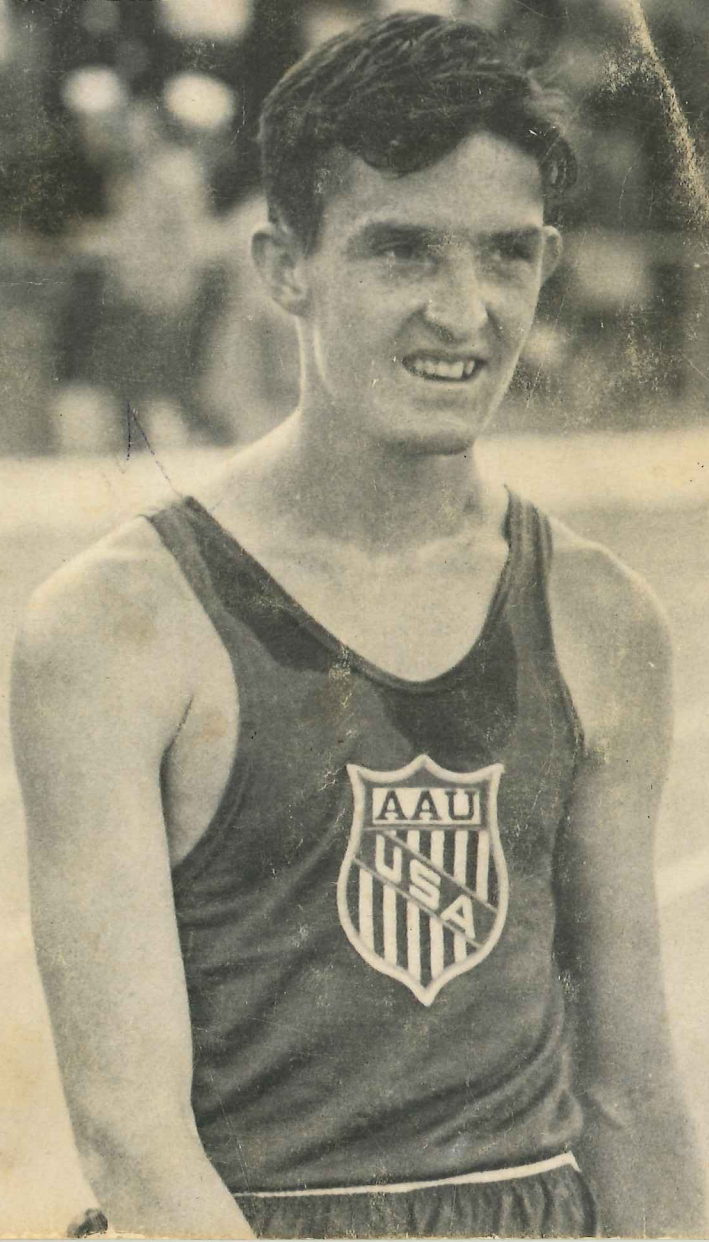


# **The Gerry Lindgren Story**

A RUNNER'S WORLD  
BOOKLET OF THE MONTH





*Runner's World*  
*"Booklet Of The Month" No. 6*

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***The Gerry  
Lindgren Story***

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Publisher — BOB ANDERSON

Editor — JOE HENDERSON

**COMPILED BY JIM DUNNE**

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Runner's World Magazine

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Published by  
Runner's World Magazine  
Post Office Box 366  
Mountain View, Calif. 94040

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**EDITOR'S NOTE:** *This booklet is largely the work of Jim Dunne, a longtime follower and friend of Gerry Lindgren. Dunne, a professor in the communications department at Washington State University, began running himself after his 40th birthday. He now races marathons in close to three hours. Besides contributing frequently to Runner's World publications, running and teaching, Dunne also serves as mayor of Pullman, Wash.*

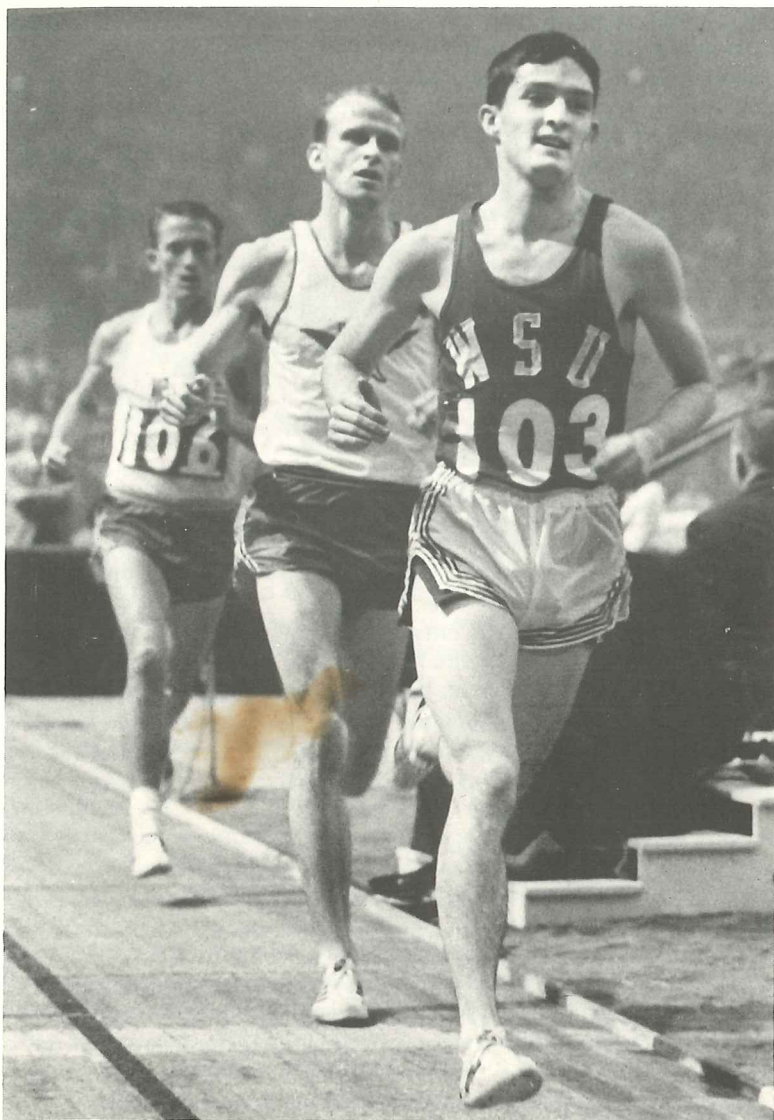
*We'd also like to thank Garry Hill, statistician at Track & Field News and a friend of Lindgren, for his assistance with the booklet.*

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**COVER PHOTO** – Gerry Lindgren was young but he was a world record holder for six miles. (Photo by Rich Clarkson)

**Chapter One**

***A Super-Kid  
Who Grew Up***



Indoors against Jim Grelle and George Young. (Rich Clarkson photo)

**A**mong world class distance runners, time doesn't run in years. It is counted in Olympiads, and those four years between Olympic Games are about the maximum life-span at the top that any runner can expect.

Tokyo 1964 is now two Olympiads removed. In athletic terms, that was another era, represented by an almost entirely different generation of runners. Marty Liquori and Steve Prefontaine hadn't started running. Frank Shorter was a struggling high schooler, and Kenny Moore was only beginning to master running at the University of Oregon.

A few old-timers remain from the 1964 US Olympic team, but not many. George Young hangs in there. Billy Mills is trying a comeback, but it isn't bearing much fruit yet. Both are in their mid-30s.

That 1964 Olympic team included two youngsters who were the sensations of their day – Jim Ryun and Gerry Lindgren. Ryun was 17, Lindgren 18. The two must be viewed in the context of the times. Until 1964, no high school runner had broken 4:00 for the mile. No American had broken 9:00 for two or 14:00 for three (though Bruce Kidd, a Canadian, had accomplished both in US races).

During the 1963 Christmas season, promoters of the *San Francisco Examiner* indoor meet decided to build a high school two-mile field around Ryun, already something of a prodigy. They brought Lindgren down from Spokane, Wash., but mostly as a pack-filler. This was to be "Ryun's showcase race."

Lindgren had no reputation outside of Washington. He'd not yet gone through a full track season. (In both his sophomore and junior years, he'd fatigue-fractured a foot.) Above all, he didn't look capable of running with Ryun. Gerry, 5'6" tall and 120 pounds, and sporting a haircut that looked as if it came from under his mother's soup bowl, appeared no more than 14 years old.

