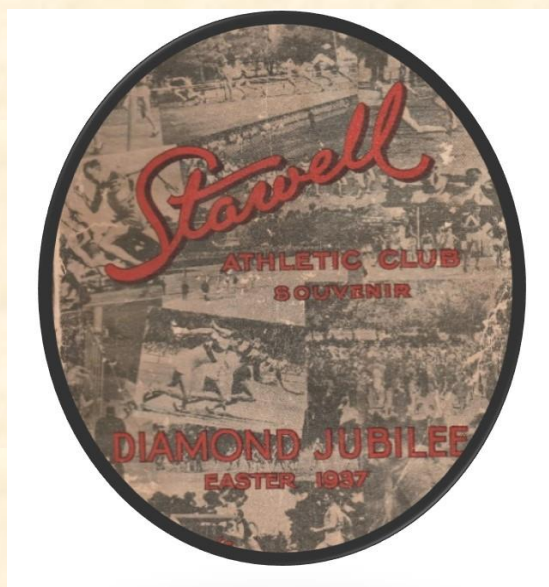


THE LANGUAGE & IDIOM OF PROFESSIONAL RUNNING AND PEDESTRIANISM

An Illustrated Glossary of Terms, Phrases & Practices



BOSTON MUSIC HALL.

MISS BERTHA VON HILLERN

Attempts the extraordinary feat of walking

88 MILES

In 26 Consecutive Hours,
WITHOUT SLEEP,

FRIDAY and SATURDAY, January 19, 20.

By invitation of numerous ladies and gentlemen in Boston Miss Bertha Von Hillern has consented to give a still more extraordinary exhibition of her wonderful powers of endurance.

BERTHA'S Taking everything into **JOURNEY**
BERTHA'S consideration, Miss Von **JOURNEY**
BERTHA'S Hillern's walk is a re- **JOURNEY**
BERTHA'S markable one, and her **JOURNEY**
BERTHA'S sex cannot fail being **JOURNEY**
BERTHA'S proud of her.—SUNDAY **JOURNEY**
BERTHA'S HERALD. **JOURNEY**
BERTHA'S **JOURNEY**

Start Friday Evening, 9 o'clock.
Finish Saturday Evening, 11 o'clock.

The American Band will furnish music during the entire 26 hours. Hall open to the public day and night. Admission 50 cents. Box office now open. Doors open at 7.30 Friday evening.

PROGRAM of SPORTS
WORLD'S MILE
SATURDAY,

In conjunction with
CHAMPIONSHIP
AUGUST 15, 1906.

SALFORD FOOTBALL GROUND,
"THE WILLOW" WEAST.

DAY
(UNITED KINGDOM)
vs.
POSTLE
(AUSTRALIA)
For £500.

HUGH NAYLOR, late of Australia,
President of all English Athletics,
Honorary World's Champion 1904,
1905, 1906, & 1907. Private dress maker,
24, Abchurch Lane, London E.C. 4, near Old St. W.C.

H. H. DAY (United Kingdom),
World's Mile Record Holder

ARTHUR B. POSTLE (Australia),
World's Champion Sprinter

OFFICIAL BOOK, 3d.
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Compiled by Paul Circosta Version 1.0

Acknowledgement

This document came about through the author's concern that many of the terms, practices and techniques relating to early pedestrianism competitions were locked away in old books and newspaper archives with a danger of them being lost from the history of the sport.

This glossary has been compiled with the generous assistance of a several people who have provided information they have acquired over many years and I gladly acknowledge their contributions.

Peter Lovesey: author and athletics historian with several major publication including *The Official Centenary History of the Amateur Athletic Association* and *The Kings of Distance*.

Andy Milroy Long distance running historian and author of *The Long-Distance Record Book*.

Glenn Piper: Researcher into pedestrianism in Sheffield and author of *Peds of the Past, 1837-1920*.

Harry Hall: researcher and author of *The Pedestriennes, America's Forgotten Superstars*.

A Brief Overview of the sport of professional running ¹

Professional running or pedestrianism had its modern-day beginnings in England in the eighteenth century. This was in the period before the emergence of the gentleman sportsman and the notion of the "Corinthian" amateur - a competitor who favoured honour and fairness over victory or personal gain ². In England by the nineteenth century, running and walking competitions were becoming more widespread. As the country became more urbanised permanent running tracks were constructed in the larger cities.

Betting had always been a part of these pedestrian competitions and the sport came to enjoy popularity with the working class who freely supported the betting. Competition in the early years was largely in the form of match races with one athlete competing against one other.

The length of races could be over short distances such as 100 yards and up to one hundred miles. Gradually a standard set of distances became the norm. In sprinting the Sheffield distance of 130 yards was the most common, though racing over other distances was also undertaken. In the longer distance events competitions at one mile, 10, 100 and 200 miles were common.

Two other competitive formats become popular. Firstly, there was the challenge of completing a specific distance in a specific time. The first and most famous of these was the one thousand miles in one thousand consecutive hours challenge. The difficulty of this challenge was the person had to finish one mile in each and every hour over the forty-one-day period.

The other type were the contests that went for a specific time period, these were commonly twelve hours, twenty-four hours and six-day events. The winner was the athlete who covered the most distance in the nominated time.

Three countries England, America and Australia were the dominant centres for professional running with regular competitions. In the second half of the nineteenth century the leading professional athletes crossed the Atlantic both ways to compete. It was also common for some of these leading athletes to also journey down to Australia to compete in match races against each other and against local pedestrians.

