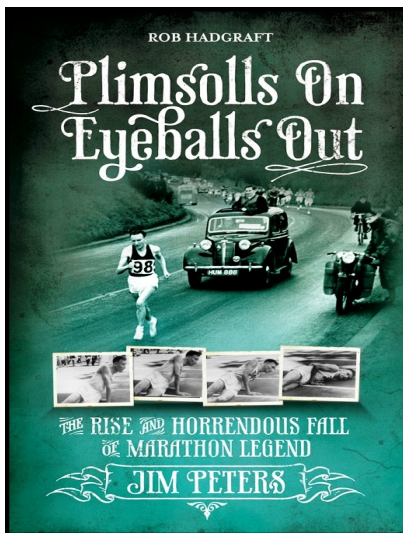




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**'PLIMSOLLS ON,
EYEBALLS OUT:**

**The Rise and
Horrendous Fall of
Marathon Legend
Jim Peters'**

**By
ROB HADGRAFT**

Foreword by
Dave Bedford

272 pages, illustrated
£14.99

ISBN 978-1-905328-96-3

On sale November 2011.

Also available as an e-book for
Amazon 'Kindle' users

Book launch

November 2011

The marathon legend who owed it all to Woolworth plimsolls!

BRITAIN'S distance runners go into the 2012 London Olympics as rank outsiders, but there was a time when we boasted the finest marathon runner the world had ever seen – by a country mile!

In the 1950s Jim Peters single-handedly turned marathon running into a high-speed race against the clock, smashing world records in his Woolworths plimsolls.

A mild-mannered dispensing optician from Essex, when Peters pulled on running kit he became a demon running machine. His motto was 'kill or be killed' and his fierce training programme horrified friend and foe alike.

For decades, marathons had been the preserve of elderly plodders, who trained and raced slowly and steadily, believing it to be the only path to success. Jim Peters blasted such theories out of the water.

Born in London's poverty-stricken East End, he overcame serious childhood ill-health to make his name as a runner. His career was interrupted by the war and he came late to the marathon, having been humiliated into track retirement by the great Zatopek at the 1948 London Olympics.

Peters' comeback aged 32 involved a self-imposed training programme of unprecedented intensity. 'I bashed it night after night' was his own description. His 1951 marathon debut caused a sensation and led to a series of glorious world records.

Peters was no stylist, he lacked tactical nous, ignored conventional wisdom and ran 'ugly'. But guts and sheer bloody-mindedness saw him grind out victories, no matter how harsh the conditions.

Then, just as he was being described as indestructible, his world came crashing down. In a Vancouver heatwave, Peters paid dearly for his policy of running 'eyeballs out' every time. What happened at the 1954 Empire Games was so awful that "women wept and grown men lost their lunch". Peters' rise had been astonishing, but his fall was truly horrendous. This is his story.

*** ROB HADGRAFT's fifth athletics biography in this acclaimed series is on sale now. If you experience any problems obtaining a copy, please e-mail the author: r.hadgraft@btinternet.com**



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