In his national debut, Ryun fell on his face. Literally. He tumbled to the track on the first lap and never got back into contention. Lindgren, for his part, burned the pace. He ran the two miles in nine minutes flat to launch a spectacular year and a spectacular career (and not the least of all, a new era in US junior distance running).

Lindgren, playing the role of naive, wide-eyed kid to perfection, slashed his two-mile time on down to 8:40 that indoor season, and ran three miles in 13:37.8. He attained full-fledged national hero status that summer when he whipped the Soviet 10,000-meter men. And of course Gerry, along with Ryun (who himself ran a sub-4:00 mile that year), made the Olympic team.

Both of them had rather disastrous experiences at Tokyo. But still they verified their world class billing just by getting there. They'd reached a peak thought at that time to be impossible for teenagers, and it took both Lindgren and Ryun a long time to outgrow dire warnings of "burning themselves out."

This booklet is about Lindgren, but his and Ryun's careers parallel each other so closely that one can't avoid talking about them in the same breath. It's significant in a number of ways that eight years — two Olympiads — after their race in San Francisco, at a time when the turnover rate at the top is accelerating, Lindgren and Ryun are better now than then. Both have been fabulously successful since 1964. Neither has been without his troubles — physical and emotional. But here they are now, mature runners of 25 and 24, trying to fight off a new generation of Lindgrens and Ryuns so they can run in Munich.

Gerry Lindgren has lived all his life, since he was born March 9, 1946, within a few miles of Spokane, Wash. Gerry naturally took to running. As he explains later, he ran his five-mile paper route when he was in junior high school. But he lacked, or at least was convinced himself that he lacked, the ability even to advance beyond last place in his junior high 660-yard races.

Except for his association with Tracy Walters, a coach at Rogers High School, Gerry probably never would have run seriously. He may have gone the way of thousands of other small, unsure high school sophomores.

"I owe more to him (Walters) than anyone realizes," Lindgren says later in this booklet. "You see, the first time I ever ran for this man, I was lousy. No ability, no nothing. I could never play football, or baseball, or anything else. People told me I was stupid and I believed them. I had a terrible self-image. I just couldn't do anything."

Walters took Gerry aside and told him, "If you keep working hard . . . by the time you're a senior you'll be one of the best runners this city ever had." This remark may have been innocent, it may have been the kind of thing coaches everywhere tell all their runners. But to Gerry it was music. It set off an explosion in him that even now is producing aftershocks.

"This was the first time anybody had ever really given me any positive interest," Gerry recalls. "I was overwhelmed, and was ready to do anything this man asked. He was feeding my confidence, and I was starved for this kind of attention."

Walters first pumped Lindgren full of the you-can-do-anything-you-want-to-do thinking, and this faith in the power of positive thought has never totally left Gerry. It has been shaken numerous times, but never completely wiped away.

Gerry went to Washington State University after high school, totally fit and totally confident. In his words, he was "bazooka-proof." He had a reservoir of good experiences from his last two years of running, but he lacked the maturity to deal with the inevitable hard knocks he was going to meet in college.

Jack Mooberry, Washington State's coach, did as diplomatic and skillful a job as anyone could with a runner of Lindgren's background and ability. But college was a long and tough road for Gerry, despite his unprecedented 11 national championships.

After breaking the world six-mile record in 1965 (in a race with Billy Mills that Gerry still considers his best ever), Lindgren says his self-concept and his health deteriorated steadily. Ulcers and achilles tendon damage hounded him, and in 1968 he "hit bottom" at the time he was trying (and failing) to make the Olympic team.

Since then, he has concerned himself with trying to recapture the free, happy-go-lucky, positive spirit that he enjoyed under Walters' influence. "I've been working constantly on becoming dumb again," Gerry says, "forgetting everything I know, forgetting about oxygen debt, forgetting about all the physical and psychological 'limits,' and just concentrating on being dumb again. It takes somebody dumb to really do well."

Gerry Lindgren has changed over the years, but he isn't a "has-been." The last two years, he wasn't as prominent as previously, but only because he was readjusting his life-style and thinking.

1971 AAU photo by Stan Pantovic





Gerry graduated from Washington State, had a brief hitch in the army (he lasted about a month before being discharged because of his ulcers), was married and now has a small child.

Lindgren works out of Spokane for the Glen W. Turner organization which promotes — guess what? — positive thinking. The job entails contacting business and professional men and selling them the message “anything is possible if you think it’s possible.” Gerry’s a true believer, and he has thrown much of his energy into the work.

As a result, he didn’t race much in 1971. But just to keep his foot on the track and to show that there’s still a Gerry Lindgren to contend with, Gerry raced at the AAU championships. He went most of that week without sleep, yet ran his best three-mile and six-mile since setting his personal bests more than five years ago.

Lindgren is clearly on a mind trip right now. His work with the Turner people has solidified vague ideas that he has held ever since starting training with Tracy Walters almost a decade ago. Gerry now states bluntly, “My running ability all comes from my mind.” He won’t admit that he’s immensely talented. He won’t say he has hidden resources not possessed by lesser runners. Above all, he refuses to recognize limits. He says it’s all in his mind.

Jack Daniels, an exercise physiologist at the University of Texas and a former college running coach, has tested Lindgren. He doesn’t quite agree with Gerry’s analysis that it’s all in his mind. Daniels says Lindgren has an extraordinary capacity for consuming oxygen. “Believe me,” Daniels notes, “that ‘little runt who can run’ has one of the best oxygen transportation systems around. I’d call Gerry an economy frame with a supercharged engine; he just has to try to keep from tearing up his transmission.”

But perhaps that capacity has developed through Gerry’s ability to push past so-called limits. Jim Dunne, who taped Lindgren’s comments for this booklet, says, “Much of his track success is due to his willingness to whip his body into outstanding performances. Often a track meet leaves him emotionally and physically spent for days.”

Mix this sort of thinking with Lindgren’s traditional skill with the put-on, and the result is an incredible interview. Dunne taped Gerry’s comments for the wide-ranging discussion that follows. Though Dunne says in his long association with Lindgren he has never seen him talking so seriously and straightforwardly, Jim warns that Gerry still may drift into innocent put-ons — for the sake of a good story.

It’s hard to know whether Gerry is being serious or not when he says he plans to run 50 miles a day — that’s right, 50 a *day* — this winter. He may be serious. Gerry undoubtedly is serious in his intentions to win at Munich, and he says he wants to be sure he’s the best-prepared runner there. After their talk, Dunne met Lindgren on a training run. Gerry was finishing his 35th mile of the day, and looked like he could go 35 more.

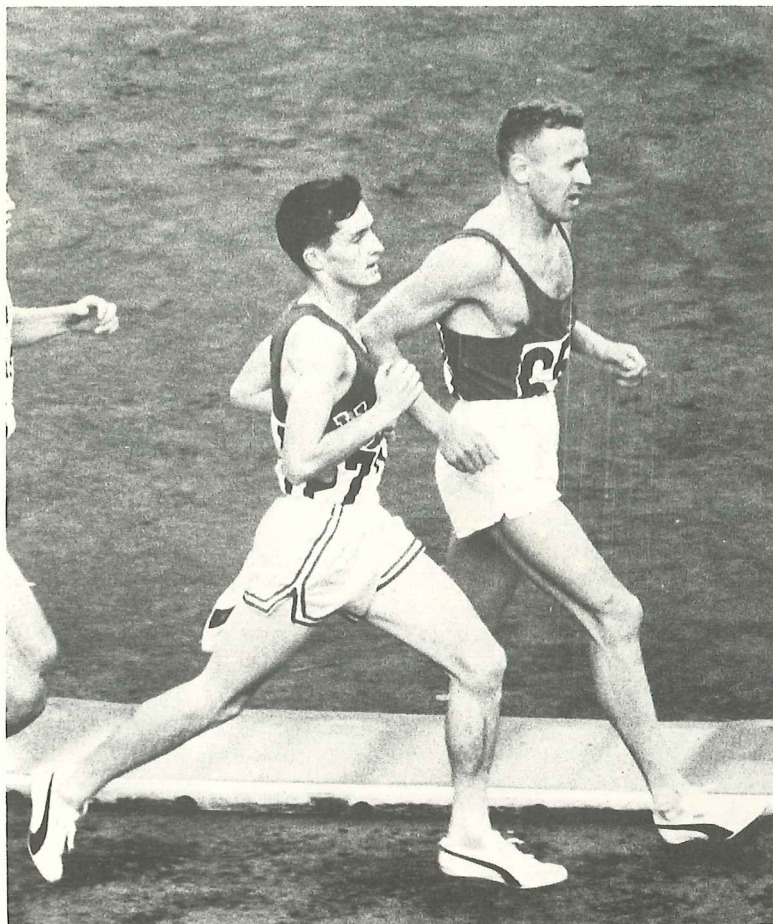
Of course he has been warned he is doing too much. Lindgren has always been told he was doing too much of this, not enough of that, or something altogether wrong. This only seems to goad him. He says, in perhaps the best summary of Gerry Lindgren’s thinking:

“I don’t like to be told what I can’t do, to have arbitrary limits set on me.”

