

CHARLES UNIVERSITY IN PRAGUE,
FACULTY OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND SPORT,
DEPARTMENT OF KINANTHROPOLOGY, HUMANITIES
AND MANAGEMENT OF SPORT

DEVELOPMENT OF MODERN MARATHONS AND DISTANCE RUNNING

SASHO BELOVSKI

SUMMARY

This work attempts to present the birth, development, and diffusion of modern marathon and distance running. Ancient stories and initial beginnings are fairly mentioned, but without any attempt to analyze in details the early forms of running. Instead, a more accurate study starts with the last decades of the 19th century which are being considered as crucial period for what will later become a new phenomenon of today's modern society.

The research approach relies on qualitative analysis and it's characterized, besides existing literature, with personal interviews with key figures from the area of interest. It further contains short case studies that help to understand different aspects that contributed to the expansion and improvement of the industry of marathon and running in general. Part of the analysis will be also focused on the Czech Republic, so that this work gains larger local relevance and applications.

Modern marathon and distance running is experiencing rapid growth and gains larger importance among various stakeholders. It can be said that the knowledge about its recent development is not very extensive, even among people that practice it or are directly and indirectly involved. The aim of this work, thus, is to offer selected highlights of its modern beginnings which should serve not just enthusiastic runners and organizers of marathon and long distance running events, but also historians, students, and academics as source of useful information and base for further academic works.

Keywords: sport, marathon, distance running, IAAF, AIMS, PIM

INTRODUCTION

This work deals with studying the development of modern marathon and distance running as an industry in sport that recently enjoys increasing global popularity and success. The idea is to present its modern beginnings, which means that we will mainly observe the period between the end of 19th and beginning of 20th century up until today. However, it is important to briefly explain few circumstances from the ancient world, which will offer us smoother transition in describing newer marathon history.

We can claim that it all started with Pheidippides, an Athenian ‘day runner’ by profession, whose job was to run all day delivering messages. He also appears by the name of Philippides, if we prefer some of Herodotus’ and Plutarch’s manuscripts (Marathon 490 BC, 2002). This courier was the one that, supposedly, shouted out “Be happy! We have won!” and then collapsed and died, after running around 40 km from the city of Marathon to Athens, bringing the news of victory of Athens over the Persians in 490 BC (Miller, 2004). Well, Pheidippides’ name also appears in connection to rather different story. It was more likely that he ran from Athens to Sparta before the battle of Marathon asking Spartans for help, whereas his run to Athens to proclaim victory actually never occurred (Miller, 2004). In any case, we will not investigate what really happened. It is important that the myth has been created and, obviously, it was strong and beautiful enough to inspire and start the modern marathon running tradition.

After hibernating for many centuries, the myth of Pheidippides has been revived in coincidence with the birth of the modern Olympic Games in 1896 initiated by Baron Pierre de Coubertin. It was certain Michel Bréal, a friend and advisor of Coubertin, who, fascinated by the story of Pheidippides, encouraged the idea of adding a running event to the inaugural Olympic Games in Athens. As a result, the official program of the games from 1895 included a “Running event called ‘Marathon’ over a distance of 48 km from Marathon to Athens for a trophy, sponsored by Mr. M. Bréal, member of the Institut de France” (AIMS, 2012). Until the start of the games, the official program was few times revised, by which the distance to be run was modified, first to 42 km, and finally to 40 km. As we will see later on, the question of the official marathon distance has developed a quite interesting history on its own. Curious enough though, the Olympic race was not the first one. “A month before the Olympic race a Greek Championship event was held, in which 11 competitors ran from Marathon to Athens. This was the first ever Marathon race” (Jones, 2003). In any case, what is important is that marathon was now established and epitomized not just as a place in ancient and modern Greece, but also as a modern running event.

The next marathon happened only two months after the first games, from Paris to the town of Conflans (AIMS, 2012). This event only anticipated the development of the marathon race as a running event independent from the Olympic Games. What we will be examining in the following pages is this marathon evolution on its own, from 1896 up until present day.

