

# Track and Field



*The "Stramilano"*



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### *55,000 Competitors!*

Created by a group of mountaineers wishing to keep in form (and probably waxing poetic from time to time—they call themselves the "Fior di Roccia")—the "Stramilano", or the trans-Milan competition has over the past few years become one of the world's most important walking events. There were 3,500 competitors at the start of the first race in 1972, a walk of some 22 km leading from the cathedral square to the Arena via a highly circuitous route. In 1973 there were 10,000 competitors. In 1974, 25,000, and a year later there were 50,000. By 1977, the entries had grown even more, reaching 55,000. If one takes into account the Italians' legendary talent for exaggeration, these numbers are sufficient to make you stop and think.

No one seems able to explain why this competition should be so popular in a country where the majority of people prefer going everywhere on at least two wheels. Suffice it to say that at the moment, in order to sustain this jostling multitude, 2,000 kg of sandwiches, 15,000 liters of soft drinks and 2 tanners of milk are necessary. Further-

more, 20,000 hours of voluntary work are required to prepare for the event. There have to be 10 doctors, 180 first-aid persons and 300 policemen to ensure the safety of all. Taking all this into consideration, it is not surprising that the price of 2,000 lira per competitor for entering the race is nowhere near enough to cover the cost; the organizers have backing from the Milan banks so as to offset their potentially large deficit.

The "Stramilano", which takes place during the first fine days of April, is growing in international prestige and at the same time is attracting an ever larger number of foreign competitors. Even the Archbishop of Milan takes part. When it is time to start, he merely steps out of his cathedral to bless the competitors. This is the moment when the walkers set off, knowing they have only five hours in which to reach the finishing line and to obtain their medal and certificate. Since 1976, the race has been open to various national and international stars and these alone have gone into the record books.

*55,000 competitors for the 1977 Stramilano*