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).

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 we 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.

When did “tactical” become a dirty word?