METHODOLOGY

The development of modern marathon running is a process which, as nearly any other, is characterized with ongoing improvements even on a daily basis. Obviously, it is impossible to trace all the concrete occurrences that added to the growth of the marathon industry. Therefore, the methodological approach of this credit work aims to present and describe selected facts and events that significantly influenced the marathon industry and contributed to its growth. The methodological goal is to answer the following questions:

- Which historical moments were the most important ones in shaping the future of the modern marathon and distance running?

- How and why these events contributed to the growth and development of the marathon running industry?

Given the fact that the above questions can be best answered by scrutinized study of literature and direct communication with relevant experts, the applied methodological approach will be ‘qualitative research method’ as per the methodological indications from authors such as Hendl (Hendl, 1999). This process will include:

Subject of the research – as mentioned previously, the focus of the research will be the development of modern marathon and distance running, stretching from the end of the 19th century up until today. In addition, this work will include events that are relevant and applicable for the Czech Republic.

Qualitative approach – several concrete moments and events will be selected and explained in separate chapters, whereas the chapters will have a form of either summarized findings or short case studies.

Data collection – all inputs necessary to describe the given occasions will be collected mainly from existing literature and interviews (formal or informal) with acknowledged personalities and experts from the industry.

Research conclusion – as mentioned above, some of the results will be narrated directly in the given chapters, while others will be translated into case studies. In addition, short conclusion will follow which will close this work.

Research style – the author’s style is narrative writing, avoiding graphs, tables, or statistics.

ANALYSIS

At the beginning, it is important to mention and it can be argued that the expression ‘marathon’ became kind of a ‘brand’ and, as such, sometimes is being wrongly used by the general public as a synonym for different long distance road races. The distances that are officially categorized, and their world records recognized by IAAF, are marathons (42.195 km), half marathons (21.097 km), 100 km, 30 km, 25 km, 20 km, 15 km, and 10 km races (IAAF, 2012). These race distances, in various forms, usually represent the product portfolio of marathon and distance race organizers, together with other categories such as 5 km race or relays.

In the following chapters, we will take a look at few selected milestones that shaped and set the directions for growth of this new industry and its emerging importance. Namely, it will be written about setting the marathon distance, the oldest marathon organizer in the world, the forming of AIMS and IAAF, or the running in the Czech Republic and the Prague International Marathon.

Defining the official marathon distance

As previously mentioned in the introduction of the credit work, the initial officially recognized marathon distance at the first Olympic Games in 1896 was set to 40 km (25 miles). This distance was generally used at, more or less, all other marathon events in the following years, including the Paris and St Louis Olympic races – although the St Louis race,

exceptionally, turned out to be over distance (AIMS, 2012). The major change, which proved to be essential for what we witness today, happened in 1908 during the Olympic Games in London. “The Franco-British Exhibition was being held at the new White City Stadium in West London, where the Olympic Marathon was to finish in front of the royal box from which Queen Alexandra would watch. Preserving the royal theme, the start was to be at Windsor Castle. The length was fixed at 26 miles (41.84 km) and seems to have been measured very conscientiously. A late request from the Queen, to move the start back to the East Lawn of Windsor Castle, from where it could be seen by the royal children in their nursery, added a further 385 yards (352 m)” (AIMS, 2012). This distance was standardised at 42.195 km (26 miles 385 yards) in 1921 and it remained being used until today.

Boston Marathon – the oldest annual marathon in the world

The very first Boston Marathon was held on April 19, 1897. It was organized by the Boston Athletic Association (B.A.A.) and has been managed by the same organization until present day. The association itself has been one of the nation’s oldest athletic clubs, established in 1887, with an objective to “encourage all manly sports and promote physical culture” (B.A.A., 2012). One of the association’s first activities was organizing springtime athletic competition which included various disciplines, but it did not include a marathon race.

The Boston Athletic Association took its inspiration to organize a marathon event during the first modern Olympic Games in 1896. One of their members, Arthur Blake, was among the drop outs during the marathon race in Athens, but his participation alone was enough to bring back home the idea to organize something similar in Boston. As a result, the world’s oldest annual marathon started its successful tradition lasting for 116 years. Whereas the inaugural race welcomed 15 competitors, the centennial edition in 1996 allowed 38,708 entrants. (B.A.A., 2012).

