

# Track and Field



## *Women's Marathon*



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### *A Long Run for Equality*

It was back in 1967, a year that women runners refer to as the "Dark Ages," when the director of the famed Boston Marathon, Jock Semple, startled everyone in view by chasing after one of the contestants. His target, Kathy Switzer, was to say later, "I was crying like a maniac. Jock was spinning me around by the shoulder and telling me I was making a mockery of the race."

Switzer, indeed, had circumvented the rules, since at that time in history women were not permitted to race the gruelling distance of 26 miles 385 yards. But Kathy, then a 21-year-old student at Syracuse University, filled in her entry form as K.V. Switzer, leaving officials to assume she was male. Such was the nature of her misdeed that Switzer was suspended from the Amateur Athletic Union.

Nevertheless, it was a beginning, although it wasn't until five years later that the AAU finally relented and gave its approval to women's marathoning. Still, there was little opportunity for women to compete, with no official international events longer than a metric mile

(1,500 meters), or 3,000 meters in cross country.

In 1974 West Germany hosted the first women-only international championships, and by 1977 the Avon International Running Circuit was formed, which provided for competition in distances from 10,000 meters to the marathon.

Indicative of the phenomenal growth of interest is the fact that in 1971 only three women ran in the New York City Marathon, but by 1978 the entry list among women exceeded 1,100.

It is also a matter of record that the top women marathoners will outrun approximately three-quarters of the men in a given event. In the 1978 New York Marathon, although she was racing at the distance for the first time, Grete Waitz of Norway set a world's record for women of 2 hours 32 minutes.

Probably the best known of the women long-distance runners is 4' 11", 88-lb Miki Gorman, twice the first woman to finish both the Boston and New York Marathons, achieving these victories after she had turned 40.

*Kathy Switzer broke the barrier*