In the twentieth century with the rise of the amateurism - spectators were provided with national championships, England versus America competitions as well international competition with the revival of the Olympic Games. Against this foray of competitions professional sprinting in America – faded. England and Australia became the strongholds of professional running with Australia

maintaining a pre-eminence through a regular and diverse network of carnivals held throughout the country.

With the evolution of the sport to “open athletics” in the 1980’s, the amateur and professional distinction has largely disappeared. Athletes can now compete in both types of competitions with pedestrianism still maintaining some of its traditional formats and practices.

Pedestrian Terms, Phrases and Practices

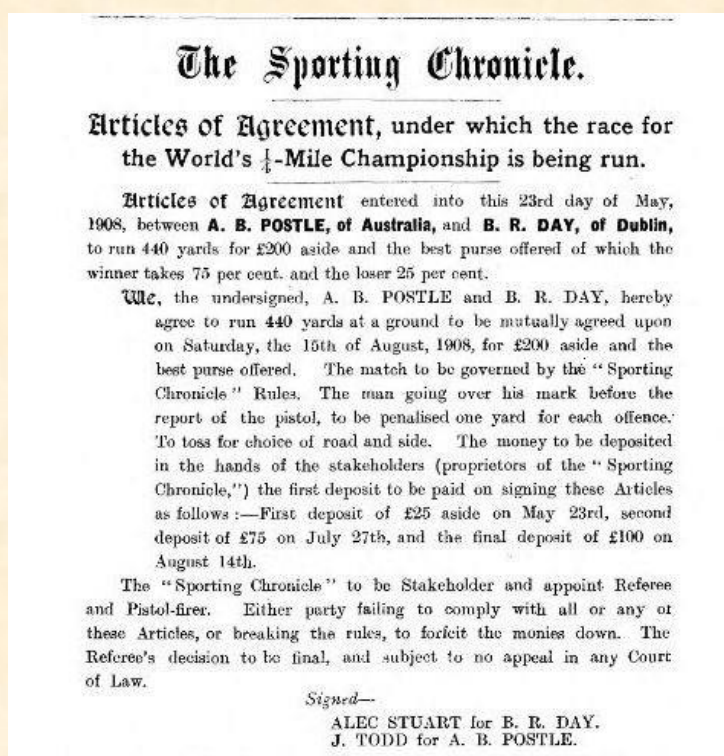
Like any sport or activity, professional running has developed a set of terms and phrases that explain the competition formats and practices within the sport. Some are specific to professional running while others have been incorporated from general language and applied to pedestrian events.

Some of these terms are local to one of the three countries where these terms have been sourced. Others such as “go as you please” were used in all three countries with the same meaning.

Glossary

Articles of Agreement: A pedestrian would issue a challenge to race to another competitor usually by an announcement in a newspaper. If the challenge was accepted the two runners would agree to the conditions of the race such as the date and distance and with other stipulations such as the prizemoney that would be contested for and how the starting positions would be determined.

The competitors or their agents would then sign the articles somewhat like a contract to formalise the arrangements. These documents were sometimes known as Memorandums of Agreement ³.



Articles of Agreement between A.B. Postle and B.R. Day for a 1908 contest.

Athletic grips: Made from cork, these grips fitted into the palm of the runner's hand. They were used in the belief that the tension a runner generated by gripping them helped them in their final spurt. See also Running Corks.

Australian Start: An alternative name for the crouch start used by some Americans including former amateur world record holder Arthur Duffy ⁴ See also Crouch Start and Kangaroo Start.

Automatic Judging and Timing Machines: By the 1870's hand-held stopwatches had improved to the level they were able to time to 1-5th of a second. The growing interest in the sport and the desire to compare runners on their times led trainers and timekeepers to want to see races timed and judged with great accuracy.

Timing Machines

In 1874 the English watchmaker James Benson invented the Electro-Chronographer ⁵ that is the first known British attempt to use electricity to time races. In a trial at the Lillie Bridge ground the starting pistol was wired via a battery to a clock with a large dial and which stopped when the first runner broke the finishing tape. Unfortunately, the trials of this device suffered from technical setbacks and were not continued.

In 1887, R. E. Phillips an English engineer and timekeeper used advances in the understanding of electricity to develop a device that linked the starting pistol, clock and finishing tape using a battery. The Phillips device also worked by closing the electrical circuit and stopping the clock when the finish tape was broken. It was successfully trialled at an athletic meeting at Stamford Bridge.

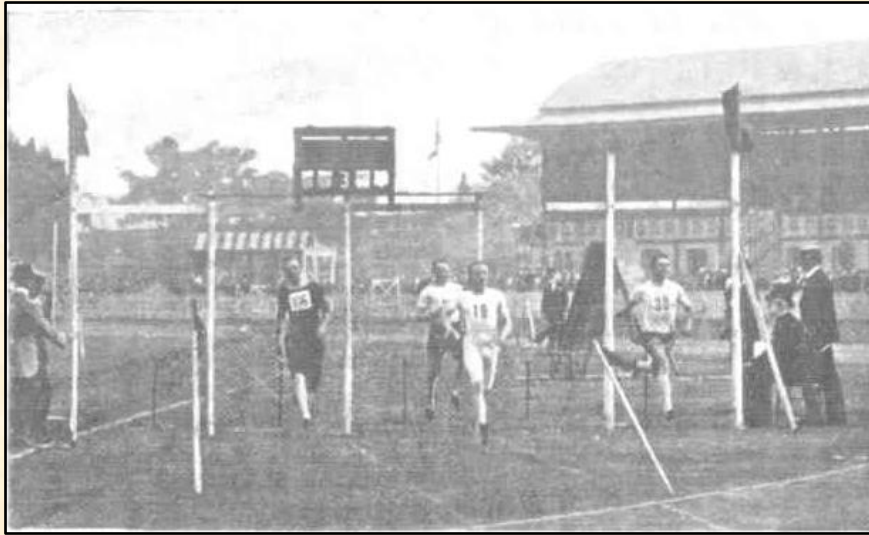
Following on from these efforts several other electric timing machines were developed by inventors in the early decades of the 1900's. All these machines had the limitation that they only timed the first placegetter and did not determine other placings which still had to be judged by the naked eye.

