

Billy Reynolds

March 29, 1905 - January 12, 1964

Running as part of his training regimen for boxing led Billy Reynolds to a remarkable career as one of Canada's premier long distance runners. In 1930 and 1931 the "Galt Phenomenon" established Canadian records in the 10,000 metres, 10-mile and 15-mile races.

At the Canadian Championships when he set the 10,000 metre record on Sat. Aug. 9, 1930, at Toronto's Varsity stadium, he shaved 52 seconds off the existing record held by the legendary Johnny Miles. Looking on in the stands to see Reynolds run the new mark of 32:58.3-5, were athletes from New Zealand, Australia and South Africa.

It was Reynolds' fourth win in five starts – his only loss had been a second to Hamilton's famed Hornby in a three-mile race. More importantly, it qualified him for the British Empire Games.

In 1930, at the Toronto Bloor St. Businessmen's 15-mile race, a race he won on several occasions, Reynolds finished a mile ahead of his nearest rival.

His well-deserved selection as a member of the 1928 Canadian Olympic team was marked by controversy. Originally chosen to run the 10,000 metres and to be a spare in the marathon race, he wound up not running either.

It was one of the saddest moments of his running career.

Once in Amsterdam, Billy trained so well that a decision was made to drop one of the five marathon team members and add him. Hence, Reynolds chose to bypass the 10,000 metres and concentrate on the marathon. But officials for the marathon were not notified of the change in Canadian personnel and he was not allowed to run that race.

Deeply disappointed, Reynolds returned to Galt following the Olympics and, in 1930, experienced what he called one of his proudest moments, running for Canada in the 1930 British Empire Games, where he finished sixth in the 10,000 metres.

His contributions to track and field were not limited to his own races. Billy was a founding member of the Galt Legion Track Club. He continued competing until 1935 and finished 11th and 13th in his two appearances in the Boston Marathon. And his son Billy Jr. captained the Michigan State cross-country team to an NCAA championship in the 1960s.

Billy Reynolds died of cancer in January, 1964. He was 58. He had worked at Babcock and Wilcox for 40 years and been a resident of Galt for 42 years.

Today, his running exploits live on in the annals of Canadian running history. A few months before his death he was made an honorary member of the Galt Branch 121 of the Royal Canadian Legion.

"I doubt if everyone fully appreciates the staggering blow that this deals to track and field in the Galt area," said Orlando Martini, vice-president of the Central Ontario AAU of Canada. "He was a tireless worker and we can ill-afford to lose men of his experience, stature and devotion."



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