**Chapter Two**

***Positive Thinking  
Plus Hard Work***

By Gerry Lindgren, with Jim Dunne



Lindgren paces 1960 Olympic champ Bolotnikov. (Mark Shearman)

I started running in junior high school. . . or tried to start running. My older brother ran a little bit of cross-country. He told me what a great sport running was and how much fun it was, so I thought I'd try out for the track team. I was in the eighth grade then.

Well, the first two years I couldn't make the team because I was too slow. But I was too stubborn to quit. For workouts, I'd run my paper route. It covered about five miles, and there were only about 16 customers—they were really spread out—so I would run this every night then run over to the school for the regular workout. Usually by the time I got there the workout was over, so I didn't get much formal training. In races, I was always the last guy on the track. By the time I finished a 660-yard race—the longest we had—everyone else would be done and have their sweats on, ready to go home. I guess I still liked running, though, even when I finished last. I stuck with it.

When I got to high school, as a sophomore, I met Tracy Walters. He was the track coach and also a counselor. By coincidence, he was feuding with other counselors at the time. They had told him, "If you can make a person believe in himself, and give him enough positive attitudes, you can make him do anything." Tracy didn't believe this and had big go-arounds with his counseling buddies who were trying to push this philosophy off on him.

In 1962, he decided to run an experiment to see if this idea really worked. He took the most unlikely, most untalented person he could find to see if he could make him a great runner. Guess who he picked!

I have the greatest respect and admiration for Tracy Walters. I owe more to him than anyone realizes. You see, the first time I ever ran for this man, I was lousy. No ability, no nothing. I've been this way all of my life, late developing and kind of a runt. I could never play football, or baseball, or anything else. I was always the last one picked for any team. People told me I was stupid and I believed them. I was rated as "dull-normal" and slightly retarded on intelligence tests. I had a terrible self-image. I just couldn't do anything.

Well, I get to high school and here is this guy Walters who says, "You can do it. If you keep working hard and trying hard, by the time you're a senior you'll be one of the best runners this city (Spokane) ever had."

This was the first time anybody had ever really given me any positive interest. I was overwhelmed, and was ready to do anything this man asked. He was feeding my confidence, and I was starved for this kind of attention. The problem with too many runners (and too many people in general) is that they never get confidence in themselves. They never just say, "I have two arms and two legs and one head just like anybody else, and the only difference between me and any other athlete is in the mind."

The early running wasn't easy. We did a lot of long distance running. We did a lot of quarters on the track, and half-miles later. We started out in cross-country the first year by running quarters and trying to hit 85 seconds. These just killed me. I was dying when I tried to run them. I wanted to quit

the team because my legs hurt so much. But how could I face this man who was the first person ever to say anything good to me?

I trained so hard I broke my foot—twice—but I kept coming back. I got a stress fracture of the foot as a sophomore and was out for the whole track season. As a junior, the same thing happened, but I came back at the end of the season and did well in the state meet, winning the mile in 4:18. (The mile was the longest Washington high school race then.)

In my senior year, I finally went a full season without busting my foot, and things started happening so fast I was hardly prepared for them: the indoor races at San Francisco and New York (where I broke the high school indoor two-mile record twice and set a three-mile record); the AAU outdoor championships (where I was told I'd qualified to run against the Russians); the unforgettable Russian 10,000; and all the rest of the things that were hard to believe for a kid just out of high school—particularly a kid who three years earlier thought he "couldn't do anything."

Tracy Walters was now a firm believer in the power of positive thinking. So was I.

I really don't think Coach Walters knew that much about what kind of workouts a man should do to run good times, how a person should breathe and all that. Oh, his knowledge certainly was adequate. But he didn't have any special, super-secret training technique. He simply worked on my attitude all the time. That was his "secret." He kept talking dedication: work, work, work. And so by the time I was a senior I'd really started to do well.

That summer (1964) we went to the AAU championship meet. The coach didn't tell me who I was racing, but I shouldn't have been running against most of the guys. I didn't know this. I placed second in the 5000 meters. It was only the second 5000-meter race I'd run, and I was surprised at being up there so well. An official came to me after the meet and said, "This qualifies you to run in the Russian meet—the USA vs. Russia meet." Instead of running the 5000 meters, they wanted me to step up to the 10,000. I didn't know what to think because I'd only run this distance once before and was just dead afterwards. I never thought I'd run something that terrible again. You see, I was a miler up to this point. Three miles was even too much for me. But I said, "Okay, I'll try it."

During the summer, the coach really laid on the mental attitude, the positive thinking, everything. Every day I was running 25-35 miles. I would get up in the morning and do something like 17-18 miles. I'd be so tired from it when I got back that I'd just flop into bed and sleep until about 2:00 in the afternoon. Then I'd either meet the coach at the track for an interval workout, or I'd go out and do sprints between the telephone poles out in the rural areas around Spokane. I'd do this for another five to seven miles, then I'd come home completely beat. I'd eat a little, then sleep some more. I got up again after the sun went down, and went out on an easy jog to get in another 10 miles or so.

This is what I'd do day after day, seven days a week. I guess we trained this way for about two months. But later everybody told us this was impos-

sible, that the human body can't do this kind of thing. We didn't know, or we probably never would have been able to do it. Most of the people who do something they aren't supposed to be able to do are people who are too dumb to know they're not supposed to do it. And I guess we were.

After the race with the Russians in which I won the 10,000, all of a sudden. I wasn't a miler any more. I was a distance runner. After that race, every time I stepped to the line the people I was running against would look at me like I was some kind of a superman, like I was naturally too good for everybody. I'd take off in a race and I'd throw a fast lap in the middle. Everybody would die from it. It wasn't because they were so tired. They'd come in at the end of the race and say, "Now why didn't I go with you? I just wasn't that tired." But they were thinking they were going to get beat. They were beat before they stepped on the track. Of course I didn't do anything to stop that. I didn't mind that at all.

All the way through the Olympic Trials this happened. I'd run a fast lap in the middle of the race and three-quarters of the field would drop off. And I'd run a fast half-lap a little later and everybody else would drop. The last person that stayed there in the Trials was a guy named Billy Mills. I didn't even know too much about the guy except that he had run a lot of mediocre races. Finally it took three laps before Billy said, "Oh, I can't do it," and dropped back.

I won this race easily and felt great. I was able to control what I was doing throughout the race, and I felt I could have sprinted the whole last mile, I was so fresh.

After this race, I felt very good about my chances in the Olympic 10,000 at Tokyo. I felt even fitter than in the Trials as I went on my last warmup run before the Olympic final. I was taking a little jog at the Imperial Palace grounds to get myself loose, and that was going to be it. I found a trail that I'd never seen before. I started to take it, but stepped on something and sprained my ankle. I didn't even think I had sprained it and got up and ran on it some more, which made it worse. The ankle got all puffed up.

Team doctors told me I shouldn't run, that I was all washed up. I sneaked down to the track and ran the race anyway. They had my ankle all taped up so it really hurt. I took off all the wrapping. It still hurt, but I could get around on it. I ran the race, but was limping so much that I couldn't do very well. I finished ninth. As it turned out, I was just a spectator watching Billy Mills make history.

Mills ran a great race. He had decided he was the guy who was supposed to win. He said there were no two ways about it. Even before the race he was thinking about how he was going to win. He was living it. He was writing down on little pieces of paper how the laps would go. And they went exactly the way he predicted.

Honestly, though, it probably should have been Ron Clarke's race. But he always had a problem winning in a big group like that. Ron always competed against *himself* when he ran his world record races. But when he got in a big race like the Olympics, for some reason he started competing against other people. He was limited to what they could do. One or two of those people—like Mills or Mohamed Gammoudi—were always up there to outkick Clarke.

Clarke told me afterwards that he looked back after half the race and saw only a bunch of guys he didn't know behind him. He said, "Well, I've got

this one won.” He was running against the people instead of running against himself. He was limited in what he could do that way, and he lost because of it.

I learned an important lesson from this race, even though I was hobbling along way behind. I learned it’s me I have to compete with, not so much the other guys.

I’m a real believer in the power of the mind, and I become more so every day as I look back on my experiences. When I got out of high school, left Coach Walters and went to Washington State University, I was just about bazooka-proof. I had a good mental attitude, I was doing really well in running, and thought there wasn’t anything I *couldn’t* do. I was ready to move mountains.