The next major development came with the Gustavas Kirby Two Eyed Camera developed by the Bell Telephone Laboratories. This device was so named as it allowed electric timing to 1-100th of a second through one camera lens while simultaneously determining the finishing order by a series of pictures recorded by the other camera. This device was used at the 1932 Olympics as a back-up to the traditional hand timing approach. The Kirby Camera was a major advance in the move to fully automatic timing.

Automated Judging Machines

As timing methods were improving the question of accurately determining finish places was tackled by automated judging machines that started to appear in Australia from the mid 1890's. These devices were activated when the runner broke a chest high cord between the two poles marking their lane as they passed the finish line. The finishing order of the runners was recorded by the machine. The first of these was Baird Automatic Judging Machine developed by a New South Wales inventor Archie L. Baird and trialled in Sydney in 1895.

Professional running showed immediate interest in these machines with the Stawell Athletic Club purchasing one and using it at their 1896 Easter Carnival ⁶. In professional races these machine were adapted to display the colour of the placegetters instead of the lane number.

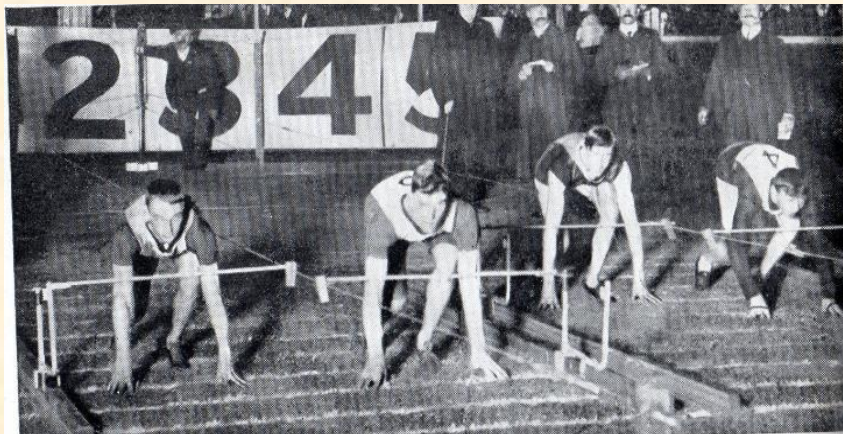


The Baird automatic judging machine being used in Sydney in 1895. Note the number "3" above the framework indicating the competitor in lane three had finished first.

Other machines followed Baird's, including E.S. Rowe's Automatic Starting Barriers and Electric Judging Machine in 1906. Rowe was an experienced promoter of professional carnivals and brought the machine to Melbourne after using it in Perth.

The key feature of the machine were the barriers across each lane that flew open simultaneously when the starting lever was pulled. The advantage of the barriers was that they prevented runners from false starting. The machine also judged the finish order of the runners.

Rowe's machine was unable to give a high degree of reliability and accuracy and did not achieve popular acceptance.



Rowe's starting machine being used in Melbourne in 1906. Note the starter (standing in front of the number "3") holding the starting lever that released the starting barriers.

In the 1940's Clarrie Draper developed the Draper Electric Judging Machine. The device worked by marking a card with the lane and finishing order of the runners. The major advantage attributed to the machine that it could separate the runners in a close finish.

Improvements in technology saw the introduction of photo finish cameras and later computer-based technology which had greater accuracy than these machines ⁷. This led to the demise of these

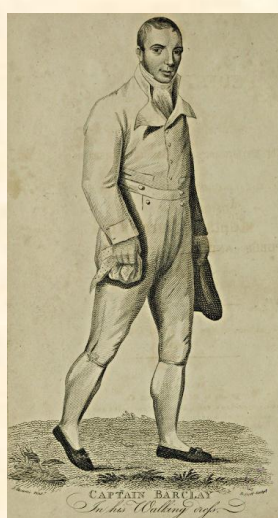
judging devices though they were still being used at professional carnivals in Australia up to the 1970's.

Backers: The people who funded pedestrians, usually for particular races, notably when sprint handicaps became so lucrative from the 1860s onwards. They would pay for training costs and expenses, including food and accommodation, during the period in a training camp. They were different in class and character from the aristocratic sponsors of earlier periods. They probably took a cut of the winnings as well as making money though betting on their runner.

Backmarker: This is the runner closest to the start line at the back of the field. In other words, the backmarker is the runner with the smallest handicap distance. The term applies to both sprint and distance races.

Barclay Challenge: This term came to be associated with an athlete who undertook to complete one thousand miles in each and every of 1000 consecutive hours. The name of the event comes from a Scotsman, Captain Robert Barclay who first performed the feat in 1809, wagering one thousand guineas that he could overcome the associated sleep deprivation to complete the challenge. When others undertook this challenge the Barclay name was used to describe the competition. The achievement was also known as the Barclay feat.

