

GETTING BETTER WITH AGE

Speed and spirit at the national masters cross-country championships

Kirk Randall is a 43-year-old squash professional from Wellesley, Massachusetts, who teaches squash and operates the pro shop at the University Club in Boston. He's a ruggedly handsome man with a Tom Selleck mustache and a strapping physique measuring six feet and 165 pounds. He ran track in high school and college, started running again at age 33 and currently commands respect among masters runners for his speed and versatility.

"I never had a kick in college," said Randall after winning the 40-49 division of The Athletics Congress National Masters Cross-Country Championships last November at

Holmdel Park in Holmdel, New Jersey. His time was 33:56.7, excellent for the hilly 10-km course, and he won by 23 seconds. "All of a sudden, running track as a master, I have speed at the end of a race. People know me as a threat."

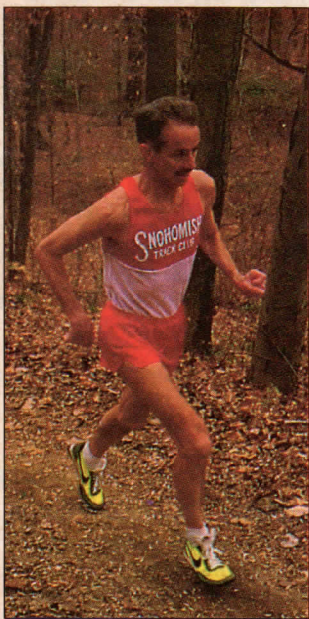
Though he has run several marathons and has a PR of 2:24:29 (at age 37), Randall prefers the shorter distances now and thrives on track and cross-country. He's run the mile in 4:23.1, a U.S. 40-44 age-group record, and his best road times are 31:45 for 10 km and 48:13 for 15 km.

Randall, third in the masters division of *The Runner* Road Race Rankings for 1984, trains 60-70 miles a week, and his schedule is spiced with variety. It includes LSD, fartlek, track work, hill repetitions and "Oregon-style drills." Also, in addition to his squash, Randall does some swimming and weight training.

He enjoys the masters scene. "There's a nice, outgoing feeling about it," Randall says. "The people are fit, they have self-confidence. You develop friendships, but then you hammer each other in a race. It's fun."

This feeling of camaraderie also was expressed by 50-year-old Derek Mahaffey of Bellevue, Washington, the 50-59 winner in 35:42.5. Mahaffey, a physicist for Boeing Aircraft, runs for the well-traveled Snohomish Track Club. "The older runners take tremendous satisfaction in each other's performances," he said. "There's this peculiar phenomenon of looking forward to turning 50."

Second to Mahaffey in the 50-59 grouping was 53-year-old Jim Sutton, a high school principal from Reading, Penn-



HOLMDEL '84

Here, Kelliher handed off to Taku's Bill Ferguson and Bronsey handed off to Bob Ferguson (no relation), the Lions Gate captain. Although Bob had almost five minutes to make up in order to catch Bill, he was confident. At this point, Bob Ferguson was sure his team would win, but not because he thought he was that much faster than Bill Ferguson. He had been sure of victory since the finish of the first leg when Greg Raschick failed to gain more than a minute and a half on Greg Badger.

Badger himself had assumed Raschick would gain at least three minutes that first leg. That Raschick didn't was considered a significant victory.

An accountant, Bob Ferguson had sat down before the race with pen and paper to do some figuring. Estimating the time each of his teammates could run for his assigned leg, he factored in the Taku Striders' 1983 statistics and concluded, using that special calculus of hard fact, hope and hunch that is the province of any team captain, that unless the Alaskans recruited Rob de Castella or Toshihiko Seko, it would be a darn close race. After Badger kept close to Raschick, Ferguson figured the race was in the bag.

"The important thing in a race like this is not to run faster than the other guy, but better," Ferguson would theorize after the race. "In the relay, everyone contributes. The slowest runner is as important as the fastest as long as he does his best. It's a matter of how much you can do relative to your opponents."

The psychology of a relay like this is considerably different than that of a traditional foot race. There is none of the loneliness of the long-distance runner here. A relay is the only time a runner can experience the pleasures and pressures of belonging to a team. Even as part of a track team or running club, you're competing against the clock, yourself and your own limits—even, in a sense, against your teammates—and goals seem more individual than mutual. But in a relay like the Klondike, personal goals quickly become subordinate to the group goal. Your victories and failures are not your own; they belong to the whole team. The desire not to let the team down can unnerve a runner, but it can also bring out the best in him or her, tapping undiscovered strengths.

Bob Ferguson caught Bill Ferguson with three miles to go in their 11.7-mile leg out of Carcross. In his last three miles, Bob built up a 90-second lead for

Lions Gate. When David Sinclair took over for the Vancouver team, the pressure was on.

"It scared the hell out of me," Sinclair said later. "I had the lead, and I didn't want anyone to say it was my fault we lost it. My legs felt like lead. Bob had done all that work to get us the lead and I didn't want to blow it. I went out too hard too early and I felt horrible."

Still, Sinclair, a filmmaker, gained another seven minutes for Lions Gate, and the the final two runners built that lead to 13 minutes by the end, 11:09:08 to Taku Striders' 11:23:10. For the 110 miles, the winning pace was just over six minutes per mile, excellent for the conditions. In third place, the Calgary Road Runners finished 40 minutes back in 12:05:10. The first-place women's team (13th overall) was Midnight Transfer from Juneau, defending champions, in 13:55:35. The first-place mixed team, Pepsi Road Runners from Whitehorse (fourth overall) finished in 12:42:39.

