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A Road Running Hero: Johnny Miles

He smelled the fresh air, pushing for the finish line, breathing deeply, focusing ahead. As He approached the finish line the crowd started to loudly cheer! Johnny Miles crossed the finish line! John Christopher Miles is a famous father of running. He won many awards for his many accomplishments in the running world and is still remembered and celebrated today.

Johnny Miles was born on October 30th, 1905 in England (Bailey 2005). His parents never dreamed that one day he would win the Boston Marathon, let alone hold the title twice. Soon after he was born, his family moved to Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, where his father managed a coal mine. An eleven-year-old Miles worked in the mine when his father went to fight in the First World War (Williston 1926).

He did not begin running until the age of sixteen, in 1922(Canada Hall of Fame 2010). The following year he won two three-mile races in Cape Breton. In September of 1925 he was the Canadian championship in the five-mile race and went on to finish third in the mile event later that same day (Bailey 2005). He also held the title of the Maritime ten mile race. In 1925 he was Nova Scotia's top distance runner (Bailey 2005). In 1926, even though he had never run more than a ten-mile race, he entered the Boston Marathon, at the age of twenty. Although he was up against two of the world's best marathoners, he won the marathon with a

time of 2:25:40 (Canada Hall of Fame 2010). It was initially believed that he broke the record by four minutes but it was discovered that the race was 176 m shorter than it should have been. In the following two years he led in all the road races he entered.

In 1928, Miles moved to Hamilton to qualify in the Olympic trials for the Amsterdam games (Williston 1926). After successfully winning the 10, 000m race, he gained a place on the Canadian Olympic Track Team. The summer of 1928 he competed in the marathon and finished in 16th place (Bailey 2005). In 1929, he competed in the Boston Marathon again, winning it for a second time. He was the only Nova Scotian to ever win the Boston Marathon twice. His career did not stop there however, it continued on and he was constantly recognized for his many victories.

In 1930 Miles won the bronze medal at the British Empire Games Marathon (Canada Hall of Fame 2010). As well in 1932 Johnny Miles, unfortunately, ran in his last competition. It was in a race at the summer Olympics in Los Angeles. It was at this competition that he placed fourteenth. However there was more in the long run for this amazing athlete to explore. Outside of running he got his MBA degree and with that worked in France until he moved back to Hamilton (Sports Reference 2010). Although he loved running, it seemed as though there was even more that was calling to Mr. Miles. He did not run but he did however give back to the running community in many ways. The Johnny Miles Marathon has been hosted in Nova Scotia since 1975 (Sports Reference 2010). Even though he was finished running,

he went on to receive many awards and host many events to recognize his great achievements. In 1979 Miles received the Will Cloney Award, an award that is rewarded to a person for serving the road racing community and the sport of road racing in general. Mr. Johnny Miles became an official member of the order of Canada in 1983 (Bailey 2005). As well, Johnny attended the Boston Marathon for many years after this and was honored in various ways. At the age of eighty five, in 1991, he made his final appearance at the Boston Marathon (Canada Hall of Fame 2010). Through the rest of the ninety's Johnny enjoyed down time and his family. In 2002 He was given an honorary degree by Cape Breton University College (Bailey 2005). This recognition to him was where the fame seemed to temporarily fade for Johnny Miles.

John Christopher Miles was an exceptional inspiration to the running community. His outstanding records and results testify to this. It is very interesting to see how the most unexpected person became such an achieved name in history. Today, he is remembered in our hearts as simply an amazing runner and as a road running hero. We hope that he may rest in peace.

George Gallant: A Long Distance Legend

In addition to Johnny Miles, there is one other long distance legend whose tale deserves to be told. This is the tale of George Gallant. George Gallant, the first Acadian to run the Boston Marathon, had an incredible long distance running career that would span 44 years. Born in Shediac, New Brunswick in 1934, Gallant was the second child out of 18 (St. Pierre 2010). His love of running began early, as he would run through the fields near his house to get to school. He entered his first race in grade 7, in 1946; against ex- army veterans was the 5 mile race in Shediac. He beat the veterans, and went on to win the race. At age twenty he entered the Boston Marathon, the first Acadian to run it, and finished in 20th place, with a time of 2:48 (St. Pierre 2010). He entered the Boston Marathon again a year later, but he was forced to drop out due to unbearable blisters on his feet due to his new shoes. He dropped out at the 20-mile place, at which point he was in 6th place (St. Pierre 2010). He didn't have official training until he went to St. Michael's College in Toronto at age 26, and got an official trainer. Gallant entered the marathon again in 1952 and completed the race, with a time of 3:28:08, in the 25th place (St. Pierre 2010). He ran the Boston marathon again in 1953 and finished in the 29th place with a time of 2:48:50 (St. Pierre 2010). In 1959 he ran the Boston Marathon under the Halifax Track and Field Association and finished with the 37th place. It would be his fifth and final time running the Boston Marathon. In one of his Boston Marathons Gallant placed as the top Canadian in this race (Huras 2010). He had already tasted a great amount of success, but little did he know he would go on to achieve the "cherry on top" and become a road running legend.

Gallant intended on running the Canadian Olympic Marathon in Quebec of the same year, but could not, due to lack of funds. Money was a problem for Gallant, who would often hitch hike to get to his races. Reminiscing about one particular race, Gallant told of the time he “hopped a freight train at four in the afternoon and arrive in Moncton the next morning. Still minus sleep, I took a plane to Dartmouth and won by three seconds after being behind all the way” (St. Pierre 2010). To help with the funds, Gallant was eventually supported by the Shediac Athletic Club, which enabled him to enter more races.

Gallant ran an average of thirty races a year, and won every major event in the Maritimes and Maine during the 1950's and the 1960's (St. Pierre 2010). Although he entered the Boston Marathon five times, Gallant was best in the shorter distance races, ranging from five to ten miles. He ran the Dartmouth Natal Day six-mile race seven times in a row, from 1956-1962(St. Pierre 2010). He also won the New Glasgow five mile race with a record time of 26:16:01, and went on to win it two more times (St. Pierre 2010). Gallant is well known in the Maritimes, as he has the George Gallant Race named in his honor, a ten-kilometer race which takes place every year (First Natal Day Races 2010). He is also in the New Brunswick Hall of Fame and the Moncton Sports Wall of Fame. His fame carried on and could not be confined to just a hall, many more of his successes were recorded and turned into events later on in history.

George Gallant retired from his running career in 1990, due to injury. The result of the many races Gallant entered throughout his career is his two artificial

hips. Although he is retired from running, he carried the Olympic torch in Shediac for the 2010 Winter Olympic Games (Huras 2010). Currently Gallant is 81 years old, and suffers from Alzheimer's, but still gets excited whenever the topic of running is brought up in conversation (St. Pierre 2010). Although he has aged and his memories may be faded; the memories will run on and on in his heart forever.

Note: We were unable to find any information in the Hamilton Spectator or the Toronto Star on either Johnny Miles or George Gallant, but we did find articles in the Boston Post (for Johnny Miles) and the Maritime papers Times and Transcript and Telegraph Journal (for George Gallant).

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