Over the years, the Boston Marathon grew to become recognized not only as the oldest and one of the largest, but also as one of the most prestigious marathon events in the world. In 2006 it teamed up with the marathon organizers in London, New York, Chicago, and Berlin, to form the World Marathon Majors. Consequently to its increasing influence in the society, the Boston Athletic Association’s objective has changed and positioned itself as “a non-profit organization with a mission of managing athletic events and promoting a healthy lifestyle through sports, especially running” (B.A.A., 2012). The Boston Marathon today represents not just a 42 km race, but also an event accessible and relevant for half marathon, 5 km, 10 km, wheelchair, or relay runners. Let’s mention here the fact that the Boston marathon was not friendly towards women runners for a long time. The event gained notoriety on this subject in 1967, when an official tried to eject a woman named Katherine Switzer from the race (she registered for the race under her initial and surname only). Even though she was not the first female runner running a marathon distance, the photos of the accident aroused large media attention and represented a certain breakthrough for women in running (Switzer, 2012).

Another step forward in shaping the development of the marathon events, which especially characterizes the World Marathon Majors, is the question of handling the registration process. Namely, Boston Marathon is one of the events that attract way more applicants than the capacity allows. As a result, each year the organizers have to manage a fair

selection among all runners willing to start the race. While each event organizer is free to choose its selection criteria (e.g. through charity organizations, first come-first served, lottery), the B.A.A. is practicing a method of qualifying times. Practically, runners are allowed to apply for a start number only if they have achieved designated times established by the organizers. These time standards correspond with applicants' age and gender and can be obtained at other 'certified' races (Morse, 2012). Nevertheless, none of the applied selection criteria proved to be ideal and perfectly fair, and thus race organizers from all over the world make continuous and ongoing efforts and try to find the most reasonable formula for satisfying the demand for entries.

Another remarkable curiosity attached to the Boston Marathon is the fact that the IAAF doesn't recognize the event's fastest time as official world record. Boston's course has a net elevation loss that exceeds the IAAF's limits, so is not considered 'legal' for record purposes (Morse, 2012). It seems that the exclusion of the race from the list of pretenders for world fastest course hasn't hurt the reputation of the marathon. Obviously, some of the fastest elites are still lured to participate in the race, regardless of their null results. This might be explained by the initiative of Guy Morse (former race director and actual senior director of external affairs), who was successful to attract world top runners by his achievement to partner with main sponsor John Hancock Financial Services and introduce lucrative bonus incentives (B.A.A., 2012).

As a matter of fact, stable sponsorship deals have proved to be crucial for mere existence and development of marathon events in general. At the same time, marathon races have become very appealing platform for corporations and their non-traditional communication of corporate and social values. At the end of the day, these collaborations and partnerships are being perceived as beneficial for both parties, and also for the running community, cities, suppliers, and many other various stakeholders. Again, the Boston Marathon is among the leaders in this area. Namely, the organizers achieved not just to keep adidas as their main sponsors for the last 20 years, but have just concluded an agreement for another ten years (B.A.A., 2012).

Boston Marathon remains one of the most influential and trend setting events in the world. Being the world's oldest annual marathon means an excellent starting point to leverage on different initiatives, but also a responsibility to dictate the tempo and shape the growth and development of the marathon and running industry.

The International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF)

In the first decade of the 20th century athletics was already one of the main disciplines of the Olympic Games, despite the fact that the sport was lacking a governing body. In 1912, the games were held in Sweden, and shortly after their closing ceremony the IAAF was formed in Stockholm on 17 July. At that time, the abbreviation stood for 'International Amateur Athletic Federation' and remained so up until 2001 when it changed its name to 'International Association of Athletics Federations'. As the current IAAF president Lamine Diack explains, the organization recognized the need for adjustment because "Athletics underwent many changes which reflected the political and socio-economic evolution of the wider world" and due to "the growth of a professional sporting world which did not exist in 1912" (IAAF, 2012).

