

Track and Field



Eamonn Coghlan



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Mid-Atlantic Miler

When on 26 February 1979 Eamonn Coghlan established a world indoor best of 3 min 52.6 sec for the mile, at San Diego, California, it was his 22nd victory in 23 consecutive indoor races. Not only did he destroy the previous world best of 3 min 54.9 sec held by America's Dick Buerkle by an almost indecent margin, but he also broke the European best for 1,500 metres on the way, with 3 min 37.7 sec.

It was a truly astonishing sequence for the hardy Dubliner whose rise to the summit of world miling can be traced, as in the case of several other Irish runners, to the time he spent in the tough testing ground of the United States Collegiate circuit. There are, of course, those who contend that although Eamonn has shown himself to be one of the greatest indoor runners of all time, his clipped running cadence and relatively stocky stature is not as well suited to racing the four-lap mile outdoors as to the indoor eleven-lap course at, for example, San Diego. One of those to make this point was John Walker, the former holder of the outdoor record at 3 min 49.4 sec who, it was suggested in the press, has stopped short of completing his indoor season in America in 1979 because he

wanted to avoid Coghlan. Walker may have had a point, as he had previously beaten Coghlan outdoors in 3 min. 52.0 sec on the Irishman's home track at Dublin. However Walker is probably now near the end of a distinguished career while Coghlan shows every sign of rising to his lifetime peak.

It was in 1975 that Coghlan first hit the record books with resounding impact when he set a European mark of 3 min 53.3 sec for the mile. This has since been improved, first by West Germany's Wessinghage, whom Coghlan defeated with a sizzling finish in the wake of Steve Ovett in the European Championship in Prague. His appearance in the Olympic 1,500 metres final in Montreal was meritorious enough for a man still feeling his way into the major league, a man who, like Delany himself, is a graduate of Villanova.

EAMONN COGHLAN

Born Nov. 21, 1952 in Dublin, Eire.

AWARDS AND RECORDS

1978 ECH: silver medal in 1,500 m in 3 min 36.6 sec, Prague

Olympic semi-final: Coghlan (514) leads Gonzalez (320), Nevens (95) and Wellmann (446)