As a college freshman, I guess I was still a little bit naive, and I didn’t realize it had been the mental attitude more than anything else—the belief in myself—that had helped me do so well. When I got to WSU, I started coming into contact with a lot of ideas that I didn’t know existed. This is where I learned that a person isn’t supposed to run very far because it will kill his body. I learned a lot of negative influences that can damage a person’s attitude.

For about a year and a half after I got there, I was still running great. I was running 10-mile loops through the Palouse country, up and down the hills, every day for workouts. And every step I was taking I was thinking about how great the next one was going to be.

But later I started letting negative thoughts weigh me down. I started worrying about my workouts and worrying about my races. I got to the point where I was really competing against other people rather than just trying to improve myself. I was more competitive with other people, not just in track but in the classroom, and in what I did and what I said. I thought I had to keep up a “college image.”

My troubles already were mounting toward the end of my first semester at WSU. I was having a lot of trouble at school with people who said, “You can’t run here and you can’t run there.” This was at the height of the NCAA-AAU “war,” and I was being pressured not to run non-college races. But I still was anxious to compete, so I went down to San Diego for the 1965 AAU six-mile.

I wasn’t ready to run. I hadn’t run for a week before that and was under a lot of pressure from people calling me at all hours telling me that I shouldn’t go to this race. I went down there hoping to do a good job. When I got there, here was Billy Mills, all psyched up. The mental energy was just radiating out of the guy.

He said, “Let’s run a world record.”

“Okay,” I said, “I’ll try to go with you. I’ll try to help if I can.”

During the first two miles we just tried to get rid of everybody else, which was easy to do because nobody else thought they could run world record pace. It was a terribly hard track. My legs were hurting by the time we’d gone halfway, and Billy was hurting so bad he wanted to quit. Both of us wanted to

slow down, but we would never slow down to let the other guy go. It was kind of a competitive thing, but at the same time were running it *with* each other.

The last three-quarters was almost an all-out sprint. I think we ran it in 3:02. With about three laps to go, I really started to pick it up to see if Mills was all that fresh. Maybe I could get rid of the guy, I thought. He wouldn't let me go. Every time I started to go past, he would take off harder.

With two laps to go, we both took off in a dead sprint, like most people do at the end of a race. The last lap was unbelievable. We ran it in around 55 seconds. It was one of the fastest last laps I've ever had—at any distance. It was just too much. It had been a dead heat all the way. Mills won the race by inches. But we had the same time—27:11.6—and both got credit for the record.

For a number of reasons, I haven't run that fast since 1965. It's more my attitude than anything else. In my sophomore year I started getting ulcers. Negative attitudes were creeping in and getting me so I was settling for second best all of a sudden. I got to the point where I didn't have much confidence in myself. I was still winning. I went on to win 11 of a possible 12 NCAA championships. But things still weren't right. I wasn't the carefree Gerry Lindgren any longer. I was chronically injured, ulcer-ridden and—worst of all—unsure of myself.

**T**he college environment is both good and bad for a distance runner. You'll find athletes who say, "Oh, I like it." And others will say, "Oh, it's terrible." The athlete who says it's terrible is the one who gets ruined by it. The one who says, "It's great; it will build me up, and when the college season is over I'll be fantastically strong," will be fantastically strong. It's a neutral environment. You can make it bad or you can make it good, depending on how you're thinking. I didn't make the most of my college career because I wasn't thinking right.

Also, I was putting more effort into my studies than ever before. As I said earlier, I was dull-normal, almost mentally retarded, before I got to college. Through high school I had improved because I'd started working harder when I'd started running well. But I was told when I got to Washington State that I probably wouldn't make it. They gave me a chance anyway, and I set out to prove them wrong. All the way through school I studied every chance I got. I was in the library while everyone else was still messing around in the room or still eating dinner. I was always studying as hard as I could and trying to do extra work besides what was required. But still I wasn't an outstanding student.

I was still showing my stubborn streak, too. I was taking everything I was told I shouldn't. I was told I would be all right as long as I stayed away from foreign languages, so I took Russian. I was told not go into this or that, and it seemed these were the things I ended up doing. I don't like to be told what I can't do; to have arbitrary limits set on me.

Frankly, I'm surprised I was able to win 11 NCAA championships. I always seemed to be ill or injured at the wrong times. Negative thoughts were cropping up in my mind during those years and were messing me up.

A lot of times I wasn't supposed to do well. But it didn't seem to matter when the big race came.

The 1967 NCAA cross-country race is a good example. My troubles had more or less come to a head then. I had a bad leg and the race was being run in the snow at 7000-foot Laramie, Wyo. Tracy Smith had beaten me by 100 yards a week or so earlier. At the national meet, I guess we both expected the same thing to happen. I got out to a big lead, but he was only about two steps behind at four miles. But for some reason I pulled out and said, "I'm not beat yet. I'm going to have to run a little harder." Tracy slowly dropped back until I was way ahead at the finish. It was amazing. I didn't even know I could do something like that.

The toughest of the national collegiate races wasn't this one, though. It was the 1969 cross-country championship—my last NCAA race. The first mile of an NCAA meet, with 300 runners on the line, has to be a sprint all the way. We ran our first mile in about 4:15, I think. Steve Prefontaine hung tough for a long time (he had beaten me earlier in the year), and Mike Ryan was very, very tough *all* the time. I only beat him by a couple of seconds. That was some of the toughest running I ever did.

A lot of schools really key for cross-country. They run their heads off

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## THE NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS

### AAU CHAMPIONSHIPS

Year	Site	Distance	Time
1967	Bakersfield, Calif.	3 miles	13:10.6

### USTFF CHAMPIONSHIPS

1965	Bakersfield, Calif.	6 miles	28:21.8
1968	Milwaukee, Wisc.	2 miles (indoors)	8:43.0

### NCAA CROSS-COUNTRY CHAMPIONSHIPS

1966	Lawrence, Kans.	6 miles	29:01.6
1967	Laramie, Wyo.	6 miles	30:45.6
1969	Bronx, N.Y.	6 miles	28:59.4

(didn't compete in 1968)

### NCAA OUTDOOR TRACK CHAMPIONSHIPS

1966	Bloomington, Ind.	3 miles	13:33.8
		6 miles	28:07.0
1967	Salt Lake City, Utah	3 miles	13:47.8
		6 miles	28:44.0
1968	Berkeley, Calif.	5000m	13:51.2
		10,000m	29:41.0

### NCAA INDOOR TRACK CHAMPIONSHIPS

1966	Detroit, Mich.	2 miles	8:41.4
1967	Detroit, Mich.	2 miles	8:34.8

(second to Jim Ryun in 1968; Lindgren's only NCAA loss)



to get in immaculate shape. I didn't do that. Cross-country was kind of a relaxed, long-run time. I did a lot more long running and didn't really burn myself that much. All of a sudden when I got in the races I had to burn harder than they were burning because wasn't used to it. It was tough in cross-country. . . every time. Every time I was amazed that I was able to come away a winner.

In one race I wasn't so fortunate. That was the 1968 NCAA indoor two-mile, where Jim Ryun really got me good. My ulcers were acting up. I was warming up for this race and all of a sudden I was just doubled over with cramps. I was in terrible pain. Just then they called the race. I got out on the track and went through the motions of racing. Ryun sat in behind me until the last 180 yards then took off. I couldn't stay with him.

I'd expected 1968, my senior year in track (I had another season of cross-country eligibility remaining), to be a good one. In May, I broke the American 5000-meter record. But then. . . more trouble.

By this time I was getting injury after injury. I won the NCAA 10,000 and was just taking it easy, but I hurt my achilles tendon. I couldn't walk the day between the 10 and the five. When the 5000 came up, I was wondering if I would be able to run. I probably shouldn't have run. I'm normally a "bounce" runner rather than a power runner, and I couldn't get any bounce. Two-thirds of the way through the race everybody started to go by, and it was just about over for me.

