

# Track and Field



*Bill Rodgers*



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## Bill Rodgers

### *The Marathon Man*

It is perhaps the most fascinating event in all of track and field. The marathon is a gruelling grind of 26 miles 385 yards—the official Olympic distance. It tests the stamina, condition and will-power of the runners who challenge that distance, whether in the Olympic Games or anywhere else.

The best American marathon man is a slender runner from Boston named Bill Rodgers. "I've probably run around the world four times," said Rodgers, who has won marathons all over the globe. "And I'll match my heart and lung capacity against any athlete in the major sports. That's what determines athletic ability—the heart and lungs. Some baseball players are so out of shape; how can they call themselves athletes? And football players have been known to die at 40. I'll run over their graves."

To prepare himself for a marathon, Rodgers runs between 125 and 140 miles every week, rain or shine. He shrugs off the physical pain that the distance can inflict. But he grants that if he is not in very good shape, "it's a struggle."

Rodgers made his first impact on the long-distance scene in 1975 when he won the prestigious Boston Marathon,

setting an American record of 2:09.55. He captured that race again in 1978 and in between he won marathons in Amsterdam, Holland, and Kioto, Japan. He also took three straight New York City Marathons, running through the streets of the five boroughs while hundreds of thousands of spectators cheered him on.

Rodgers, who stands 5'8½" and weighs 128 lb, always wears white gloves when he runs. "I guess I'm a little superstitious," he said. "I first wore the gloves in the 1975 Boston Marathon because my hands were cold and I won that race. Now I always wear them, for luck and because it serves to psyche out the other runners."

Rodgers' major marathon disappointment came in the 1976 Olympics at Montreal when he led the field for 10 miles but finished 40th, limping into Olympic Stadium on a badly bruised foot. But three months later, he won the New York marathon for the first time.

#### BILL RODGERS

Born Dec. 23, 1947, in Hartford, Conn.

#### AWARDS AND RECORDS

American marathon record 2:09.55, 1975

*Lonely life of the distance runner?*