

EAMONN COGHLAN

Things Irish: green hills, potatoes, cobblestone streets, good ale, fierce tempers, and great distance runners. To American track fans this last may be the dominant characteristic associated with "Eire," the Irish Republic. Names like Delaney, Carroll, Murphy, Walsh and Hartnett have for years turned up high on US lists, helping Villanova become one of the premier distance powers in the country.

As good as these Irish runners were, however, it is likely that the best of them all is currently a junior at Villanova. In the space of one short track season, Eamonn Coghlan (pronounced A-mun Cogk-lun) has gone from "decent" Villanova middle-distance runner to 8th fastest miler of all-time, European recordholder, IC4A champion, NCAA champion, and prime candidate for the Montreal 1500 meter final. In five weeks, Eamonn ("It's the Gaelic for Edward") managed 3:56.9, 1:51.9 and 3:59.6 relay legs at Penn; open 3:56.2 and 13:35.0 wins at Pitt; a European Record 3:53.3 3rd in the Bayi Kingston race; 3:59.3 and 13:38.8 wins at the IC4A; a 4:01.2 victory over Marty Liquori on a muddy track at the Villanova Twilight; and a 4:00.1 NCAA win.

Quite a month's work for the 22-year-old marketing and sociology major, especially considering that his mile PR before this season was only 4:04.0. But somehow, one isn't surprised that this slightly-built (5-9½/137) Dubliner was able to cut off 12 seconds in the mile in one year: He comes from an athletic family of six ("My brother was once called the future 'Pele of Ireland' but then he put a bit of fat on his backside"), and beneath the soft brogue and easy amiability lies granite. Still, for Eamonn, it has all come rather quickly:

T&FN: Are you at all surprised at your sudden emergence?

Coghlan: Oh, yeah, definitely. For the past couple of years, up until last September, I wasn't really into training as much as I am now—I was always just fooling around and didn't take it serious. I'd always just relied on my natural ability. Then, last year, after running close to 4:00 just kidding around, I decided to come back to school and put my mind to it, you know.

I started to train every day, not to where I was killing myself. Just do a little bit every day; just get into a routine. Now I'm starting to get the results from this routine; I'm now beginning to realize my true potential. It's very exciting to realize that I am up there with the world-class guys. I still don't believe it.

T&FN: When you say you were just fooling around, what were you doing?

Coghlan: I was training every other day, more or less. I wasn't into it, you know. I'd miss more days of the year than I trained. If I trained for maybe 3 days straight, I felt "My God, I'm in great shape." The week before the race, I'd decide to do a bit of work to get ready for it, just the week before the race. I've

Bible of the Sport



Chip Gane/Sportsphotos

changed all of that around and decided to get steady about it rather than go in a big burst, and that's the reason for my successes so far this year.

T&FN: What about the King Games mile?

Coghlan: Bayi had the field completely under his control. He managed everybody in that race. And the two times I did try to go by him, he was just fan-tas-tic. There was no stopping him. He didn't seem to sprint away, it was like a glide. He just looked at me casually and glided away, effortlessly. It was simply fantastic. I don't know how he does it.

T&FN: How will you run against him when you meet him again?

Coghlan: Well, he's going to take the race out again. If there's a top-class field, he's always going to take it out. And I'll just run my own race for the first two laps like I did in Kingston, then after that, go a little harder and try and be a little more gutsy. When I say "gutsy" I mean like when someone tries to pass me, I usually try to fight him off until he breaks.

So I feel that if I were to run against Bayi again, when I do try to go by him, I'll keep going as long as I can, as long as I can to try and break him.

T&FN: Do you ever sort of wake up at night and think "3:53, incredible!"

Coghlan: Funny enough, last year, last December just before I left for Christmas vacation, I was into track fully this time, right? I had a good cross country, I was

running everyday, so—I never usually set goals—but I decided I would write on the back of my mirror in my room a time and see if I could get it this year. At that point, I'd never broken 4:00 and my best outdoor time was 4:05.5.

I forgot all about that time till I came back from the King Games, and I said, "God, I'm going to have to take a look at this now." I had no idea what I had written down and I looked and saw "3:53.5 by June 1975." I couldn't get over it. It was quite fascinating. I kept trying to convince myself that I had run faster than that time.

T&FN: How did you feel after the 3:53.3?

Coghlan: After the Kingston race, I was really tired. I was coming down the homestraight and I thought I would never get to the finish. My legs were, like, wobbling, and I hadn't felt like that since a long time before. I think the only reason it was like that was that it was the fastest that I'd ever gone in my life; it was just a new thing for me.

T&FN: Did you and Liquori actually jostle during the race?

Coghlan: Not that I really remember. I remember Marty coming on me okay, and there was a little bit of a feel. I remember him grazing my arm a bit, but I don't think it was enough to stop his performance or mine.