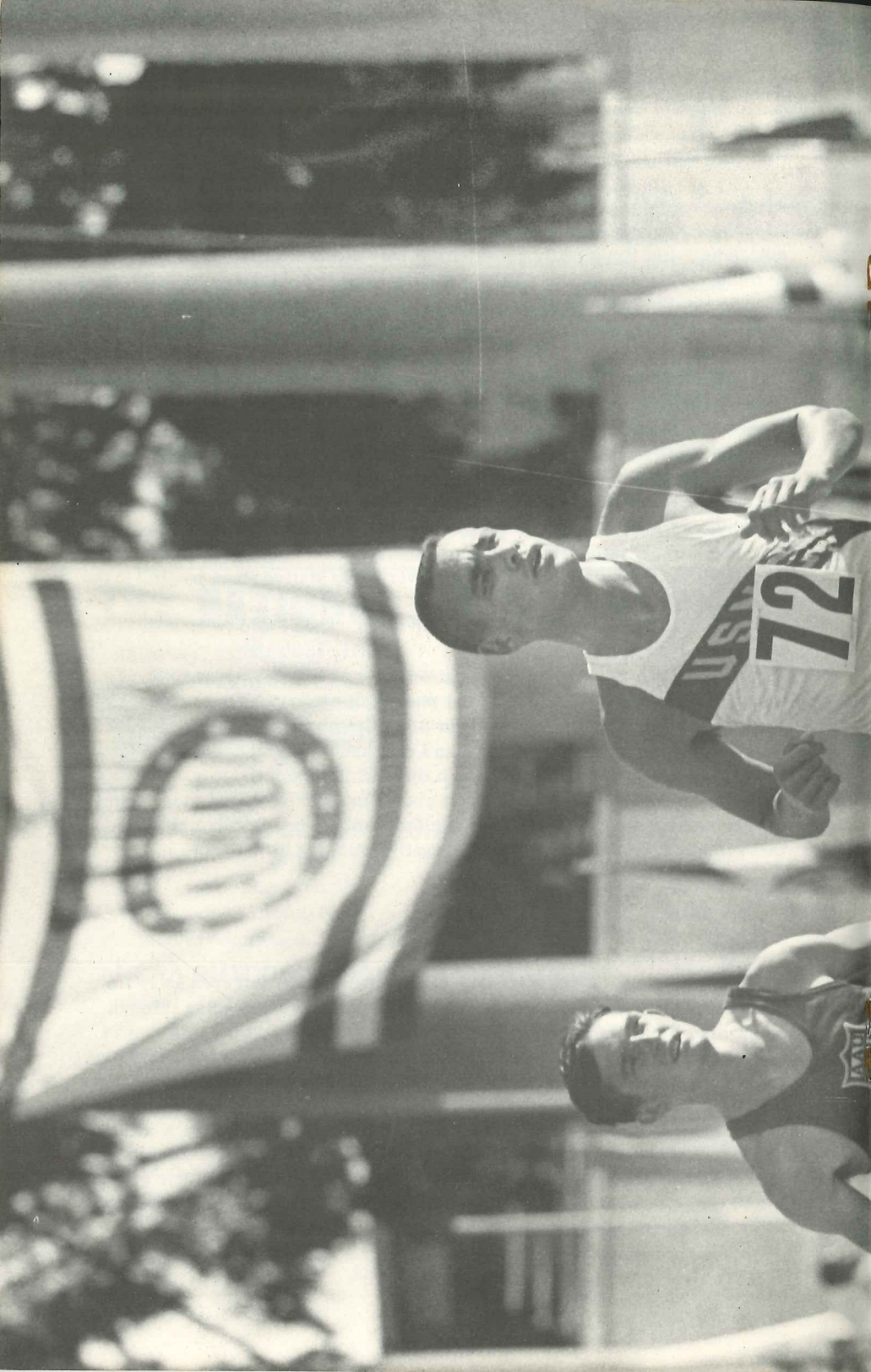
I was well out of the race with a lap to go. Then I said to myself. "I'm not pushing my bod the way I used to. I'm letting the negative take over." I started picking it up a little and caught one man—I was in fifth or sixth. This gave me a little confidence, and I kept picking up the pace. On the backstretch I started catching the leaders. I caught Steve Stageberg and Arne Kvalheim. I started sprinting, probably harder than I ever had before. I couldn't believe it. I sprinted around the corner and down the stretch to win the race.

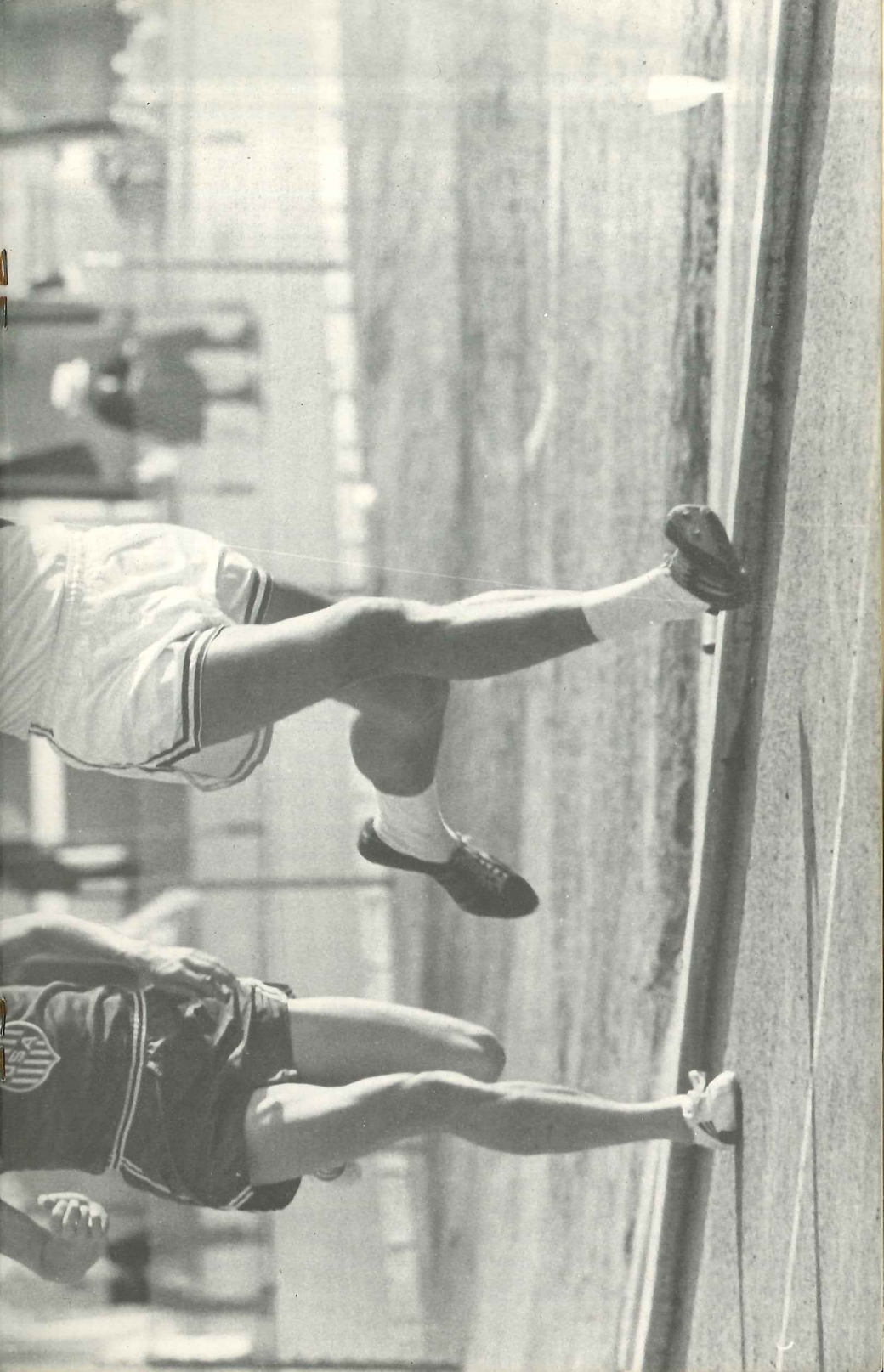
But again my good luck had just about run out. Bothered more than I should have been by my ailments, I couldn't quite make the Olympic team that summer. Along about here, my negative thinking hit bottom.

**N**ot until I got away from the college environment and even away from heavy racing for awhile did I realize the mental process I was going through. . . or the kind of mental process I had to go through to correct my mistakes. I don't know whether I'm a new man now, or whether I'm just back to the way I was thinking in high school. But I'm thinking right again, and I feel stronger than ever.

I went a whole week without sleep before the 1971 AAU track meet—not a drop of sleep—yet I ran my best three-mile (13:04.4) in five years, and then doubled back and ran probably my best six-mile (27:46.6) in five years, too. I didn't do as well as I would have liked, but it definitely was improvement and shows I can come back and run better than ever.

I see now that my various ailments have been tied in closely with my negative thinking. I never had any injury in high school, except my stress





fractures which were physical things. I never had any really big problem like hurting my achilles tendons or getting an ulcer because I was too dumb to think negative thoughts.

