



from the editor

E. Garry Hill

LAST MONTH IN THIS SPOT I detailed for you my favorite men's races of all time, by event. An important caveat was that I had to see the races in person.

This month, let's swing over to the women's side, where I end up not listing every event because so many of the vignettes cried out for more than a 2-sentence précis.

100—Allow me to cheat and pair up two races 3 years apart: Stuttgart '93 and Atlanta '96. Gail Devers over star-crossed Merlene Ottey, by a grand total of 6 thousandths of a second. In Stuttgart, the American was announced as the winner, but the Jamaicans protested. "If anyone deserves a gold medal, it is Merlene," said Devers. More than 90 minutes later, after the reverse-angle camera was also examined it was announced that Devers had won by 0.001. At the next day's victory ceremony, the popular Jamaican was accorded a 2-minute standing ovation...

My favorite women's races ever, by event

By comparison, Devers' Atlanta win came by a landslide, her margin being all of 0.005. Once again, a Jamaican protest failed. This pairing isn't my favorite because Devers won. How the medals shook out was irrelevant, it was just incredible to see two of the best ever twice being separable only by modern technology.

200—It was wonderful to see Ottey bounce back from her Stuttgart disappointment with her first-ever outdoor gold after a sequence of 12 silver or bronze medals dating back to '80.

3000—This one's out of sequence on purpose. On Day 4 of the inaugural World Championships, Helsinki '83, came the longest women's track race. Mary Decker (as she was known at the time) was tabbed in our pre-meet preview to finish 2nd, unable to kick with the best of the Soviets. As the *T&FN* meet story headlined, "Decker Stuns Soviets In Stretch."

1500—Helsinki Day 7 brought us the 1500, where we had suggested that 4th was Decker's likely spot. Our headline for that one after all was said and done? "Decker Kayos The Soviets Again." Grown men wept, even if they weren't fans of her off-track persona.

100H—Yordanka Donkova's WR 12.29 at the '86 Cologne GP meet. No, not because it was the first race ever under the 12.30 barrier; the real reason is much more complicated. The meet was the last of a fabulous 3-meet series being enjoyed by 40-odd members of a T&FN tour group. We had already seen Zürich on Wednesday night and Berlin on Friday night.

I can't guarantee the specific times, but the tickets for Cologne's Sunday-afternoon affair listed a start of "3:00"; we got there about 2:30, only to discover that the heats had been run before the listed start time. Only a few minutes before, as it turned out, Donkova had set a WR of 12.35. In Zürich and Berlin we had seen two spectacular meets, but no WRs, so the tourists were ready to strangle me. Donkova to the rescue before another half-hour was out!

400H—I try not to get too excited about age-group stars, but how can you not go gaga about this year's prep AOY, Sydney McLaughlin (see p. 21). The best Junior ever and she still has two more seasons in the U20 ranks after her 54.15 at the OT.

Marathon—Helsinki '83 strikes again. As noted previously, the 3000 was the longest track race, but women finally got some parity with men as the 26-miler debuted, and Grete Waitz became the first-ever gold medalist. How disappointing it was, then, the next year in LA to still have no 10K.

4 x 100—After a couple of decades of seeing Team USA foursomes with the raw speed but not the passing to take down East Germany's 41.37 from way back in '85, I loved seeing Tianna Bartoletta, Allyson Felix, Bianca Knight & Carmelita Jeter crush it with their 40.82 in London.

4 x 400—There may never be another one like it: the U.S. puts all four of its runners under 50 and two under 49... and loses, as the Soviets come up with a pair of sub-48s. Yes, it's the may-stand-forever 3:15.18 WR/3:15.51 AR race from Seoul '88.

At some point next year, unless I'm shouted down by cries of "enough already!" I'll chronicle my field-event choices, and that'll make keeping it short even tougher for this field & track fan.

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