

From the RRC Archives

Jim Peters' reports from two classic marathon races, and a couple of very varied articles describing training practices from early days.

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ENSCHEDI INTERNATIONAL MARATHON 12th SEPTEMBER 1953.

by Jim Peters

On the Friday after a day's work I set off to the Royal Dutch Air Lines Office just by Knightsbridge Station. I had a four mile run round Mitcham track in 20.30 and had to call it a day. In London I met my old friend and great runner Stan Cox - he obtained his first international vest in 1939 and is still winning them in 1953 - and Jack Crump who was to be our Team Manager for this happy and memorable trip to Holland. After the Coach journey to London Airport we eventually took off as darkness was almost complete in a Consair twin engine plane.

My first view of Holland was Amsterdam beautifully lit up and it made me feel very happy indeed to be about to land in the country of those fine brave and so English-like Dutch people. We were met by a Dutch Official and hustled to a very exclusive night restaurant. There we had to wait ages for a lovely meal. From there to a boarding House, which could not be really be called a Hotel, and finally turned into bed just after midnight. As we were to be up early in the morning for the long journey to Enschede we soon put the lights out. First asleep was Jack snoring like the Devil, but then he was not racing a Marathon next day. I could hear Stan twisting and turning but that finally stopped and off he went. It seemed as if I'd never get any sleep but eventually I must have gone off for a short spell. Around about 3.a.m. Jack woke up because his WALL was moving in and out. Now Jack had not had a single drink and actually he was quite correct for the wall turned out to be a very flimsy affair that just moved in and out as the gale blew. Came 6 a.m. and up we got. I felt pretty rough as usual but tried to raise a smile. It was a fairly bright morning and off to the station we went and we were very soon on our way. Very nice diesel train, not at all crowded. and we soon covered 140 miles or so. We had plenty to talk about and saw plenty of the windmills we expected to see.

The Hotel at Enschede was just about the nicest little place I have ever stayed in and we changed into our kit and dashed off to the Stadium for our Medical. Here Jack looked a little nervous for the first time - reason was Stan and thoughts of Helsinki in 1952. Stan as usual appeared outwardly very cool and soon had the O.K. I know that Jack was more than happy about that. I then said "I'm going back to the Hotel for a sleep" and sleep I did. Woke up very dopey and off we went for the ceremonial parade. This lasted too long in the rather cold wind but otherwise everything was absolutely perfect. The course was as flat as a pancake - slightly

over distance says Squire Yarrow - and about a mile of cobble stones to be negotiated twice.

I made up my mind to do the first mile in 6 minutes to warm up and very soon the field lengthened out. Stan and Van de Zande were in the lead and Victor Olsen of Norway and myself just behind. Very soon Olsen was dropped, mainly I think because he finished second the previous week to Karvonen of Finland in the Scandinavian Championship on a severe course. Now Janus Van de Zande is a marathon runner well above average, although only 5ft. 2in high, and I predict great things if he sticks to it. He can do a 6 miles in just outside 30 minutes and in the Royal Beerschot 7K. 100m cross country race held at Antwerp on the 15th November finished 10th just behind Pat Ranger. I somehow or other won this race in 22.36, but that's another story.

From 4 miles it was I that was doing the pushing, Stan running almost stride for stride with me and the gallant little Dutch Champion pushing his way in the middle of us. After 7 miles I got anxious and put the pressure on - 5.5 miles or thereabouts - but it made no difference until nearly 9 miles and then the trio suddenly broke up and I managed to open up a 20 yard gap over Stan and he the same over Janus. After that I just plugged away on the ever winding course mainly with the wind behind me.

I reached the half way mark in 69m. 70s. and Janus in about 73 only to have cramp and stop. Then we had the wind and rain to contend with and the German Press said I would have undoubtedly have done a faster time if conditions were better. But it did not matter because I turned out to be very fit and had no difficulty in beating Karvonen's course record of 2:20 plus set up in 1951, as also did Stan. Leading positions:-

1.	J. PETERS.	GREAT BRITAIN	2h. 19m.22s.
2.	S. COX	GREAT BRITAIN	2 24 38
3.	V. OLSEN.	NORWAY	2 35 20
4.	J. VAN DE ZANDE.	HOLLAND	2 36 12
5.	A. GRUBER.	AUSTRIA	2 38 02
6.	H. VOLBACK.	GERMANY	2 39 00

In the evening a good time was had by all and the Dutch people were extremely nice. Stan and I both slept much better than we usually do and back to England we came on Sunday for me to miss my first run of my new season which began on September 1st. This was only because it was too late to go out.

TURKU MARATHON 4th OCTOBER, 1953

by Jim Peters.