Ever since 1968, when I didn't make the Olympic team, I've been working constantly on becoming dumb again—forgetting everything I know, forgetting about oxygen debt, forgetting about all the physical and psychological “limits,” and just concentrating on being dumb again. It takes somebody dumb to really do well.

I've set up a kind of long-range program that's going to take me into the Olympics. I'll be averaging 50 miles a day through the winter, and will probably have to go south during the winter months so I can keep it up.

I have a good arrangement for this kind of training. I don't have to work a full day at a job. I couldn't and still hope to train this way. Running 50 miles a day is going to take me all day, you see. But I'm my own boss.

Maybe it isn't necessary to run 50 miles a day. I don't know. Someone may be able to win running less than that. Everyone I run against next year isn't going to be running 50 miles a day. I can and will. And more than anything else I think it's going to help me. It's going to help my self-image. When I get on the track I'll know I've done more than everyone else out there, and I'll know I'm stronger.

Every time I get into a workout, I'm working my mind more than anything else. I don't believe a person needs to work out 50 miles a day in order to get his *body* ready to run. I believe you can get by on one workout a day, if you need that much. Kipchoge Keino can win on three workouts a week. I go hard for my mind. I get a lot out of it.

My body says, “Slow down!” And my head says, “You're not going to slow down! You're going to go, go, go!”

When I get done with the workout my body is tired, but my mind has been controlling my body instead of outside forces controlling me. I feel great. Though I'm physically tired, I can go the whole day because I'm physically tough. I go out and race hard, and do hard workouts, and do things I'm not supposed to do just because I'm not supposed to be able to do them. It helps.

I've never liked running on the track, and seldom go there except to race. I've never liked the track because when I'm competing against the clock I'm competing against something other than myself. I don't like the idea of competing against the clock because it distracts me from looking inward to find what I really need to compete well.

I love to run alone. I run with somebody else only to get the feeling of being able to compete well in relationship to other people, and this is a limiting form of competition. When I run alone I definitely have to do it all myself. I have to do the work. The only guy a person can't cheat is himself. He can't lie to himself because he knows what's going on. When I come in from a day's work, I know for sure if it was good or bad. Running alone makes me a more severe judge of myself and a tougher runner.

# TOP TIMES THROUGH THE YEARS

Event	1964 (age 18)	1965 (age 19)	1966 (age 20)	1967 (age 21)	1968 (age 22)	1969 (age 23)	1970 (age 24)	1971 (age 25)
Mile	4:06.0	---	---	4:02.4*	4:04.1	---	---	---
2 miles	8:40.0i	8:36.6	8:34.0i	8:31.6i*	8:38.4	8:35.4	8:41.4	---
3 miles	13:37.8i	13:04.0	12:53.0*	13:10.6	13:07.0	13:18.4	13:25.0	13:04.4
5000m	13:44.0	13:45.4	13:38.0	13:47.8	13:33.8*	13:38.4	13:58.4	---
6 miles	28:07.0	27:11.6*	28:07.0	---	28:39.2	29:13.0	28:05.8	27:46.6
10,000m	29:02.0	29:00.8	---	28:40.2*	28:55.2	---	---	---

(i)=indoor performance; \* =all-time best mark)

2 MILES		3 MILES		5000 METERS		6 MILES		10,000 METERS	
Time	(Year/Age)	Time	(Year/Age)	Time	(Year/Age)	Time	(Year/Age)	Time	(Year/Age)
8:31.6	(1967/20)	12:53.0	(1966/20)	13:33.8	(1968/22)	27:11.6	(1965/19)	28:40.2	(1967/21)
8:32.6	(1967/20)	13:04.0	(1965/19)	13:38.0	(1966/20)	27:46.6	(1971/25)	28:55.2	(1968/22)
8:34.0	(1966/19)	13:04.4	(1971/25)	13:38.4	(1969/23)	28:07.0	(1964/18)	29:00.8	(1965/19)
8:34.8	(1967/20)	13:07.0	(1968/22)	13:44.0	(1964/18)	28:07.0	(1966/20)	29:02.0	(1964/18)
8:35.4	(1969/23)	13:10.6	(1967/21)	13:45.4	(1965/19)	28:21.8	(1965/19)	29:17.8	(1964/18)

In a race, I'm definitely on my own, too. The other guy isn't going to be running with me. He's going to be running *against* me, and anything he can do to hurt me he will do. My tactics are to break down the other guy. I'm running to break him down, and he's trying to do the same to me. I don't do anything to break a man down physically because that's literally impossible to do in the class of competition I run. All these men have done too much work and they aren't about to crack physically.

Nobody is ever defeated until he thinks he is, and as soon as I can make somebody believe he *can't* win, the better off I am. If I run the first mile of a three-mile in 4:06, everybody's going to think I'm either super-human or crazy. They're going to think, "Oh, he can't do it," or "Oh, *I* can't do it." And either way they'll slow down. Then I'm away. I can put in my mind a dozen reasons why this guy is going to be hurt even if he catches up, and this makes me want to go harder.

Everybody, before he loses, has to admit he has lost, whether it's in the last two strides or the last two miles. He has to say to himself that he can't win. Some men are already looking for second place when they get on the line. They say, "I'm going to run behind so-and-so, and hope that I can stay with him." They've already conceded. They have negative thoughts in their minds before they even start.

Theory gets to a lot of runners and knocks them down before they start racing or even start training. I've been told a million times, "Watch out, you're going to build up an oxygen debt; you're going to do this or that." An oxygen debt, like most things in track, is built up more in one's mind than in his muscles. A man can run 100 miles with an oxygen debt if he has his mind right. An oxygen debt isn't going to kill anybody unless he thinks it is. Neither is high mileage. I was told in high school that it is "physically impossible" to run 35 miles a day, and yet I was getting over 50 a lot of days. It only became "impossible" when I started believing the experts. Now I'm concentrating on washing away this kind of thinking and becoming dumb again.

**O**bviously, I believe that anyone can do anything. There are no limits. Or if there are limits, they're much further out than anyone dares to realize. I believe that a kid in high school whose body is not yet formed in one pattern can do as well at distance running as a man 25 or 30 years old. He can take more. If his mind is right, he can go through just unbelievable efforts. I know; I did it myself. Too many people say a young runner has to do a lot less than an older person because his developing body can't take the stress. But this theory never has been adequately proven. Theories like this, and the people who pass them along, often do more to limit us than to help us.

Coaches tend to limit runners. When coaches in America today start having a lot of success, people come up and ask, "What is it that made your runners great?" The coach will say this-and-this-and-this-and-this. And his plan is followed to the letter. This puts runners in the coach's groove, and this is what our whole society had done since we were little kids. We are put in a little groove that has us believing we have to do this and can't do that.

I'm working now for a company called Glen W. Turner Enterprises, which trains people to believe in themselves. We work in the business world, but these methods apply in all walks of life. If a person—businessman, athlete or whatever—believes in himself, he can do anything; if he doesn't believe in himself, he can't.

Coaches are looking all over for the man with "natural ability," the natural-born runner. I've never seen a natural-born runner. A person is successful not because of what was born into him, something innate, but because of what someone has put into his mind.

The physiologists say that I'm supposed to have a good oxygen uptake. I don't believe it. They say I'm supposed to be good here and poor there because of my body physiology. I don't believe it. I think my running ability all comes from my mind.

A good coach—and there are very few good coaches in America—is someone who can take a nobody and make somebody out of him. A person needs a positive attitude more than anything else. A good coach is someone who can take a boy who isn't already a great runner and make one of him. Tell him, "Go, go, go. I know you can do great things." Inspire the kid. Get him to change his self-image to be a great runner. This is what Tracy Walters did with me in high school.

A coach who gets great runners and tells them they have to do this and that is not a great coach in my opinion. Steve Prefontaine was a great runner when he went to Bill Bowerman. I don't look at Prefontaine and say, "Gee, Bowerman is a great coach because he made Prefontaine a great runner." He didn't. A coach in Coos Bay did that. Maybe his dad's a great coach. Somebody took Steve at an early age and taught him to believe in himself. That is why he's a great runner now.

Jim Ryun is a fabulous runner because somebody grabbed him early and said, "You can do it." He couldn't even make the team. He was the same as me when he started. Coach Bob Timmons has been Ryun's coach all along. Timmons is what I call a great coach because he took Ryun from scratch and made a fantastic runner of him.

College coaches, admittedly, are working at a disadvantage. Too often they can't be great because they have to take already-developed talent and use it. They have to produce great teams right now, and can't take a year or two to produce a super-athlete out of a nobody. It's a shame, because there must be hundreds—thousands—of kids just like me who are crying for just a little positive attention and encouragement.

