

**H**is business card reads "Henry Marsh, Attorney At Law," and lists the name of a Salt Lake City legal firm. It could just as well read, "Henry Marsh, Steeplechaser," and be followed by "World." For the past two seasons, the 29-year-old American has been the top-ranked steepler in the world.

By now, the story of Marsh's career has been told often: a 9:25 steepler as a BYU frosh in 1973, he went on a two-year Mormon mission to Brazil. He reemerged in 1976 stronger and more mature, made the Olympic team and lowered his best to 8:23.99 for 10th in Montreal, in his first-ever international meet.

The next year brought his first American Record and the first of 6 straight years in the World Rankings. Since 1978, he has been No. 1 in the U.S., but it was in 1981 that he hit top stride, ranking first globally. He continued his hold on the top spot in '82, and in the last two seasons has lost only one steeple outright in 27 starts.

Now, Marsh looks ahead to Helsinki and Los Angeles, the latter most of all. One of the nicest things about Marsh, who qualifies as one of the true "nice guys" in U.S. track, is his honesty. He isn't a brash sort; he says what he believes.

A light day in the legal world recently gave him the time to chat with us about steeplechasing, steeplechasers and what being No. 1 means to Henry Marsh:

**T&FN:** You commented last year that being No. 1 in your event created problems you hadn't anticipated. What did you mean?

**Marsh:** Well, for one thing, I think everybody shoots for you. I have heard that one American steeplechaser has geared his workouts specifically toward beating me. So people focus on whoever is the top guy—but I don't want to be the focal point.

Yes, I do like to lay low and stay out of the limelight. I'm out here in Utah, which is fine with me. I don't really keep up on every little thing that's happening with every athlete.

But when you live in Eugene the newspaper every day has stories on track, who is doing what, the best times. I'll just catch up every month when my issue of *Track & Field News* comes.

Over the years, as I have gained experience, I have learned that things will fall into place if you do what you are supposed to do. Don't worry about one individual who has gone out and run one fast time early in the year. All that really matters is who is in the best shape for the nationals and the big international meets. You have to keep everything in its proper perspective.

A lot of times you hear about some guy who does just fantastic workouts, and you think, "This guy is awesome." If I was in Eugene and went and trained with other steeplechasers and they just dusted me in a workout, I might naturally think, "They're going to beat me in a meet."

## HENRY MARSH



Paul Sutton/Duomo

Everything I do is geared toward the race. That is Bill Bowerman's philosophy: train to race. He prepares me very well for racing. So I don't do those back-breaking workouts that can leave you just totally fatigued. I do consistent workouts that should bring me to a peak.

**T&FN:** *Are you still down in the 60-miles-per-week range of mileage and not the 100 or 120 a week we hear that many distance runners do?*

**Marsh:** Last year, I was over 60 miles a week only once. This year I have been in the 50s a couple of times, but I tend to be in the 40s generally.

**T&FN:** *So what is your "secret"? Do you just do everything faster or what?*

**Marsh:** Well, actually I run 130 a week, but I just lie about it. No, training is just so individual. My body is unique for a distance runner; I'm heavysset and my body just doesn't respond to heavy mileage.

Also, it's a matter of your philosophy of training. A lot of runners don't mentally feel they can race well unless they have a good base, and to them a good base is 100 miles a week, or more.

But to me, a good base is being able to do hard interval workouts. If I can go out and do intervals that approximate a race, that tells me I'm in racing shape. It isn't how many miles I've run.

**T&FN:** *Being No. 1 in the world for two years in a row, have you felt any expectations from people?*

**Marsh:** It definitely brings pressures and expectations. I have to make a decision. I have to ask myself, "Henry, are you going to go out to win every race, or are you going to do the things that hopefully will help you win the nationals and the World Championships?"

That's the real problem: do you enter races to win them to defend that top ranking, or do you run races with a higher purpose in mind? I'm very competitive, so it's hard for me to lose a race. I want to win—and particularly since now I'm "supposed" to win.

But at the same time, I have to be philosophical in my outlook; philosophical about my shape at the time, the shape of other runners, how important the race really is overall.

So that really is the only problem with being ranked No. 1: do you run a race at the jeopardy of being beaten if you aren't quite ready for that particular race, or do you stay away and enter only the races you are 100% ready for and can be very competitive in?

I guess I just have to be more selective now. To be honest, I wouldn't mind getting beaten now, just to take the pressure off. I would like to be the underdog going into '84, really.

**T&FN:** *Can staying at the top be tougher than getting there?*

**Marsh:** Well, when you're at the top,

it gives you some psychological advantages. All things being equal, I think it might be easier staying at the top.

There are things, like young runners coming in that you have never raced before. They might think, "Marsh is ranked No. 1, but the event is soft right now, so I'll jump in it." But I feel the most important thing is that you never lose your hunger, your perspective on what you have to do to get to the top and stay there.

