

Jim Ryun defeated despair before challenging Liquori

By JIM DEZART
Collegian Sports Writer

Back in February while Muhammad Ali and Joe Frazier were getting ready for "The Fight," a race run in San Francisco's Cow Palace. It was a mile run that the winner captured in a time of 4:04.5. It was a race where the fans were standing and cheering for the leader during the final two laps.

Why would a crowd react this way when anybody who has any knowledge at all of track knows that the time just wasn't that fast? The reason is that the winner's name was Jim Ryun.

That night marked the first time the Kansas miler had set foot on a track in over 18 months. The last race he started he never finished. That was in Miami Beach. After finishing the first quarter mile he just walked off the track. The pressure had finally overtaken him.

Minor injuries and emotional problems plagued the star. After running a 3:57.5 mile in the last meet ever held in the old Madison Square Garden, he took a month off in hopes of getting things together and letting a sore hamstring muscle heal.

When he returned to the Kansas Relays he found himself weak, both mentally and physically. He competed and won the mile. The week after that came the Drake Relays. After winning the mile Ryun told his coach Bob Timmins that he wasn't going to run in the 880.

The coach and the athlete argued bitterly with Ryun getting his way. The media jumped upon the incident with one newspaper headline ask-

ing "Who's coach around here?"

Jim's doctor made a preliminary diagnosis of mononucleosis on Ryun later that week. Timmins, who had long thought Ryun to be psychosomatic, had him run two events at the Big Eight meet. After winning the mile Jim wanted to scratch from the 880.

Again an argument ensued and Ryun was convinced to run. He won the race but afterwards they found out that the original diagnosis was correct.

After a rest he went up to Flagstaff, Arizona to get used to living in a high altitude—he still hadn't given up hope of winning a Gold medal in the '68 Games. By mid-June he was given permission to start jogging, but his confidence didn't return until he finished a twelve-mile course in one hour and 12 minutes—a very fast time for an altitude of 8,000 feet.

The fans were convinced he was back when he ran a 3:55.9 mile on August 9. At the Olympic trials he defeated Dave Patrick of Villanova. It was while at the trials that Jim realized that nothing else mattered—not the world record nor all of his victories—unless he captured the Olympic crown. In training he developed a paranoid fear of losing which made the already tense Ryun even more tense.

At the Olympics Kip Keino of Kenya captured the gold. Ryun's fear was realized.

The pressure kept haunting him after the Olympics. "They weren't the outside pressures that bothered me but rather some inner pressures which were of my own making."

He went into seclusion with his wife Anne after quitting in the Miami race. A new Jim Ryun emerged after the layoff—a more relaxed, easy going runner. He attributes his new self to Anne. "Anne was my source of motivation. I had lost my enthusiasm but she hadn't," he said.

"When I first met Jim he had his day planned pat-pat-pat, just like that," Ann said. "He was very much a perfectionist. But I've pulled some of that out of him and he's more relaxed, more extroverted now."

"Jim enjoys running now and I want him to have fun. We decided that if he ran a couple of races and it wasn't fun he'd quit—but on a more favorable note."

So far this year the 24-year-old Ryun has equalled the indoor record of 3:56.4 in San Diego and in the Kansas Relays, ran a 3:55.8, the fastest mile since Keino did a 3:55.5 in August of 1968.

Looking ahead to Sunday, Ryun will meet the man who won the race in Miami—Marty Liquori of Villanova—in the Martin Luther King Games at Franklin Field in Philadelphia. Everybody had given Liquori the billing as the best miler when Ryun walked off that track. Now he will have to prove it against a new Jim Ryun.

The guess here is that Ryun, who has the stronger kick, will turn in the fastest time since his world record 3:51.6 to win the "dream mile". Liquori should also turn in a fast mile since he has been training for this meeting of the greats for some time now.

Jim Ryun is back and that's probably what Marty Liquori will be looking at on Sunday afternoon—Ryun's back.

Track classic follows Blue-White game

Following the blue-white football game tomorrow, Beaver Stadium will host the third annual All Pennsylvania Track Classic. Many Colleges from around the state will be represented.

No team scores will be tabulated because the larger schools should dominate. Medals will be given to the first three finishers in each event.

The entire Lion squad will compete in the meet which is scheduled to start with the field events at 4:30 p.m. The 440-yard relay and the mile run, which are expected to be two of the top events, will kick off the running events at 5 p.m.

Coach Harry Groves feels that almost all records in the meet are in danger of being broken because of the number of athletes who have already surpassed the meet marks elsewhere.

"We have received entries from most of the top talent in the state," Groves said. "Included among the entrants are people who already have better times or distances to their credit than 15 of our 21 existing records."

One obvious star from Pennsylvania who will be missing is Villanova's Marty Liquori. He will remain in Philadelphia to compete against Jim Ryun in the Freedom Games.

Interesting matchups include a resumption of the cross-state feud between Bob Kouvolov of Pitt and Scott Hagy of Penn State. Last year Hagy won the meet title with a throw of 235-1. He was followed by his team-mate Bob Gill in second place.

In the 3,000 meter steeplechase Greg Rogers will join teammate Jim Allahan in trying to hold off nationally ranked Mike Schurko of Pitt. Schurko was formerly a member of the Penn State track squad.

For those who enjoy watching distance races there will be a half marathon—all 13 miles of it—to start the meet at 1:30 p.m.

Other events which have people in them capable of

breaking a record are the pole vault, long jump, discus, 120 high hurdles, 880 and the 220.

Schools represented include California State, Dickinson, Bloomsburg, Clarion, East Stroudsburg, Franklin and Marshall, Indiana University of Pennsylvania, Juniata, King's, Lincoln, Lock Haven, Mansfield State, Millersville, Shippensburg, State, St. Francis, Ursinus, Villanova, Westminster, York Community College and the Penn State Commonwealth campuses at Beaver, Berks and Hazleton.—JD

Lion netters set record while edging Engineers

Tennis coach Holmes Slater prevailed in a 9-0 win over Lehigh. Umana was the only Lion to lose a set during the singles competition. The doubles competition was only slightly stiffer.

The Lions aren't about to rest on their laurels. Army troops into town tomorrow and Penn State is seeking revenge for some past losses to the Cadets.

Last Match
The Army match will begin at 2 p.m. on the tennis courts near the Ice Pavilion. The competition will be the final team match for Penn State before it travels to the Eastern Intercollegiate Lawn championships in Rochester, N.Y. at the end of this month.

Supporting Cast
Players like Walker Shivar, Cliff Myers, Tom Wright, Alvaro Umana, Doug Pollock and Bruce Issadore didn't hurt the cause any.

The Lions' latest win was a one-sided affair. Every Penn

Weather washes out game

WEATHER REPORT—The question as to "whether" or not Penn State played a baseball game with Indiana yesterday has been confirmed—it didn't.

The Lions (9-3) will attempt a doubleheader with Cornell at Beaver Field tomorrow at 1 p.m. Coach Chuck Medala will probably send pitchers Roy Swanson (3-2) and (yawn) Jim Conroy (3-1) to the mound. The baseball team has suffered eight cancellations this year.

The last time the Lions were able to comply with the weather, they defeated the Temple Owls in a double-header. Swanson and surprise starter Rick Sherkel each went all the way in their respective games last Sunday, 11-1 and 4-2. For Sherkel, who has been mainly called upon in relief this year, it was his third win against no defeats.

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