Anybody can do anything he wants. In 1937, a man in a mental institution thought he could fly. He stayed off the ground for over 30 seconds by flapping his arms. I don't limit anybody. Man can do anything. He can fly—at least figuratively—if he believes in himself, and if there isn't somebody there to discourage him.

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# LINDGREN'S RECORD RACES

## WORLD RECORD

Distance	Time	Site	Date
6 miles	27:11.6t	San Diego, Calif.	27 Jun 65

## AMERICAN RECORDS

6 miles	27:11.6t	San Diego, Calif.	27 Jun 65
3 miles	13:04.0	London, England	10 Jul 65
3 miles	12:53.0	Seattle, Wash.	14 May 66
5000m	13:38.0t	Los Angeles, Calif.	4 Jun 66
5000m	13:33.8	Modesto, Calif.	25 May 68

## COLLEGIATE RECORDS

3 miles	12:53.0	Seattle, Wash.	14 May 66
5000m	13:38.0t	Los Angeles, Calif.	4 Jun 66
2 miles	8:31.6i	Seattle, Wash.	4 Feb 67
10,000m	28:40.2	Dusseldorf, W. Germany	17 Aug 67
5000m	13:33.8	Modesto, Calif.	25 May 68

## WORLD JUNIOR RECORDS

(Before age 20)

10,000m	29:17.8	Los Angeles, Calif.	25 Jul 64
3 miles	13:17.0t	Kingston, Jamaica	15 Aug 64
6 miles	28:07.0	Los Angeles, Calif.	12 Sep 64
10,000m	29:02.0	Los Angeles, Calif.	12 Sep 64
6 miles	27:11.6	San Diego, Calif.	27 Jun 65
3000m	7:58.0	Karlsruhe, W. Germany	5 Jul 65
2 miles	8:36.6	London, England	10 Jul 65
3 miles	13:04.0	London, England	10 Jul 65
10,000m	29:00.8	Kiev, USSR	31 Jul 65

## HIGH SCHOOL RECORDS

2 miles	9:00.0i	San Francisco, Calif.	Dec 63
2 miles	8:40.0i	San Francisco, Calif.	15 Feb 64
3 miles	13:37.8i	New York, N.Y.	22 Feb 64
2000m	5:29.0	Los Angeles, Calif.	5 Jun 64
3 miles	13:18.2	Los Angeles, Calif.	5 Jun 64
5000m	13:44.0	Los Angeles, Calif.	5 Jun 64
6 miles	28:23.8	Los Angeles, Calif.	25 Jul 64
10,000m	29:17.8	Los Angeles, Calif.	25 Jul 64
3 miles	13:17.0	Kingston, Jamaica	15 Aug 64

(t=tied record; i=indoor record)



I can hardly wait for 1972, because it should be the greatest year in the history of American distance running. Prophets of doom have said we hit our peak in the mid-'60s and have lost ground ever since. But I don't believe it.

The 1964 Olympics, where Bob Schul and Billy Mills won gold medals, was just a start. Forget 1968. It wasn't any indication of our power or lack of it. Everyone was telling us, "Watch out. You can't run very fast at high altitudes. You'll kill yourself." The people who lived at altitude knew they were going to slow down naturally, and they didn't fear it. They accepted it. So they won and we lost.

Nineteen sixty-eight was a freak year, but 1972 is going to show what I already know to exist. We have the most fantastic corps of distance runners in the world right here in America. We're great. In the Olympic Trials, we will have 15 runners under 13 minutes for the three-mile on the way to 5000 meters. Look at the AAU meet this year. How many guys did we have under 13:10? Six. And this was an off year. We are just starting to build.

In the Olympic 5000, we stand more of a chance for a gold medal than any other country. We could get the gold, silver and bronze. Steve Prefontaine now is the best anywhere at that distance, and we have others right with him—Steve Stageberg, Frank Shorter, maybe George Young, and I naturally plan to be in there, too.

It's the same in the 10,000. A lot of people have run better times than we have, but there are a lot of factors to keep us down here that we won't have in Munich. I definitely think one of the US runners has a good chance for a 10,000-meter world record next year. It might be Shorter, it might be me. It might even be Billy Mills who breaks the record. Don't think he's too old. This is another restriction we put on people. We say they're too old or too young, too this or that. Billy can come back. He's not too old. He has been in Spokane a few times recently, and I've run with him. He is running well and looks good. He definitely can come back if he wants.

I realize that Dave Bedford was running great times in 1971, that five men broke 28 minutes at the European championships, and that no American ever has gone that fast. But I have a lot of confidence in our people. This was an off year. It always works out that way. In Olympic year runners just drop out of trees and run their heads off. It will be murder to make the team next year.

I think we have seven or eight runners who can run under 28 minutes in the 10,000, given a little more training. I think we're loaded with 5000-meter men, 10,000-meter men, marathoners, steeplechasers. We're loaded with talent that no other country in the world can match.

But the negative influences that bog down individuals often infect national programs, too. We don't always run fantastic times here in America because of certain problems that don't exist in other countries. We have to run in the heat of the day for the television camera. We are plucked up one day and told to race the next because someone is needed to fill in at an international meet. We have trouble with housing. We have trouble getting along with offi-

cials. There are lots of little things that have come up to keep us from reaching our potential.

There's a universal law of farming. You can't plant corn and expect beans to come up. There's also a universal law of the mind. You can't plant negative thoughts and expect positive results to come out. Negative results will come back to you sooner or later. You have to be very, very positive. The more positive you are, the more you can do.

I have very carefully planted the positive and weeded out the negative in my thinking. If other runners and our national Olympic officials have done the same, there'll be no stopping us in Munich.

## Chapter Three

# *Closer Looks at Lindgren*

1971 AAU photo by Stan Pantovic



# W.S.U. COACH MOOBERRY

BY JIM DUNNE

There's a forgotten man in the Gerry Lindgren story. In several thousand words describing his running career, Gerry doesn't once mention the coach who guided him for five years. Lindgren speaks highly of his high school coach, Tracy Walters, but doesn't say a word for Jack Mooberry, who helped him through the rough college period.

Another case of bitterness toward the college coach? No, not at all. Although Lindgren doesn't talk much about his relationship with Mooberry (or for that matter about anything of a personal nature), he knows Jack has done a great deal for him and he feels great affection for the old man.

The chief characteristic of the Mooberry-Lindgren relationship was freedom. Gerry came to Jack a finished product as far as training ideas and philosophy were concerned. Another coach may have tried to remake Gerry. Coach Mooberry permitted Gerry to have the freedom he needed to do what he felt was in his own best interests.

Mooberry was Lindgren's guide and advisor. When asked, or when the opportunity presented itself, he would offer suggestions based on his lifetime of coaching experience. He never insisted that Gerry follow that advice. To many, Gerry seemed (and still seems) young and immature, but he was and is sure-minded and positive about distance running—and his own running in particular.

The coach spotted these traits and was wise enough not to insist. He simply was there when Gerry needed him. Often at the end of a workout, after other runners had gone to the locker room and then home, Gerry would decide to run a series of accelerations between telephone poles on the airport road. Jack would wait for Gerry to come back. The coach's health has not been good in recent years, but he would stand out in below freezing winds waiting for the little guy to come back. Gerry never asked Jack to wait, but he always appreciated the fact that the coach was there so that he would have someone to talk with about the workout.

Now that Gerry is gone from Pullman, Jack won't see him for months at a time. Lindgren never writes to anyone. He never has. But one night he will appear at Mooberry's door, chattering about a subject he and Jack were discussing the last time they got together . . . months ago. Now Gerry shows up with his wife and youngster. The Lindgrens are always welcome at the Mooberry home.

Jack always treated Gerry as an equal. Perhaps the most enduring lesson coach Mooberry taught the little runner is the fact that friendship can only be shared by equals. It cannot be bestowed from above.

This is the real Mooberry-Lindgren story that Gerry is reluctant to discuss.



Lindgren's 1966 NCAA race with Jack Bachelier. (Steve Murdock photo)

# LOST IN LOS ANGELES

Remember now, Gerry Lindgren is a master story-teller. His best stories have himself as the central character, and more often than not as the butt of the joke. Perhaps a little exaggeration creeps in around the edges of this tale about his pre-Russian meet experiences in 1964. But he says it's *based on truth*.

Lindgren arrived in Los Angeles several days before his first international race, accompanied by coach Tracy Walters. Walters and Lindgren decided on an easy beach workout, so Tracy drove his young pupil up the coast. They planned to meet again several miles later.

As Gerry ran, Walters got hung up in traffic. You know about the legendary Los Angeles traffic. Gerry passed the scheduled rendezvous point, didn't find his coach, and kept on running. He figured Tracy would catch up.