Marty, I don't know whether he was using it as an excuse or not. He said that if we had been working together, we'd have been passing Bayi, but I don't think we'd have been passing Bayi at all, because he had the whole race in his command. And I wasn't going to like sit down and say, "Okay Marty, go on ahead." I was running my race and he was running his and these things happen.

T&FN: Has that race increased your confidence quite a bit?

Coghlan: Not quite a bit; slightly I guess. Every race I go into, I always sort of feel that I'm in terrible condition, terrible shape. I always feel that I haven't done enough training. It's just my approach to a race. Then when I get into the race, the minute the gun goes off, "Pow," I'm back to normal again. I'm relaxed again. So I don't know if it has fully increased my confidence to where I'd like it to be; I've got a lot of experience to gain yet.

Another thing: I always sort of liked the challenge, too, where I'd come into a race with Bayi, with Walker or with Liquori, and I'd hear the people say, "God, you can't compete against these guys, what are you thinking about?" And I liked that; I like a challenge.

This is one thing that is true about

MEET INFORMATION

HS X-C COACHES-NINTH OLP INVITATIONAL. Oct. 4. 13 races (by enrollment): 5 V, 3 JV, 3 Fr, 2 Girls. 450+ awards. 2.5 miles, all grass, secluded seminary, great hills, spectacular 400yd. grass oceanfront start-finish. Sanctioned Pa., NJ, NY, Mass, RI, NJ, Vt., Me. James Ackroyd, Meet Director, 57 Goddard St., Providence, RI 02908. 401-751-1216 (7-8 a.m.).

2ND ANNUAL MID-SOUTH 5-MILE CLASSIC. Aug. 9, 12 noon. Beautiful, cool Overton Park, Memphis, Tenn. AAU sanctioned, sponsored by Gamma Zeta Chap., Delta Sigma Pi, Memphis St. U. 6

Meet Directors, Coaches, Publicists! Keep athletes and fans informed about your meet, road race, etc. by a notice in our Meet Information section. \$15 for the first entry, \$10 each appearance thereafter. Bold face heading & 50 words. Please pay with order to T&FN, Box 296, Los Altos, California 94022.

divisions, incl. girls. Prizes ea. division. Entry fee \$2, prior to race; \$3 on race day. Shields Hood, Box 161325, Memphis, Tn. 38116. 901/332-0997, 901/332-2506.

NATIONAL AAU MASTER'S MARATHON: Medford, Oregon (in the beautiful Rogue River Valley) is the site for this prestigious event, Oct. 12 (Sunday), 8:30 a.m. Medals awarded 1-6 in six age divisions: 40-44, 45-49, 50-54, 55-59, 60-64, 65-over. T-Shirts, certificates to all finishers. \$3.00 entry by October 1. Contact Jerry Swartsley, Box 1072, Phoenix, Ore. 97535.

me: When I was 12 or 13, when I first started track, the first day I went out, there was a mile cross country race on and they said, "You can't compete, you're too young," because it was a race with 18-year-olds and like that, and I cried, literally cried, because they wouldn't let me run the race. So they said, "Okay," and I beat all these guys who were 18 and over, because I wanted to accept the challenge. I'm still the same: when I'm put under pressure, I like it better.

T&FN: Irish runners have a reputation for toughness...

Coghlan: My explanation for that is when I came over here, I was completely overwhelmed by the environment that is created by the American guys. Being at the track meets, you see how professional they really are about it. This is something that is very much lacking in Ireland: Everyone is lackadaisical and easy-going. They sort of expect other people to do things for them. So when we come over here, we're overwhelmed. If we can't beat them, we join them, and when we join them, our toughness begins to show.

T&FN: How did it feel to beat Liquori in the Villanova Twilight?

Coghlan: I was surprised at Marty, all right, because I couldn't understand why he let me get so far ahead. When I beat him, I was more surprised than glad. I did want to beat him because there was always a little bit of a comparison at Villanova between Marty Liquori and Eamonn Coghlan. So I did feel good about it, for took, as we say, a bit of his glory and put it onto me.

T&FN: Who else do you consider great in the 1500, besides Bayi and Liquori, obviously?

Coghlan: John Walker of New Zealand, definitely. He's so powerful physically and mentally that there's no stopping him. I think he's going to be, not the darkhorse, but the man to watch next year in the Olympic 1500.

T&FN: Are the Olympics a big event in your mind?

Coghlan: It's in the back of my mind, but I don't want to plan too far ahead. Anything could happen between now and then. I'm just taking one race at a time.

T&FN: Speaking of the Olympics, is Ron Delaney '56 1500 champion for Ireland one of your heroes?