The original challenge spawned many variations such as 1000 quarter miles in one thousand consecutive quarter hours and 500 half miles in 500 consecutive half hours. Eventually competitors moved into attempting distances greater than one mile in the hour.



Captain Robert Barclay



Allan McKean attempting the 1000 hours in 1858 ⁸.

Barclayist: A term used to describe a person who attempted the Barclay Challenge.

Being set: The term refers to a specific race a runner is "setting" themselves to win through their training and tactical preparation. This may include undertaking some form of deception to ensure that they received best possible handicap for their target event.

Betting and Gambling: These activities have been an enduring feature of professional events. In the early days of the sport wealthy patrons who sponsored runners would wager large sums of money on their runner usually one of their footmen.

Over time the wealthy patrons dropped out of professional running as it became a more working-class recreational activity. Bookmakers began to attend meetings and to set odds for runners to lure

money out of patron's pockets. Historically, bookmakers sometimes attempted to manufacture the outcome by working in collusion with runners⁹. Alternatively, bookmakers could be subject to a plunge - a betting "sting" where a runner from a stable who had been "set" to win would have a large pool of money placed on them, generally just before betting closed for the race. See also Pencillers.

Blanket finish: The end of a race where many of the field finish close together. A blanket finish was generally regarded as an indicator of good handicapping.

Bloomers: A term originating from Mrs Amelia Bloomer (1818-1894). This American lady was an advocate for emancipated dress for women. Though she was not an athlete and didn't invent the pantaloons and skirt-based Bloomer costume, her name is associated with it. Some female pedestrians wore the bloomers as they were less constrictive than conventional dresses which led to them being referred to as Bloomers or Bloomer Pedestrians.



Amelia Bloomer wearing a Bloomer costume

The women who competed were attired in what is known as the Bloomer costume, similar to that worn in the competitions in Melbourne, the dresses covering the knees of the females.

Report of women wearing Bloomer costumes in an event in Geelong, Victoria, 1882.

Break Start: A starting technique used before the crouch start and the advent of starting blocks. The technique involved a judge standing on a starting line with the two competitors some 15 metres behind him. The runners stood side by side with one arm reaching in so that their fingers lightly touched. They jogged to up the judge, as they passed between him, he broke their touching fingers which signalled the start of the race. This technique was used in America prior to 1900¹⁰.

A variation to the break start was known as the 'lead pencil start'. In this version the two competitors held a pencil or short stick and approached the judge and commenced their dash when the pencil or stick touched the judge's body¹¹.

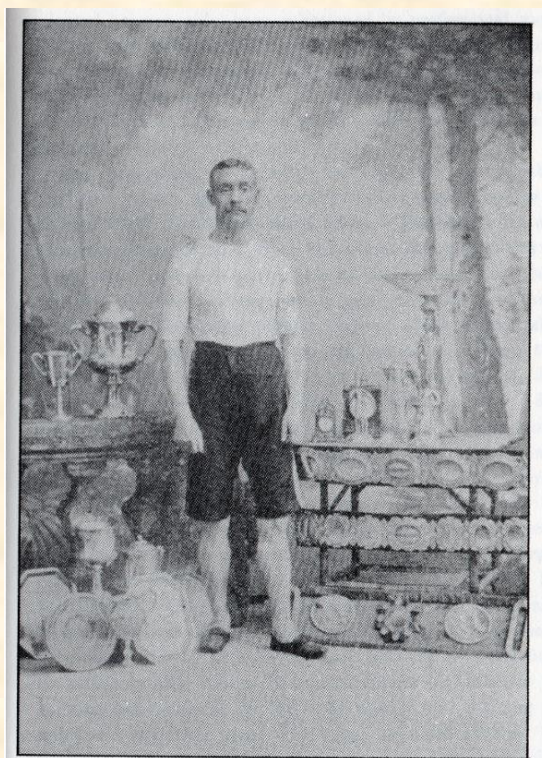
Breathings: A term that had popular use by the mid 1850's that referred to a runner's training and was generally referred to as "taking his breathings". The Era newspaper reported on the preparations for a match race between George Darley and Edward Bentley.

"Bentley trained at Lindrick Common under the watchful eye of the celebrated trainer Leggy Greaves and Darley took his breathings in Doncaster under the guardianship of his brother." ¹²

Card: This was a published listing of runners competing at a particular meeting with details of their handicaps. The card was generally issued several days ahead, so that pre-race betting could be undertaken.

Champion's belt: A concept first borrowed by pedestrianism from pugilism by John Garrett in November, 1851, when he advertised a 10 mile walk at his Copenhagen Grounds in North London. A championship belt was offered as the main prize. The idea became popular, with belts being offered by promoters for a range of distances. Generally, belts were not won outright but had to be defended against contenders for several challenges until they then became the property of owners.

The most famous of the champion belts were the Astley Belts awarded by Sir John Astley for a series of six-day race that were held between 1878 and 1879. These belts were ornate items. They were made of gold and silver with motifs with the buckle engraved "Long Distance Champion of the World". The belt had to be won on three consecutive occasions to be given to a winner.



*William Cummings professional ten-mile world record holder with some of his trophies.
Note there are several belts displayed on the right.*



One of George Littlewood belts he won in an Astley Six Day Race.

Cheating: All sports have some form of cheating associated with them. Historically professional running has had a number of these emanating from its use of handicapping and betting. Some tricks used to fool handicappers included wearing lead insoles and undertaking a hard training session the day before competing. For examples of various forms of cheating see Dark Horse, Ring-In, Roping and Running Dead ¹³.

