



# from the editor

*E. Garry Hill*

**THE CHANGING DEFINITION OF SIN.** When I started in the sport, about the worst thing you could do was accept money under the table (which was very problematic, because that's the only kind of money there was). Then it became—properly—taking drugs.

In some corners, it appears that the new go-to-hell transgression is to run too slowly in winning Olympic gold. You know, to choose “tactical” as a road to success. When did that become such a dirty word?

I speak, of course, of Matthew Centrowitz, who had the temerity to be content to plod along with the pack in the Rio 1500 before unleashing an eye-popping 50.5 final circuit. Make that popping eyes for both his fans (who were boggled by such a turn of speed) and his detractors (who went apoplectic at the sight of a final time that wasn't even great for a mile).

**When did “tactical” become a dirty word?**

The *T&FN* message board exploded. In all, the men's 1500 thread generated almost 600 posts and racked up no fewer than 47,342 page views. More, even, than Usain Bolt's 100 win.

Many—maybe even most?—of the reaction was negative, as it has been in that old-fashioned thing, writing letters to the editor (see. p. 41 for this month's collection). As one reader penned, “Disgraceful, absolutely disgraceful!” Perhaps I was reading too much into the negative reactions, but the vituperative nature of it as a whole took me somewhat aback.

I can understand *preferring* to see a faster race—our sport is, of course, largely built on the ethos of the old “faster-higher-stronger” thing—but to actually evince such horror at a slow race truly surprised me, even after all these years.

A few years back, I ended one of my monthly screeds with the line “Death to all rabbits!”

In Olympic and World Championships racing, I get my wish; not a hare in sight. If I were hung up on fast times, it would then be a case of “be careful what you wish for,” but I'm not at all bothered by slow times. Put away the stopwatch, the final time makes no difference to me. I enjoy every race for what it is, and if somebody does something creative or daring—you know, disgraceful—so much the better.

As Centro himself pointed out in the interview in last month's issue, he was prepared to race off any pace, but “once I got to 600–500 out, I pretty much made sure that no one went by me. Look, at that point, you can't really allow people to go and try re-passing them.”

What really gets me is that the acid has basically been thrown at Centrowitz, not the field as a whole. It's almost as if the detractors would be happier if, in a race where Centro felt quite comfortable with what was happening—is there any better situation for a runner to be in?—he had suddenly been struck by guilt in mid-race and had the mad-cap idea to start sprinting from who knows how far out.

Maybe he still would have prevailed, maybe not. One thing I do know is that if under a different pace scenario he hadn't won gold, or perhaps even made the podium, many of the same boo-birds would be saying, with 100%-perfect hindsight, “Man, if only he had...”

At any rate, give me pack racing over a single-file procession any day. And that applies to the DL as well as championships, particularly in an era where any shots at the existing World Records appear to be just too much wishful thinking.

Many years back, in another one of these polemics—relating to being subjected to another summer of rabbitied 1500s/miles on the Euro Circuit which led to an endless succession of the winner's being annointed before the race began and then embarking on a World Record pursuit which virtually always ended up falling short—I asked, “Is this a race or a damned parade?”

Rio was no parade. It was the real thing.

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