A ski chalet, perched on the hills above Whitehorse, hosted the party that night. Glenn Frick and the Taku Striders kept to themselves, not antisocial or aloof, but thoughtful, as they began even during the post-race bacchanal to plan for next year. Something of a philosophical rift was developing among the Striders, something new and complex they'd never had to deal with before. Frick was already talking about those two lean Juneau boys who lived in Anchorage now. Jerry Buckley, Frick's good friend and fellow carpenter who'd run the ninth leg, allowed as how he didn't think recruiting was quite the point. "This is for drinking beer and having fun, Glenn," he said gently.

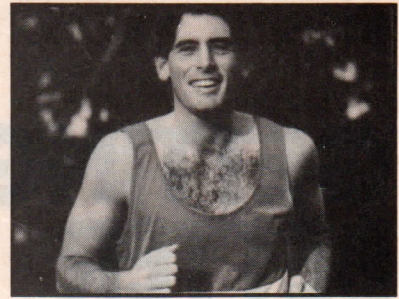
"But we can beat them," Frick insisted. "I know we can."

"If you bring in anyone from outside," Buckley said softly, "I don't know if I can run next year."

Frick and Buckley stared at one another, an awkward moment of silence, while a fiddler played bluegrass and smoke from the barbecue blew through open doors on a wind that had winter written all over it. Then Kelly Miller, Taku's fifth-leg runner, a lean young man bronze from a summer of triathlon training in San Diego, his eyes sparkling with that resilience and excitement that visits you even in defeat if you did your very best, held up his glass and said, "This is going to sound crazy, but it was a great race, wasn't it? Wasn't it a great race?"

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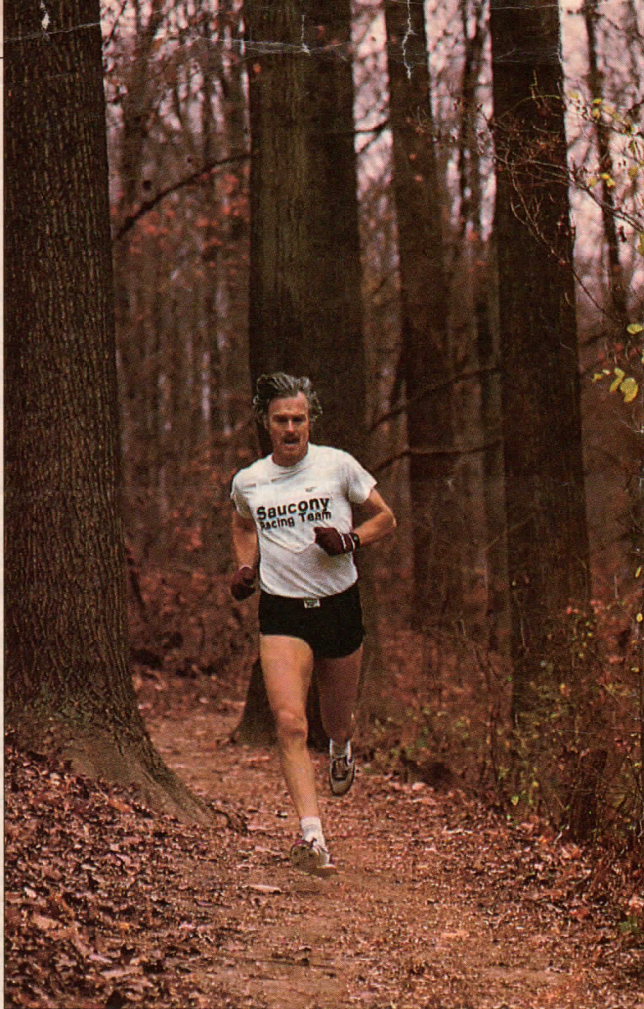
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sylvania. A 9.8 sprinter in his college days, Sutton makes the most of his speed and has run a 2:06 880 and 4:38 mile. One workout he relies on to keep himself sharp is a weekly session of 20 x 110 yards on grass, at three-quarter speed. Sutton relishes the memory of the time Sebastian Coe gave a talk at his school and the two of them did a 7 A.M. workout together. "I ran like hell for eight miles," he says with pride.

That's an attitude close to the heart of Dr. George Sheehan, the winner of the 60-and-over race at the masters cross-country meet. Trailing through the first of the two 5-km loops, Sheehan dogged the leaders and then raced ahead on the final downhill stretch for a convincing victory, in 43:58. He collapsed, in character, at the finish, and lay panting on the chilled turf. If it was anyone other than Sheehan contorted on the ground, an observer might have been tempted to call out: "Is there a doctor in the house?" **FINISH**

Masters of their game. Top: The versatile Kirk Randall of Massachusetts, 40-49 champion, is a threat in track, cross-country and on the road. Below: Speedy Jim Sutton, of Pennsylvania, ahead, finished second in the 50-59 division. Bottom: New York's Kathy McIntyre was the overall women's winner. Center: The meet included sub-masters competition, and the men's champ was Harry Nolan of New Jersey, fourth from right. Far left: Derek Mahaffey of Washington State, proud of "looking forward to turning 50," won the 50-59 race.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY STEVEN E. SUTTON/DUOMO