Cinder Path: An early form of running track that was made of several layers of rubble and stone at the lowest level with coarse and fine cinders on the top layer. Cinder tracks were used in both amateur and professional competitions.

Clockers: Another term for a timekeeper who took the times of runners using a stopwatch. The stopwatch first appeared around 1730 with their accuracy being improved over the years so that by the late nineteenth century they could record to 1-5th of a second ¹⁴.

In 1862 a Swiss watchmaker developed the flyback mechanism for a stopwatch. This mechanism was a benefit to timekeepers as it allowed the watch to be easily started, stopped and reset with a single button at the top of the watch.

Colours: In professional running in the major race of the carnival, competitors wear cloth bibs over their vests. In Australia, each competitor is allocated a colour depending on the lane they have drawn. Starting from the inside lane the colour sequence is red, white, blue, yellow green, pink, black. Other colours are allocated if additional lanes are used.

The use of the colours may be another connection between professional running and horse racing where jockeys are identified by the colours they wear. In England, the use of colours goes back to the nineteenth century with each colour allocated a designated lane somewhat like what currently occurs. In Australia colours may have replaced caps to identify runners.

Program of Sports.					
EVENT 1—70 YARDS HANDICAP.					
[1st prize, £7 and Gold Medal; 2nd prize, £2; 3rd prize, £1.					
[TO START AT 2-45 P.M. (No. 1 Track, nearest to Grand Stand).					
COLOUR.	HEAT 1.	YDS.	COLOUR.	HEAT 3.	YDS.
1 Blue,	J Barr, Tyldesley	4	1 Blue,	A Wilson, Blackburn	4
2 Red,	C Heap, Accrington	6½	2 Red,	J Brooks, Clitheroe	5
3 Purple,	C Turner, Ashton	7	3 Purple,	J Ashton, Ardwick	7½
4 Yellow,	P Alcock, Stockport	7½	4 Yellow,	W Kelly, Rochdale	8½
5 Green,	H Wood, Bolton	8½	5 Green,	J Hilton, Leigh	8½
6 Pink,	A Stafford, Royton	10½	6 Pink,	T Southwell, Cornholme	10½
7 Black,	P McHugh, Oldham	10½	7 Black,	T Walmsley, Shaw	11½
8 White,	W Webster, Rochdale	12½	8 White,	J Buckley (old), L'th'wte	16½
9 Heliotrope,	A Fish, Ancoats	13½	9 H'trope,	C Harrison (o), Hulme	18½
COLOUR.	HEAT 2.	YDS.	COLOUR.	HEAT 4.	YDS.
1 Blue,	A B Postle, Australia	scr	1 Blue,	L Walkden, Bolton	6
2 Red,	W Lomas, Gorton	5½	2 Red,	F Mace, Manchester	9
3 Purple,	J Cox, Blackpool	6	3 Purple,	J Wolfenden, Oldham	9
4 Yellow,	J Haggerty, Stalyb'dge	9½	4 Yellow,	W Bell, Lees	9
5 Green,	F Gill, Accrington	9½	5 Green,	F Davies, Stockport	9
6 Pink,	W Mellor, Ashton	9½	6 Pink,	W Leech, Hulme	9
7 Black,	F. Potter, Stockport	10½	7 Black,	W Smith, Cheadle	9½
8 White,	J W Ellis, Shaw	10½	8 White,	A Speakman, H'shaw	9½
9 H'trope,	G Cook (old), S. Helens	16	9 H'trope,	A Robinson, L'ngsight	9½

The colours and handicaps allocated by lane for a 1908 professional competition in England.

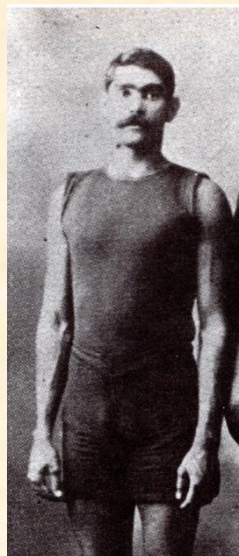
Crack: An English term also used in Australia to describe a very good runner. The term was also used in general conversation to describe someone who was good in their particular field. In a report of the heats of the 1872 Powderhall sprint, the high standard of the competitors was described as:

“a first class clashing of cracks” ¹⁵.

Crouch Start: A starting technique so named because the athlete crouched down on all fours at the starting line. In the set position the runner would have one leg in advance of the other. Previously runners had stood virtually erect. An aboriginal sprinter Bobby McDonald from western New South Wales, Australia is generally regarded as the first recorded user of the technique at the Carrington Ground, Sydney in 1887, and possible even earlier in 1883 in Western New South Wales ¹⁶.