**T&FN:** *After you won the 1980 Olympic Trials with your American Record 8:15.68, you said that athletes tend to hold themselves back by placing themselves into categories. Now that you have ranked No. 1, what category would you place yourself in?*

**Marsh:** That's the thing. When you rank No. 1, you can't go any higher so you place yourself in that category. You can be the best in the world. Mentally, that does a lot for you. It can elevate you to a new category in your own mind. I have always felt it is very important for any athlete to have a mental picture of himself and where he belongs.

But, I'm realistic, too. My fastest time doesn't even put me in the Top 10 of all time. I know that all it takes is a Henry Rono to be in shape for the steeple, or a Filbert Bayi or some other African, or some Eastern European. I know that being No. 1 is very shaky at best and if I start thinking how great I am, I'm going to get whipped but good.

I know that if I don't keep improving, if I don't get down in the 8:12 range this year, I won't be a legitimate gold medal contender in 1984. And that's what I want.

**T&FN:** *Some people feel the steeple goes through more ups and downs than almost any other running event. And there is no top-flight African around right now, which has something to do with why Henry Marsh has ranked No. 1. How do you feel about that?*

**Marsh:** Oh, I agree. I've been very lucky because they have been soft years. If 8:16.17 is the fastest time in the world, like mine was last year, there is a lot of room to run faster. I know I can run a lot faster, but I fully anticipate there being very strong competition both this year and next. If you're not 8:10 or better, you could very well have your problems; 8:15 certainly isn't going to do it.

**T&FN:** *You have always come across as a very smart racer—you stay in the back, conserve yourself, let everybody else play their cards and then you trump them and kick away. Are the other steeplechasers just dumb, or is Henry Marsh that much smarter?*

**Marsh** (laughs): Boy, that's a loaded question. Everybody has to race according to what they feel are their strengths. As long as I don't get outkicked, I feel that is my strength. I feel everybody has to evaluate their own strength and then play

it. It's like if Yifter is with you with 300m to go in a 10,000, it's bye-bye.

For me, my strength has been my kick and until it proves not to be, that's what I'll use. I understand that people will take it out on me and try to run hard paces. But I gear my training toward that.

**T&FN:** *Is there really anybody, anywhere—Americans, Eastern Europeans, Africans—that you really fear at this stage of your career?*

**Marsh:** Let me put it this way—the only thing I fear are my own limitations. If I can prepare myself like I want to, I know I can go out and take on whatever comes. I don't think you can fear just one particular person, because the moment you start to focus on one person, you're going to lose sight of another.

My philosophy has always been to prepare myself for whatever might come. I realize that if I don't prepare myself to sustain an 8:10 pace, or faster, I'll probably get beaten. Somebody else will be able to do it.

**T&FN:** *From what do you draw your motivation, your inspiration, for the steeplechase? Is there any one thing?*

**Marsh:** Well, I think everyone has in his mind that he wants to do well in the Olympic Games next year. That is a big motivating force. But in the interim, the main thing is just to win. And I know that if I don't prepare properly, then I will get beaten. And who wants to go out and lose?

So a main motivation for me is to compete well and win. It's fun to win, it's enjoyable. It's great to work hard and then be able to reap the fruits of your labor. So that, plus the Olympic Games, motivates me most.

And honestly, the Olympics inspire me more than the World Championships, even though I am preparing right now for the World Championships. That is the specific goal for this year, but I still think about the Olympic Games most of all.

Like I have told people, I would gladly trade ranking No. 1 in the world in 1981, '82 and '83 for ranking first in '84. □

Henry Dinwoodey Marsh was born March 15, 1954, in Boston and is 5-10/160. Married (Suzanne), with a son and a daughter. Coached by Clarence Robison at BYU and now by Bill Bowerman. He is the 10th steeple scorer in World Rankings history. PRs: 1500, 3:44.6 ('76); mile, 4:05.0 ('76); 3000, 8:02.61 ('82); Steeple, 8:15.68 ('80); 2M, 8:39.81 ('83); 5000, 13:58.50 ('81). Four-time TAC champ ('78, '79, '81, '82) and 1979 Pan-Am winner. Best NCAA placing, 2nd ('76). He has the 3 fastest U.S. times ever, and 6 of 9. His progression:

Year	Age	Class	Affiliation		
1970	16	So	King, Corpus Christi	4:25.0	
1971	17	Jr	Punahou, Honolulu	4:18.5	
1972	18	Sr	"		
1973	19	Fr	BYU	9:25.0	
1974	20		religious mission	9:34.0	
1975	21		"		ranking— W A
1976	22	So	BYU	8:23.99	— 1
1977	23	Jr	"	8:21.55 AR	7 2
1978	24	Sr	"	8:22.5	8 1
1979	25		AW	8:23.51	8 1
1980	26		"	8:15.68 AR	7 1
1981	27		"	8:18.58	1 1
1982	28		"	8:16.17	1 1