Besides modifying the name, the organization also changed its headquarters. After more than 30 years in Sweden and over 40 years in England, the Principality of Monaco has been the IAAF's home since 1993 (IAAF, 2012).

Changing places and modifying the name was just two of the many steps IAAF undertook in the past decades. The results of years' long process of development and growth of Athletics were captured into a centenary edition of the IAAF Constitution which celebrates '100 years of Athletics Excellence'. While the document has been sophisticated to meet all contemporary complexities of sport, IAAF claims that the fundamental objectives remained untouched. Namely, as Diack continues, "the IAAF was founded to fulfill the need for a world governing authority, for a competition programme, for standardised technical equipment and for a list of official World records" (IAAF Constitution, 2011). At the very beginning, these objectives were shared among 17 national associations who founded the IAAF, and by today this number increased to 212 national member federations. (IAAF, 2012).

For a long time, Athletics were strongly and mainly associated with the Olympic Games. Hence, its 'public appearance' and general interest was based only on a four years' cycle, coinciding with the games. These circumstances slowly started to change in the eighties which was the period when the IAAF began to expand and develop its own Competition Programme. It all started in 1980 when the IAAF Council announced its first World Championships which were to be held in Helsinki. Until that year, including Moscow 1980, the Olympic Games were considered as the official World Championships in Athletics and the Olympic winner was celebrated as a World Champion. In the following years, few other events were added to the programme and, as a result, the organization introduced a coordinated package of IAAF events named 'World Athletic Series'. Its first cycle included the inaugural IAAF World Marathon Cup, and later on also added the IAAF World Half Marathon Championships. Today, the IAAF Competition Programme consists of 14 pillars, among which belongs the Road Race Labels (IAAF, 2012).

As mentioned earlier, the IAAF was founded as the world governing body for Athletics and it has been primarily, and correctly, associated with track and field Athletics. However, as we witnessed in the later developments and growth of the sport, it enlarged its government and influence also towards road race competitions, and hence absorbed responsibility for fostering and promoting long distance running such as marathon events. These long distance road races attract large population and communities of amateur and leisure runners, as they give opportunity to 'normal' people to participate in professionally organized events alongside their favorite elite athletes. This is why President Diack perceives that "it is also fundamental that we fully understand that athletics is no longer just about high performance, gold medals and records, but also about 'sport for all' and about ensuring that the maximum numbers of citizens are able to participate in Athletics. This means, of course, the thriving world of road running, which is where the majority of people actually connect directly with the world of Athletics" (IAAF, 2012).

Hence, the IAAF Road Race Labels and their regulations convey the attention that the organization is giving to the development of the long distance road race events. Namely, each year IAAF is awarding leading Road Races in the world with designated labels of quality. The rules and requirements are manifold and highlight several focuses (IAAF Road Race Labels, 2012):

- Races are divided in three categories: marathons, half marathons, and other mixed gender mass participation races. Other races means other standard (5 km, 10 km, 15 km, etc.) and recognized ‘classical’ non-standard distance races (Paris-Versailles over 17.6 km).
- Races must have an international elite field of at least five different nationalities between men and women.
IAAF awards Gold, Silver, and Bronze Labels which are granted for one year depending on the fulfilled criteria as per below.
Technical requirements such as:
 - Organization (health and safety of participants and officials, race referees, refreshment points)
 - Measurement (officially measured course by IAAF/AIMS measurer, intermediate timing points)
 - Road closures (traffic free course, police and other traffic controllers)
 - Timing (full electronic timers, time splits, available to media, clock car)
 - Video screen (giant screen, TV monitors)
 - Data processing and results (full data processing service, online availability, immediate submission)
 - Athletes (international elite field, performance, reimbursement of expenses, prize money, bonuses)
 - Health and safety (medical and doping requirements, refreshment stations, doping controls, safety and security to participants and minimum disruption of local residents)
 - Media and promotional requirements (media center, press conferences)
 - Broadcast requirements (live domestic coverage, international coverage, streaming)
 - Insurance (athletes, officials)
 - Equality (equal prize money)