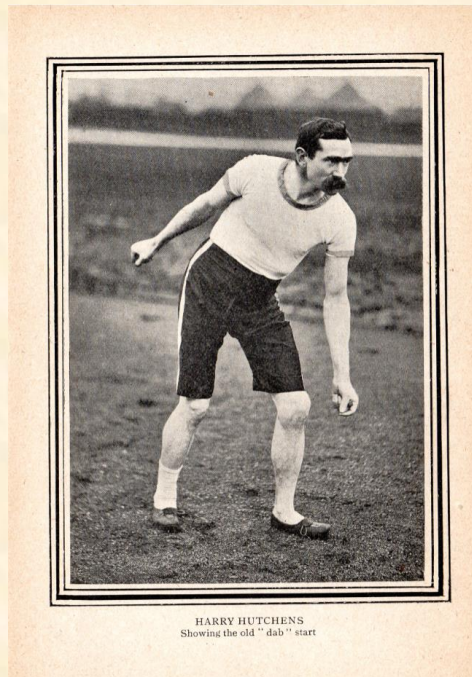
An alternative claim for first use of the technique was made by an American coach Mike Murphy who claimed to have used it as early as 1880 in America. Other alternate claims to who used the technique first were made by several Australians including H.A. Cummings, Sam Sloane and Louis Hope. It is difficult to verify these claims. McDonald has long standing recognition as the first user. Murphy coached the amateur Charles H. Sherrill to use the technique in 1887 when he won the American Amateur Athletic Union national 100 yards championship ¹⁷.

Despite the successes of McDonald, and Sherrill and somewhat later Tom Keane with the technique, it was not universally adopted by sprinters, with the Dab start still being used into the early 1900's. See also Break Start, Dab Start and Mutual Consent.



Bobby McDonald creator of the crouch start.

Dab Start: Another starting technique that is also known as the Sheffield start. In this stand-up start the body's weight was on the front foot with the arm on the same side also forward. The runner made a short, fast step forward (the dab) on the leading leg with the opposite arm being swung forward at the same time. The dabbing of the leading leg was considered to be quicker than bringing the rear leg through to get the runner underway. See also Break Start, Crouch Start and Mutual Consent Start.



Harry Hutchens of Putney was a world record holder and exponent of the Dab start.

Dark Horse: The dark horse is a deception approach where the true capabilities of a relatively unknown athlete are concealed until they win a major event. The term has been borrowed from horse racing.

Dead Bird: An Australian term meaning that some event was considered certain to happen. It was taken up into pedestrianism idiom to indicate a likely winner of a race.

M'Gilvery is reckoned a dead bird for Botany Handicap. Why he should be put on 24½ yards is a puzzle.

An 1889 report of an athlete with a particularly good handicap and favouritism for the Botany Handicap event.

Electric Finishing Machine: See Automatic Judging and Timing Machines.

Fair heel and toe: This referred to competitive race walking where a competitor was required to use a technique where the heel touched the ground first followed by the toe touching down with the knee straightened on every stride. Failure to continuously walk heel-toe could lead to the athlete's disqualification.

Foot racing: A term used to differentiate the racing by humans from other forms such as horse racing. In America foot racing for prizes was sometimes bundled in the same newspaper articles as horse racing and walking. See also Pedestrianism.

Gaffer: Another word for a trainer of runners. It was adapted into pedestrian idiom from its general meaning of someone in charge of others.

Gift: An Australian term that generally describes the feature race at a professional running carnival. This event is usually run over the Sheffield distance. The most well-known gift races in Australia are

the Stawell Gift (1878) in Victoria and the Bay Sheffield (1887), held at Glenelg in South Australia and the Burnie Gift (1908) in Tasmania.

Professional running in Australia flourished in areas where gold was mined. The origin of the term is considered to have come into use when the winner of races were given a “gift” of a gold nugget by the race sponsor.

Go as you please: Competitors in events that were designated as go as you please were allowed to run or walk and rest as they pleased. The “go as you please” format was common in the longer multi-day races such as the six-day event.

Go to the post: A term indicating that runners were to assemble at the starting line.

Handicap: This was the distance that a runner was given in front of the scratch line. They are also known as marks. The greater the handicap distance the less the athlete had to run. Originally the handicaps were given in yards (now in metres). The handicaps would be published prior to the competition so all runners would be aware of their own and others handicaps.

The handicap system was intended to even up the competition so that all competitors had a chance to win. As a result, this system could produce close racing particularly over short distances.



PEDESTRIAN EVENTS.	
SHEFFIELD HANDICAP.	
D. M. Strickland	2yds.
J. A. McDonough	3½
J. Madden	5½
C. Harrington	6
J. Smith	6½
W. Jarvis	8
T. Arthur	8½
T. Ellis	9
F. E. Palmer	9
A. S. Jarvis	9
T. Confoy	9
A. J. McArthur	9
G. Ashton	9½
E. A. McDonough	9½
F. Donovan	10
H. Hedemann	10
J. Birmingham	10½
T. Price	10½
B. Bellamy	11

The table shows the handicaps given to runners in a 1901 Sheffield distance event.

Another form of handicap is the **Sealed handicap** which is largely used in road and cross country running. Under this format all runners start at the same time. At the end of the race the runners handicap time is deducted from their actual time to determine the winner.

Heats: The preliminary rounds of a competition that would see the fastest runners qualify for the final race. In its earliest use it was also used to include the final which was known as the concluding heat.

Impost: An occasionally used term referring to the handicap allotted to a runner. It is another example taken from horse-racing where it meant the extra weight a horse had to carry. See also Handicap.

Kangaroo Start: An alternate name for the crouch start. The term originated from the fanciful interpretation of the crouch start as resembling a sitting kangaroo see also Australian Start and Crouch Start.

“Left hand in” In a race of one or more laps a runner could be given the option of starting in the direction with the left hand facing the inside of the track. This would result in the race being run in an anti-clockwise direction. See also right-hand in¹⁸.