Coghlan: Not really. Take him as an example. When I was a kid, people would ask if I wanted to be the next Ronny Delaney of Ireland, and I'd say, "No, I don't want to be Ronny Delaney, I want to be the next Eamonn Coghlan of Ireland." I didn't want any comparisons there at all, you know.

But I guess that when I was in my teens, I always used to think of Kip Keino and say, "Isn't he fantastic." I used to idolize Keino. And now that I'm starting to reach the sort of times he used to run, I'm wondering to myself if there's some kid looking at me in the same way. It's something that is hard to accept. □

ADVERTISEMENTS

TIGER-NIKE-ADIDAS TRACK SHOES. Full inventory for immediate shipment. Tiger Warriors (were Road Runners), \$12.95 (5-13). Adidas Meteors, \$19.95 (4-8½). Special prices on all Tiger spikes. Write or call Dekan Athletic, Dick Pond, 879 Duane, Glen Ellyn, Ill. 60137. (312) 858-2567.

MIDDLE AND LONG DISTANCE RUNNERS. Are you an Olympic, international or national level competitor searching for year-round daily coaching and training? Come to beautiful smog-free Santa Monica, Calif. and train with Joe Douglas and Pete Mundle, coaches of national individual and team champions. Excellent local educational and employment contacts available. Write: Santa Monica Track Club, 615 S. Bundy, Los Angeles, CA. 90049.

TEE SHIRTS CUSTOM PRINTED. Sweat shirts, jackets, jerseys. Schools, teams, clubs. Minimum 12; quantity discounts. Free catalog. Mandelker's 2603F N. Downer, Milwaukee, WI 53211.

LYDIARD SHOE DISTRIBUTORSHIPS. Manufacturers representative for North America will interview by appointment anywhere in U.S.-Canada. Openings limited, investors only. L.F. Sullivan, R.D. 1, Box 131, Princeton Jct., N.J. 08550.

SPECIAL ISSUES OF TRACK & FIELD NEWS. All essential reference works and good reading. Olympic issues: 1968, \$2.00 (limited supply); 1972, \$1.00. 1972 Olympic Preview issue, \$1.00. Annual Editions: 1974 and 1975, \$1.50 ea.; 1964-66, 1968-73, \$1.00 ea. 1967 (photocopy only), \$6.00. All from T&FN, Box 296, Los Altos, CA. 94022.

RUNNING T-SHIRTS our specialty. Our business is owned and operated by runners. Sponsors of the International Rice Festival Marathon, we supply custom printed T-shirts for your race or marathon, a good job by someone who cares. Also individual custom T-shirts such as our "Ancient Marathoner" shirt for your favorite seniors. Before ordering shirts for your race send for our price list. Finnish Line Sports, Inc., 621 North Ave. K., Crowley, La. 70526, 318/783-6301.

WIND GAUGES, TRACK LINERS, MEASURING WHEELS, JUMPING PITS. Just some of the hundreds of items for the track coach, athlete and fan in THE TRACK MARKET PLACE catalog. Request your free copy from T&FN, Box 296, Los Altos, Ca. 94022.

TRAILS TAHOE—8300 ft. Train this summer with Galloway Labenz, Von Ruden, Tuttle, others. Low rates. Coaches free room with 5 or more athletes. Box 3776, Incline Village, Nevada 89450.

LIVER PLUS C, by Neo-Life for endurance. 100 tablets (½ gram each), \$3.50; 425 tablets, \$11.65. Postage paid. Protein in 5 flavors—free samples. Cynthia Kirk, 636 Palomar Drive, Redwood City, Ca. 94062.

JOGGERS: Serve as your local National Jogging Association NJDay chairperson. Details from National NJDay Chairman Gene Greer, 402 Baptist Building, Dallas, Tx. 75201.

GREEN MOUNTAIN CROSS-COUNTRY CAMP. Lyndon Institute, Lyndon Center, Vermont. There are still a few openings. Boys and girls, Jr. High and up. Two sessions: July 20-26, July 27-Aug. 2. Staff includes: Roy Benson, Head coach, Florida TC, Peter Squires, Manhattan College. Ideal training on pine needle paths and dirt roads in the coolness of The Green Mountains. Comfortable Prep School Housing, mountain lakes and streams. Write for free brochure: Peter Davis, GMCC, Lyndon Institute, Lyndon Center, Vermont 05850.

BIORHYTHM: Robert Ripley's Famous Forecast reveals athletes' Critical (usually poor performance) days also their Physical "Energy" High-Low periods. Use BIORHYTHM to help you train and WIN. Special Offer! Send \$1.00 (with birthdate-year) to Robert Ripley, P.O. Box 138T, Getzville, NY 14068. Special group discounts to schools, clubs.

Classified ad rates: \$15 minimum for 25 words. 40¢ each additional word. (Count name & address as 5 words.) Pay with order to T&FN, Box 296, Los Altos, California 94022.