

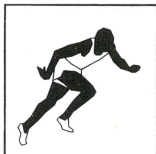
# Track and Field



*Ian Thompson*



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## Ian Thompson

### *Two for the Road*

In less than one year Ian Thompson climbed from the modest role of unknown road runner to the world's top marathon man. He was only persuaded to enter the AAA marathon in 1973 to make up the numbers in his club team. He had never previously raced farther than 10 miles on the road. Yet he defeated the reigning Commonwealth champion, Ron Hill, clocking a time of 2 hr 12 min 40 sec, the fastest marathon debut in history. Three months later he won the Commonwealth Games gold medal in Christchurch by a margin of more than two minutes.

His time there was a European record and remains, five years later, the fastest time ever accomplished in a major championship. Months later he pounded the cobbled streets of Rome to collect a European gold medal. He won a third international race at Athens.

After that dramatic ascent to world celebrity Ian Thompson was not seen in marathon action again for a year, and then he won his fifth successive marathon in Finland. On the same occasion his wife, Margaret, established a UK women's marathon best.

It was in the background to his prepara-

tion for his Olympic bid in 1976 that Thompson's charmed life suffered its first setback. In the Olympic trial at Rotherham he managed only seventh place complaining of cramp in his thighs. The reason seemed to have been that he had just returned from altitude training which, though beneficial over a long period in advance of competition, can have deleterious short-term effects. It was also revealed that he was, at the time, suffering from throat ulcers. Thus Thompson was not seen in Olympic action at Montreal but did return to form later that year to take second place in the classic Fukuoka marathon. At 29 Thompson is still below the age at which most marathon runners achieve their peak and a good win in Auckland following a second in the New York City marathon in 1978 suggested that he may yet have some fine races left in him.

#### IAN THOMPSON

Born 16 Oct. 1949, in Birkenhead, England

#### AWARDS AND RECORDS

1974 CG: gold medal, marathon in 2 hr 09 min 12 sec, Christchurch

1974 ECH: gold medal, marathon in 2 hr 12 min 19 sec, Rome

*A brilliant marathon start—and more wins to come*