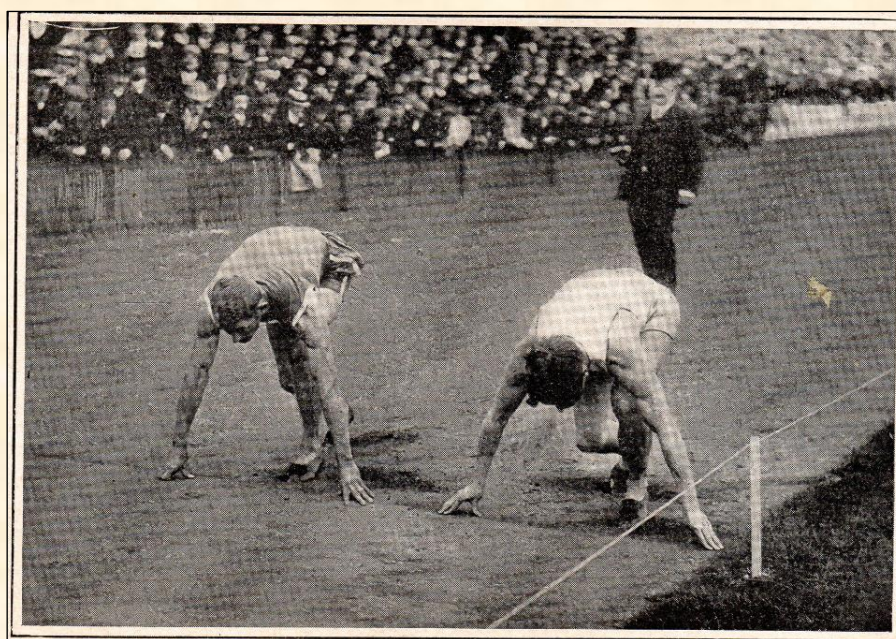
Lift: (getting a lift) This is term used to describe when a runner gets a better mark from the handicapper than what they would previously have received.

Limit man: This was the runner who was given the largest handicap in a race. This is the opposite of being a backmarker.

Lunge Start: In this starting style the runner stood somewhat bent at the knees with the trunk rotated and used his arms to throw himself forward from the starting line. To get a good start the runner had to time the use of his arms and forward lunge with the firing of the start gun ¹⁹. The technique was still in use in the 1890's. See also Starting Techniques.

Match race: A match race occurred when one runner challenged another, so the field comprised only those two runners. Many of the early professional races were match races.

The term could also be used when a single competitor undertook to complete a specific distance in a predetermined time matching themselves against the clock.



The start of a match race between Arthur Postle (Aust.) on the left and Beauchamp Day (Ire.) for the world 440 yards championship in 1908.

Mentor: Another term for a trainer of runners. See also Gaffer and Trainer.

Mixers: Athletes who combined both running and walking in long distance events such as six-day races.

Mutual Consent Start: This was another starting technique used by English and American professional runners from around the 1850's. The technique had the two competitors stand in an area 5-7 metres behind the starting line. The start was commenced when both runners touched the ground in front of the starting line. The runners would jiggle and feign a start until one of them put a

foot over the starting line, if the other competitor also crossed the starting line then a mutually consented start had been achieved.

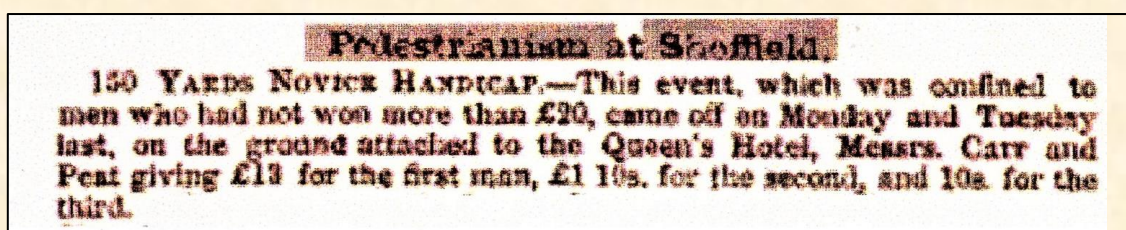
In another 1867 account of the Mutual Consent starting approach ²⁰ both runners stood at the scratch line looking at each other, when one stepped across the starting line and the other followed at the same time a mutually consented start had been achieved. The American sprinter George Seward “was highly successful on both sides of the Atlantic with this starting technique.

If the other competitor didn’t cross the start line the process was restarted. Often this type of start could take up to an hour to get underway which led to a clause being inserted in the Articles of Agreement that if a start had not occurred in a specified time it was to be replaced by the firing of a pistol ²¹. Eventually a start by firing a pistol replaced the mutual consent technique.

Nicknames and Bynames: Many professional runners were given nicknames, some of these related to their occupations such as the sprinter Richard Buttery a maker of sharp-edged tools who was known as the “Sheffield Blade”. Other nicknames were linked to where the pedestrian lived, such as Gateshead born distance runner Jack White, known as the “Gateshead Clipper”.

The very successful sprinter George Seward was known as the “American Wonder” due to his impressive racing record . In Australia, the most well-known pedestrian byname is that of William King popularised as the “Flying Pieman” for his occupation as a piemaker. Interestingly, even though the female long-distance pedestrians attracted large audiences and good press coverage, there was no common use of nicknames for these competitors.

Novice handicap: A race that was conducted for runners who had not previously won a race or who had not won prizemoney over a certain amount. See also Handicap.



