

Track and Field



Boston Marathon



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Patriot's Day Run

April 18 is a special day in Massachusetts, marking the day of the Revolutionary War when the British were driven from Boston. It's called Patriot's Day, schools are closed, the baseball Red Sox and basketball Celtics are usually playing before home fans. It is also the day the Boston Marathon is run, although the event is as much a celebration of spring as it is an athletic competition.

As many as 3000 starters may be entered, and they include everybody from world-class runners and hopeful collegians to confirmed marathon addicts and publicity seekers. There are official standings kept for men, women and team, as well as a special division for those confined to wheelchairs. Upwards of a million spectators will line the streets on a sunny day, encouraging runners along the 26-mile 385-yard route which stretches from suburban Hopkinton to the Prudential Center in the heart of Boston.

The crowd of runners at the starting line is so large that races can be won and lost there – not that a fast start is so important in such a long race, but because the shoving, pushing, kicking and elbowing could produce an injury serious enough to become debilitating

during the long and gruelling race. The race was first run back in 1897, mostly as a diversion for working people in Boston. One of the early standouts was Clarence De Mar, who worked nights as a newspaper printer at the old Boston *Post*. He won the marathon in 1911, 1923 through 1925, 1927–28 and 1930. After he spent 3 hours or so covering the distance, he would report to work.

The race was not a world-class event and attracted mostly Americans and a few Canadians. Marathon running has not been particularly important in these countries. Canada has never had an Olympic marathon champion, and the U.S. went nearly 65 years between Johnny Hayes' 1908 victory in London and Frank Shorter's surprise triumph at Munich in 1972. To make matters worse, newspapers often ridiculed the race, calling it the "bunion derby" and referring to the runners as "nuts". But in the mid-1960s, there was an increase in the number of foreign runners of high caliber. They came, they ran, they won and now the Boston Marathon ranks up there with the likes of the Fukuoka Marathon in Japan.

Start of 32nd Boston marathon