Alongside the above mentioned high level priorities of the IAAF, the organization continuously works on many other activities that foster, promote and develop the sport of Athletics and long distance races. The federation’s strategic and systematic initiatives include support of foundations, education and development centers, scientific research and publications, scholarships, or technical and social activities (IAAF, 2012). Furthermore, it teams up with other subjects and parties, with whom it agrees on various memorandums of understanding for mutual promotion and support. Such an initiative is ongoing with the Association of International Marathons and Distance Races (AIMS), about whom it will be written more in the next chapter.

Association of International Marathons and Distance Races (AIMS)

As mentioned above, marathons and other long distance road races were for a long time on the margins of interest for the IAAF who was predominantly occupied with track and field events. Nevertheless, the expansion of marathon events was growing its own way and the number of race organizers was adding continuously. “... it seemed as if every city in the world suddenly wanted a marathon, and many organisers responded to the demand,” says Hugh Jones, Secretary of AIMS (Jones, 2012). Back in the eighties, some of the most agile race organizers started to meet and discuss ideas for cooperating with each other. One of

those ideas was organizing a ‘World Circuit’ of Marathons, which eventually faded out. However, race organizers recognized the potential of staying close and continued to meet informally, now with a vision to establish an association. It was soon after, in a formal meeting in London on 6th of May 1982, when the ‘Association of International Marathons’ (AIMS) was established by 28 founding member race organizers. One of the most acute challenges troubling race organizers was the need to set up strict measurement criteria that would ensure and prove that the marathon distance was indeed of a correct length. As these kinds of topics were numerous, the organization soon realized the need to provide more structured and strategic guidelines of the association. As a result, three general objectives were embodied in AIMS statutes, and they remain valid until present day (AIMS, 2012).

- To foster and promote distance running throughout the world.
- To work with the International Association of Athletic Federations (IAAF) on all matters relating to international distance races.
- To exchange information, knowledge and expertise among members of the association.

These objectives, translated into concrete actions over the years, have brought obvious results and success. One indicator that shows AIMS’s growth and influence is the number of its members which increased to more than 320 races, reaching even territories such as the Arctic or Antarctica. Another pointer showing its impact on the running world is the fact that, similarly to IAAF, it undertook a change of its name to the ‘Association of International Marathons and Distance Races’. Even though the abbreviation AIMS remained unchanged, the new name clearly indicates AIMS’ resolution to foster and promote all kinds of long distance running (AIMS, 2012). It was at the 4th World Congress of AIMS in Manila, where the Berlin 25 km and the Gothenburg Half Marathon were two of the first non-Marathon events to join the association (25 years, 2007).

AIMS’ strong intention to work closely with the IAAF on all matters relating to international distance races has been expressed through many realized and ongoing incentives.

One very important partnership lies on the recognition of the calibrated bicycle method as the only approved method for measuring road races. “The system of measurement developed by AIMS was officially adopted by IAAF in 1988, and enshrined in their rule book” (25 years, 2007). This joint work of the two organizations soon after resulted in recognition of world road records as of 2004 due to having the acceptable criteria for their accreditation.

Furthermore, the two teamed up in publishing the ‘Distance Running’ magazine which serves as a platform for promotion of races, offering calendar of all events, and finding other useful information for race organizers and runners. The magazine represents an improved and more sophisticated continuation of the earlier AIMS Yearbook which was one of the main tools for self-promotion of the races since 1985 (AIMS, 2012).

Last but not least, a cooperative effort of AIMS, IAAF, the Athens Classic Marathon, the Greek Athletic Federation SEGAS, and the town of Marathon gave birth to an annual Marathon symposium held in Greece. Its first edition took place in 2007 and every year has a goal to “encourage close co-operation and exchange of views on issues of mutual interest which will assist organisers in their constant efforts to improve their races”. In addition, the Symposium “also raises significant symbolism related to World Peace, Olympic Ideals, and Fair Play” (IAAF, 2012).