Lindgren ran out of beach at Hermosa Beach, 15 miles from his starting place. It was getting dark. He spied a clump of beach houses nearby. At the first one, no answer; same at the second and third. At the fourth house, a woman cautiously peeked out through a crack in the chain-latched door, quickly looked over this suspicious character in shorts and slammed the door in his face.

Gerry turned to retreat, looking for friendlier territory. Just then the door reopened. The man of the house was holding a shotgun. But miraculously he recognized Lindgren. The man was a former Washington State football player. He contacted the local police and arranged to have Gerry escorted back to the athletes' dormitory.

Hermosa Beach's police, however, were having a busy night. Midnight came and went, and still no ride. While he was waiting, wrapped in a blanket the police had given him, a call came in that the Coast Guard was searching for a body in the surf. The "body" fit Gerry Lindgren's description. "It took me 15 minutes," he said, "to explain that they were looking for me."

Finally, at 2 a.m., Lindgren caught a ride back to the dormitory. But his troubles weren't over yet. The Russian team had moved in while he was lost on the beach. Room changes had taken place. Gerry found Tamara Press, a 250-pound female shot putter, occupying his room. He was too tired to throw her out.

# DEFYING THE BOYCOTT

Gerry Lindgren was a first-semester freshman at Washington State. He wasn't starting to count his potential NCAA championships. The fact is, in June 1965 Lindgren was wondering if he'd ever run an NCAA race—even a college dual meet.

The National Collegiate Athletic Association and the Amateur Athletic Union were warring. Both wanted full control of track in the United States. Neither wanted to compromise, and the athletes—much like draftees in the military—were pawns in the power play.

The NCAA had slapped a boycott on the AAU's 1965 championships, saying in effect that any athlete who competed there risked not only personal penalties but recriminations against his school.

Gerry wanted to run that AAU six-mile. Not as a symbol of athletic bravery, or anything like that. He simply hadn't competed much that year (freshmen weren't allowed on varsity teams in those days) and he wanted some good, fast racing. Well, as it turned out he did become a symbol and a celebrity, and he didn't mind the role. But he started out just wanting to compete.

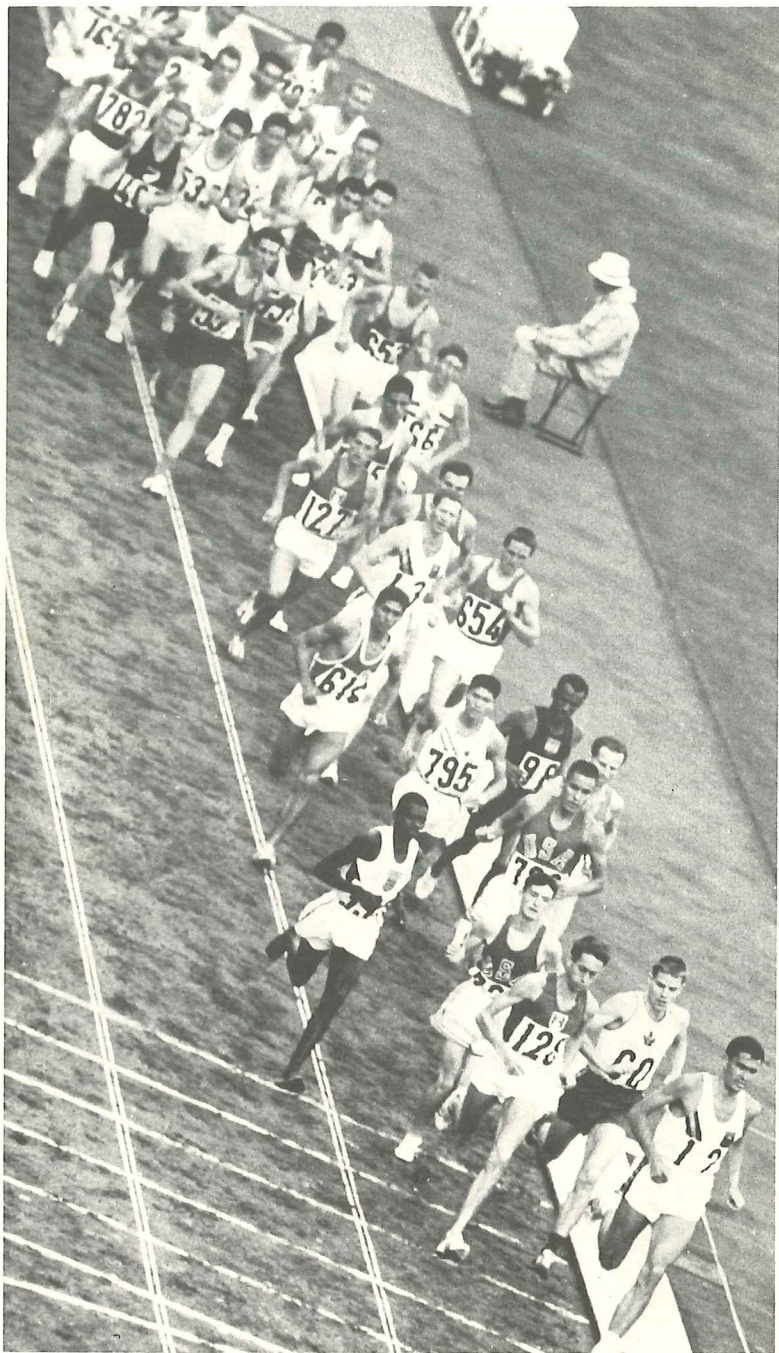
As soon as Gerry announced his intentions, rumors of dire consequences began circulating. Loss of scholarship. Ineligibility from all further collegiate competition. Slaps at Washington State's athletic department. The rumors eventually proved to be bigger than the actual threats. But at the time, Lindgren says, "It was bad. I was really scared. I thought I was going to be kicked out of school."

He stood firm, though. "I didn't think it was right that any organization could tell an athlete where he could run and where he couldn't," he says. "I thought if I bowed down, then others would follow the example. I decided to compete and take the wrath that might fall."

Whether out of fear or out of firm resolve we'll never know (though judging by Lindgren's previous statements, the latter looks more likely), but he ran what he still considers the best race of his life in San Diego. He and Billy Mills set a world record for six miles.

The NCAA-AAU war rambled on. But Lindgren now had opened a crack in the boycott, and other conscientious objectors now had the courage to defect through it, too.

There were no penalties.







**LINDGREN PAST (LEFT):** Racing along in fourth place (behind Ron Clarke but ahead of Billy Mills) in the 1964 Olympics. (Mark Shearman)

**AND PRESENT (ABOVE):** Seven years later and Lindgren is still keeping world-class company. This is the 1971 US-USSR meet. (Steve Murdock)

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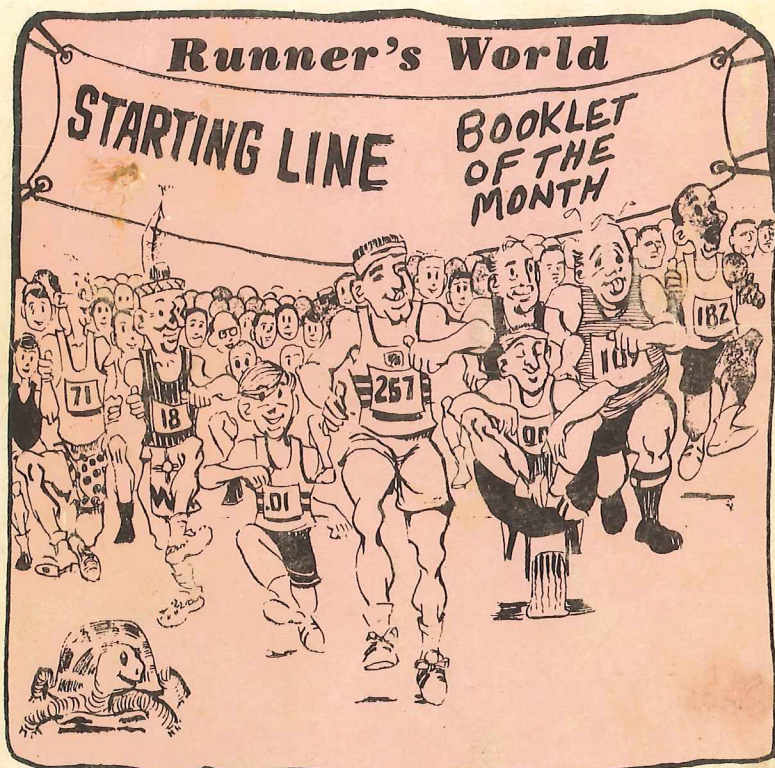
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