Thirty two days after Enschede, I had promised to run in Finland my fourth Marathon of the season. I accepted for several reasons: 1. Experience 2. To try to remove my dismal failure at Helsinki in 1952 where I ran myself into the ground and collapsed at 20 miles 3. To see if I could do two Marathons in three weeks in case I might be asked to do that in 1954. Most enthusiasts will see I'm sure what is at the back of my mind when I think of that but I do not wish to say exactly what in writing as I take nothing for granted and wish to make any International teams I might be picked for. Anyhow I plugged on with my Commando training averaging about 110 miles in 12 sessions and actually did a 30 minute six miles on Mitcham track just before I left.

The B.A.A.B. very kindly gave me special permission to go on my own as the Finns just could not pay for two, and John Riley, son of Mr Ernest Riley of the "News of the World" Relay fame, undertook to look after me. I must thank John and everyone else for the wonderful help they gave in making the trip possible.

Came Thursday, the 1st October, and soon after breakfast I ran 10 miles to my beloved Hainault Forest and back in 56.20 and my wife Frieda had a nice bath ready on my return. She also packed my bag as usual although, except on rare occasions, she never watches me race. I kissed her and young Robin aged 6 goodbye, a hard task, and off I went with the determination of a man going out to slaughter or be slaughtered. I felt pretty rough as usual and was quite relieved in a sense to take off in the B.E.A. Viscount to Copenhagen. Here we had to wait three hours for a Finnish plane to Helsinki. We arrived around 1 a.m. in plenty of rain and at once my mind turned to last year but we soon reached the Hotel Helsinki and so to bed. Believe it or not I could not sleep.

On Saturday Morning I had a real English breakfast and gave an interview to the Press who seemed very interested in my training and the fact that I had asked Paavo Nurmi his advice for 10,000 metres training in 1947 when Veiko Heino wiped the floor with Jack Holden, myself, Reg Cosney and Doug Wingate in 29.28 for six miles or thereabouts. He said "Every day - twice a day, sometimes fast sometimes slow." in the best English he could muster. How I wished I had taken his advice in 1947 and had a bash. They were also impressed with the fact that in 1953 I had run three 6 miles on only Marathon training in 29:01.5, 29:07.4 and 29:06.4.

John and I then went for a stroll in Helsinki for an hour and re-visited the Harbour and Stores and bought a couple of running badges for Robin. After lunch he put me on an old coach for 140 miles with as many stops on a bumpy road. The sun came out and I felt very ill when I finally reached Turku at 5 pm. I was

met by Lasse Viarteen - 3rd in the 5,000 and 3rd in the 10,000 metres in the 1932 Los Angeles Olympic Games when he also ran against Sam Ferris in the Marathon but had to retire - he could only say in English "Welcome to Finland".

Volbach, the German Champion, who has promised to train as hard as I do, came on Sunday and I looked out of my Hotel at the rain. Soon I met the other competitors and away we went to the Market Square for the start. The course, a figure 8, was neither severe or easy. Something like 8 miles on rough cobble stones, 5 on the track, 3 of woods and the rest on reasonable roads.

I started slowly and after a mile went into the lead but got away from Karvonen very slowly. He was anxious to break his course record of 2.25 plus and I could not understand why he did not come with me. I ran the 25 miles completely on my own and seemed to be on top of my form. No trouble until I reached the Stadium where I had to do 10 laps on the outside instead of the usual one. The track was soft from the heavy rain and I seemed very leg weary. However I made it and soon recovered to be a really happy man, especially when Roy Moor of the "News Chronicle" phoned me to say my folks at home all had the news.

Result:-

1.	J. PETERS.	GREAT BRITAIN.	2h. 18m.34.8s
2.	V. KARVONEN.	FINLAND.	2 25 47
3.	O. KOSKINEN.	FINLAND	2 32 53.6

Allis Stenroos presented the prizes. He, I believe, won the Olympic Marathon the year Harold Abrahams won the 100 metres and was Caretaker of the Stadium at Helsinki during the last Games.

The journey back was uneventful. Arriving at 6, I was out by 7 doing 6 miles in 35:30. I had the Brighton Relay, then 5 days off to think of, when I would be running for my Club Essex Beagles who, I modestly thought, had a chance. It is old news now that we won and that I set up a record for Leg 8 and even beat 21 year old Ken Norris, who has done a 14:01 three miles this season, by 32 seconds.

The following Saturday I was in the winning team in the Chelmsford Relay and did the fastest time of the day, a week before my 35th birthday. This is, however, only the second fastest time as Sando did 14:50 last year compared with my 15 minutes. I also beat my own record in the Ipswich relay by 8.4 seconds and this I regard as one of my best performances. Shortly afterwards I won a cross country race in Belgium from a field of 158. So, Road Runners, don't be afraid to venture over the country. I train the whole year on it.