AIMS objective to foster and promote distance running in the world has been as well implemented through several ongoing initiatives.

Since its first year of existence, AIMS has been publishing a monthly newsletter to keep up to date with AIMS business and record the results of member races. The newsletter today enjoys its modern electronic version, reaching a database of more than 450 contacts of race organizers, sponsors, journalists, and other stakeholders (Borao, 2012).

Furthermore, in 2006 the organization launched the AIMS Children's Series with the main goal to promote running among children especially in regions and to organizers that need assistance, such as in Sahara, Nepal, or Ethiopia. "Many great athletes have often emerged against great adversity" announced former AIMS President Hiroaki Chosa, and continued "We are seeking to encourage more young children to follow their dreams and to aim for a healthy life" (AIMS, 2012).

The organization further introduced and fosters the AIMS Awards, an initiative comprised of several categories and areas of interest. Together with its sponsor Asics, it introduced the AIMS/ASICS Athlete of the Year Award, which acknowledges outstanding male and female runners' athletic achievements and their 'ambassador' roles in promoting their sport and country. It also established the AIMS World Fastest Time Award which is being given to any runner who breaks the world record in the marathon or half marathon. Lastly, it brought up the AIMS/MYLAPS Innovation Award, which encourages innovations from the area of organization (logistics, course, marketing, volunteers, etc.), sport itself (participation, image, and fair play), runners (elite, amateurs, and safety), the environment and community, or media. The criteria for innovative quality relate to the uniqueness of the nominated innovation, its long-term effect, and its positive effects (fun, involvement, and image). Mylaps (formerly ChampionChip) itself was one of the catalysts in innovations in running. Their revolutionary new technology to time races by a transponder worn on the foot that records time as it passed through a magnetic field generated at a timing point undoubtedly changed the course of development of the marathon industry forever (AIMS, 2012).

In addition, the organization created an AIMS Marathon Museum of Running, initiated by Horst Milde – race director of the Berlin Marathon, and incorporated into the Berlin Sport Museum since 1994. Through the collection and exhibition of over 100,000 artifacts, the museum documents the development of marathon and running in general. Among some of the most valuable collections are, for example, an olive crown presented by the mayor of the town of Marathon, or the running kit worn by Haile Gebrselassie when he set the World record in Berlin (AIMS, 2012).

When it comes to fulfillment of the objective to exchange information and knowledge expertise, besides the already mentioned symposium, AIMS' main platform offered to race organizers is the biannual World Congress of AIMS. Introduced in coincidence with the foundation of AIMS in 1982, it grew to become the world's largest gathering of race organizers. Its 19th edition held in Prague in 2012 welcomed more than 240 delegates representing 122 race organizers from 55 countries (PIM, 2012). "The congress gives opportunity to race organizers to meet, share experiences, and learn from each other," says Paco Borao, president of AIMS (Borao, 2012). "It is important that the world of marathon running meets on regular basis and exchange ideas," continues David Bedford, the IAAF Road Running Commission Chairman (Bedford, 2012). Similar opinion shares

Sean Wallace-Jones, IAAF Road Running Senior Manager who is “extremely pleased to see such a great participation, lot of interaction among participants, and excellent standard of the organization” (Wallace-Jones, 2012).

The ‘Association of International Marathons and Distance Races’ celebrates in 2012 its 30th year of existence. Its latest developments and initiatives include moving its headquarters to Greece – the birthplace of the marathon, and preparing for the 20th World Congress of AIMS which will be held in Durban, South Africa (Borao, 2012).

