leinster track titles over 4 to 6 miles and was virtually unbeatable on the road racing circuit, often running off scratch and giving time to all his opponents in Handicap Races which were all the rage at that time. John once told me that he won a twenty mile Dublin to Skerries and after an hours rest he ran in a mile track race and duly won it also.

CLOSED GATE SAGA

In this article I am pleased to clarify "the closed gate saga" at Croke Park, once and for all. Sundry incorrect versions of this story have been bandied about. When John Timmins was alive he would never permit me to tell the true story.

It was in the early 1930's, John, as usual was off the scratch mark and giving time to all opponents in an eight mile road race which was to end with

one lap of Croke Park. A promising Clonliffe Harriers runner, Billy Morton (who would later become world famous as a race promoter) led the field as the arena was reached. To Billy's consternation the stadium gate was closed. It had been blown shut by the strong wind that faced the athletes that day. After a short delay the harrassed gateman arrived to open the gate and so also had a very fast finishing John Timmins who made no mistake over the last mile where his experience told against the Clonliffe man.

By 1932 Timmins, considered by many to have reached the veteran stage (at 33 years of age) turned his sights to the marathon. In his first effort he won silver in the national marathon and again was second best in what was to be the last ever tailtean games marathon. However, in the summer of 1933 came another proud moment for John when he stood on the rostrum to receive his national marathon gold medal. John's time was a new Irish best time, 2 hours 49 mins 52 secs on a warm humid day. A framed certificate, commemorating this event, is still on display in Timmins's medal/jewellery premises in Camden Street, Dublin. John successfully defended his marathon title in 1934, though the time was much slower, 3 hrs 34 mins 15 secs due to an unbearable scorching sun which made this one of the toughest marathon races ever of that era.

John spent many happy hours in John Timmins's company in the early 1960's. Listening to his tales of the athletic life is gone by: make no doubt about it, the club came first with all the old timers and they seemed to be far away from the attitude we see around us these days. John's marathon training was an extension of his shorter distance training with longer runs only thrown in occasionally. The Sunday coming up to the marathons usually saw the marathon men out for long walks of 20 to 25 miles. This was a method used by other marathon men right into the 1940's. This was their stamina building. The road surfaces were poor and the reason most of the marathon were run from around Navan to Dublin was that the Meath/Dublin Road was possibly the best in the country at that time. All marathoners wore rubber shoes known as "spongies" though there was not much sponge either.

INJURIES

John used to laugh when I spoke of injuries. Doctors at the time did not take too kindly to runners doing 26 miles on hard roads and physiotherapists were unheard of... blisters were the bane of all road runners and shoe makers tallow was always rubbed well into the soles of the feet before races. Some distance runners ran with a small ball of tallow in their shoes, with the melting tallow acting as a lubricant.

In 1935 Timmins won silver in the national marathon and faded gracefully from the Irish athletic scene he had



John Timmins
Dublin City Harriers
Cross Country International
Runner 1926 - 28, 29, 30
Irish Marathon
Champion 1923 - 34

1st Place



1st Place



1st Place



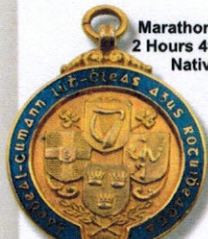
1st Place



1st Place
1923-24



Marathon Winner 1
2 Hours 49 Min 52 S
Native Record



Marathon Winner
1934
3 Hours 13 Min 14 Secs



Co. Dublin
C/Country C/C
1922 Winner



Co. Dublin
C/Country C/Chips
Winners 1920
Dublin City Harriers



Junior C/C C'Ship
Winners 1927
Dublin City
Harriers



5 miles
Cycling
1926



Dublin to Howth
Relay Race 1933
Winning Team



N.A. & C. A. Provincial C/Chips
1927 4 Miles Winner



Senior C/Country C/Chip 1928
Winning Team



Invitational
2 Miles Team Race 1933



3 Miles Inter Club
Steeplechase
1922 Winner