Long Distance Running in the Czech Republic and the case of the Prague International Marathon (PIM)

The Czech Republic has long tradition of nurturing marathon and long distance runners as well as organizing running events. Just mentioning the name of Emil Zátopek says enough about the recognition and important position this country holds in the world of Athletics (Ejnés et al.). If we go even before Zátopek’s time, we will find other running champions and interesting stories about the running culture in the Czech Republic. For example, the golden book of Athletics (*Zlatá kniha Atletiky*) tells us the story of Arnošt Nejedlý, who in 1906, travelled to Greece to run the already appealing ‘original’ marathon race. “At the beginning period of our Athletics, long distance running was among the most popular competitions, and so the winners of those races were publicly well known and famous people. One of them was Arnošt Nejedlý” (Janecky et al., 1978). It is certainly worth mentioning the name of Jakub Wolf, a three time winner of the first three editions of the Běchovice race. “27th of May 1897 became for us a historic date. At that time, we hadn’t clue that we were setting the base stone of the most popular running event of our Athletics,” says Wolf (Janecky et al., 1978). Indeed, the race has been hosted each year without a break – at 116 years it is the oldest road race on the continent (Bednář, 2011).

Another running event that fosters its tradition as the oldest marathon race in the Czech Republic (together with a marathon in the city of Ostrava) is the Prague Marathon held in the Stromovka park. This event in 2012 celebrated its 50th anniversary and only adds and contributes to the development and growth of the running culture in the country (Pražský marathon, 2013).

Coming back to Zátopek, it is important to acknowledge his contribution to running in the Czech Republic also after his active running days. Namely, he was the honorary founder of the Prague International Marathon (PIM) back in 1994, participating in the organization until his last days. Since then, PIM managed to achieve emerging local significance and appliance, but also big international success and acknowledged position in the marathon and distance running industry. Today, PIM organizes the largest marathon and half marathon races in Prague and whole country in regards to participation of runners. Moreover it organizes other five major running events in Prague and other four regions in the Czech Republic.

It all started in 1994, when Carlo Capalbo, the founder of PIM and his close friend, the Olympic medalist Gelindo Bordin, were talking about the idea of organizing a marathon event in Prague, with a goal to achieve appeal similarly like it was already the case in London or New York. One year later, in 1995, the first marathon event organized by the Prague International Marathon saw the light of day. Emil Zatopek was the one who ceremonially

fired the starting pistol and 958 runners rushed through the city. The organization started with one annual marathon event in Prague in 1995, and added many more in the following years, such as half marathons, Grand Prix of 10 km and 5 km race, Junior Marathon, Corporate races, Minimarathon, Family Runs, Eco Walk, and Walk with Dogs. The final outcome in 2012 is a portfolio of 48 events in 14 cities in every region of the Czech Republic (PIM in numbers, 2012).

Throughout the course of its 18 years old history, the organization has gradually evolved and has accumulated several milestones, which reflects the increasing popularity of running in general in the Czech Republic. Few highlights are presented below (PIM report, 2011).

In 1999, IAAF called the Prague Marathon ‘the most international marathon in the world’; not to a big surprise, knowing that the last edition hosted runners from 106 nationalities from all over the world. In 2004, the T.O.U.R.S. association had chosen Prague Marathon as “the most favorite European marathon destination”. In 2005, the book “The Biggest Marathons in the World and their History” placed the Prague Marathon among the Top 10 marathons in the world. The same year PIM received “Sponsor of the Year” award for its contribution to Czech sport. In 2007, PIM becomes one of the top 5 recognized sport brands in the Czech Republic. In 2008, IAAF awarded the Prague Marathon and Half Marathon with an “IAAF Road Race Silver Label”, placing Prague among just a few cities in the world with this prestigious award. The award was confirmed and progressed to the highest Gold Label in 2010, which PIM continuously regains until today. Moreover, by 2012, PIM became one of the only two organizations in the world owning five IAAF labels in total (two Gold and three Silver). In 2012, PIM hosted the 19th World Congress of AIMS, which proved to be the biggest gathering of running in the history.

CONCLUSION

The marathon mania of today was born in line with the birth of the first modern Olympic Games back in 1896. The first decades afterwards were characterized with their close co-functioning and, it seems, it could have easily happened that running would be destined with a four years’ peak cycle. Instead, the development and growth of marathon and long distance running took its own directions.

The sport was first embraced under the umbrella of IAAF, however yet in the shadow of track and field Athletics. Nevertheless, in parallel to events accustomed to professionals and elite athletes, ‘private’ race organizers were offering road race marathons and long distance events open to amateurs and leisure runners. One of the first of this kind, and today’s world oldest annual marathon event, is the Boston Marathon. Once the sport gained larger attention, interest, and recognition, the Boston Marathon became symbol of tradition, prestige, and innovation.

As road race long distance events emerged and continuously grew in importance, several leading race organizers recognized the need to get together and work closely on matters that challenged the progress of the sport. As a result, another association was formed (AIMS) whose main objective, this time, was to foster and promote principally distance running, to exchange knowledge and expertise, but also to work closely with the

IAAF on all matter relating to international distance races. Since then, meaning the early eighties, the road race long distance running experienced some large shifts. Race organizers adopted the IAAF/AIMS unified method of measuring the distances, which, among else, prepared conditions for tracking, recognizing, and celebrating world records. While the public awareness is, even today, mainly focused on the marathon 'brand' of 42 km race, long distance races are extended to half marathons, 100 km, 30 km, 25 km, 20 km, 15 km, and 10 km races. These distances are as well among the ones with recognized records, and there still exist other 'less traditional' runs.

The development continued and few other improvements followed, which set the grounds for another milestone of the sport. Namely, the IAAF established rules and criteria that will evaluate the quality of long distance road race events, and consequently it will recognize the organizers with appropriate awards. The awards are translated into Gold, Silver, or Bronze IAAF Road Race Labels, according to fulfillment of conditions such as organization, elite field, security, media, timing, measurement, and others.

The United States of America and Western Europe were the catalysts of growth and dispersion of marathon and long distance events during the eighties and the nineties. However, the marathon boom expanded geographically and other regions soon paced up, both in quality and quantity. One example that shows this diffusion is the success story of the Prague International Marathon (PIM), an organization that only continued the long lasting tradition of the Czech Republic as a country that fosters running champions and traditionally organizes running events of world-wide importance and recognition. The case of the Běchovice race, the oldest race in the world, together with Boston marathon, is just one of the highlights.

All these various initiatives set the tempo and directions for continuous growth and development of marathon and long distance running, but also shape and promote positive social values.

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VÝVOJ MODERNÍCH MARATONŮ A DISTANČNÍHO BĚHU

SASHO BELOVSKI

SOUHRN

Tato práce si dává za cíl prezentovat vznik, vývoj a šíření moderního maratonu a distančního běhu. Práce se rovněž okrajově dotýká prvních historických pramenů v oblasti běhu, avšak podrobná analýza jeho raných forem není jejím účelem. Detailnější studie je naopak věnována období počínajícímu posledními dekádami 19. století, které zásadním způsobem předznamenaly vývoj směřující ke vzniku nového fenoménu dnešní moderní společnosti.

Způsob výzkumu je založen na kvalitativní analýze a kromě využití existující odborné literatury je charakteristický především osobními rozhovory s klíčovými osobnostmi z oblasti distančního běhu. Práce dále obsahuje krátké případové studie umožňující lepší pochopení jednotlivých aspektů, které přispěly k expanzi a pokroku v oblasti maratonu a běhu obecně. Část analýzy se zaměřuje konkrétně na Českou republiku, aby tak mohla mít co nejširší lokální význam a využitelnost.

Moderní maraton a distanční běh zažívají výrazný rozmach a přitahují stále větší zájem všech zainteresovaných osob – stakeholderů běžeckého sportu. Můžeme však konstatovat, že mezi aktivními běžci jakož i mezi dalšími lidmi, kteří jsou přímo či nepřímo s distančním během spojeni, nejsou vědomosti o jeho současném rozvoji příliš hluboké. Tato práce chce nabídnout vybrané, zásadní události moderní historie distančního běhu, a sloužit tak nejen zanceným aktivním běžcům a organizátorům běžeckých závodů, ale též historikům, studentům a akademikům jako zdroj užitečných informací a základ pro budoucí vědeckou činnost.

Klíčová slova: sport, maraton, distanční běh, IAAF, AIMS, PIM

Sasho Belovski
sbelovski@yahoo.com