Prize money and entry requirements for a novice handicap sprint in Sheffield in 1856. ²²

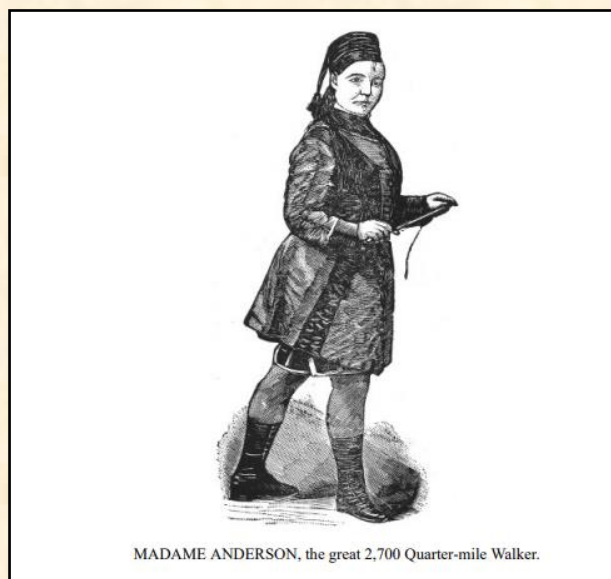
Party: The attendants and backers of a particular pedestrian were known as his “party”. See also Backer.

Pedestrian (Ped) and Pedestrianism: This is a diversely used term that refers to an athlete who is a runner or walker. The term came to be used to apply to those competitors who competed in events as money making professionals. Collectively the sport of professional running was referred to pedestrianism.

Pedestriennes: This term was used to describe female pedestrian athletes and generally those who competed in the long-distance events up to six days. The period of the competitive pedestriennes lasted from the late 1850’s to the 1880’s ²³. Usually, women competed against other female competitors but sometimes they competed against men. In these cases, they usually received some form of head start.

The pedestriennes competed over the same distances and events as their male counterparts, and like their male counterparts these pedestriennes competitions were conducted in Australia, America and England. These female competitors not only had to endure the rigors of their competitive events

they had to deal with societal pressures that considered their participation as both immoral and dangerous to their health ²⁴.



MADAME ANDERSON,
The CHAMPION LADY WALKER of the WORLD,
is now performing her
WALK of 1,500 MILES in 1,000 HOURS,
walking 1½ miles as the clock strikes every hour, day and night, at the
OLYMPIAN GROUNDS, WOODHOUSE-LANE.

*Advertisement for Ada Anderson attempting the 1000 hours challenge.
Note she is attempting one and half miles per hour.*

Pencillers: A term used to describe a bookmaker who accepts bets on running events. This is another term shared with horseracing.

Pistol firer: The name of the person who fired the starting gun for a race. They are now generally known as the starter. Although not all the early starting techniques required the use of a pistol, reference to their use can be traced back to at least the 1820's.

Powderhall: Powderhall is a town in Scotland named after a nearby gunpowder factory. The town has conducted the Powderhall New Year Sprint race since 1870 making it the world's oldest professional sprint race. The race is now known as the New Year Sprint and is conducted over 110 metres. The event has been held at several venues and is currently conducted at Musselburgh Racecourse.



A professional race at Powderhall in the 1890's.

Pull: This term refers to a runner having their handicap decreased, so that they have been “pulled” closer to the start line. It is the opposite to “getting a lift”.

Put back: The term applied when a runner was penalised for a false start by being made to start a yard further back than his original mark. A further break would see them penalised yet another yard or sometimes even two.

“Right hand in”. In a match race of one or more laps, a runner could be given the option of starting in the direction with the right hand facing the inside of the track . This would be in clockwise direction. “Left hand in” meant the opposite with the athlete running in an anti-clockwise direction.

Ring In (Ringers, Ringing) This form of deception involves a runner competing under an assumed name to get a better handicap than they would under their own name ²⁵. Though it was known practice, it became a particularly common and an organised form of cheating in Australia in the 1920's. Athletes would sometimes enter a carnival where they were not known, under their own name and under an alias. Which name they used at the carnival depended on the best handicap given to either name.

Roping: An English term describing the practice of a runner not performing to their full capabilities. This was usually associated with some type of betting activity ²⁶. See also Running Dead.

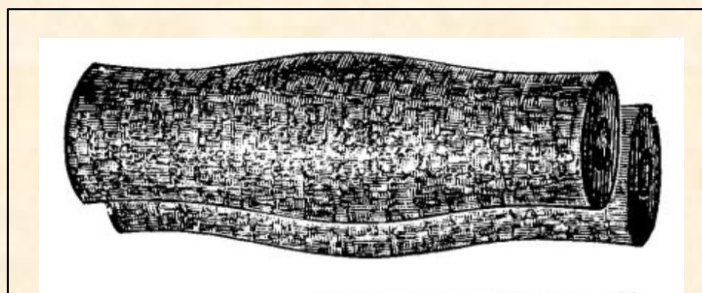
Rubber: An early term for person who would now be called a masseur. The early rubbers kneaded the runner's muscles with their hands or a towel.

Run Out: A term indicating that an athlete had not run a heat placing that allowed him to progress to the next round.

Running Corks (Running Grips): These were hand-held pieces of cork that fitted into a runner's palm and squeezed by them during the final stages of a race. The belief was that they allowed the runner to generate tension to help them at the end of the race. Their usage was noted by H.F. Wilkinson in his 1868 book, *Modern Athletics*. Many leading nineteenth century athletes such as Lon Myers and Harry Bethune used them. They were used by both sprinters and distance runners. Their use continued into the twentieth century and they were also used by amateur athletes including by Kenneth McArthur in his 1912 Olympic marathon victory.

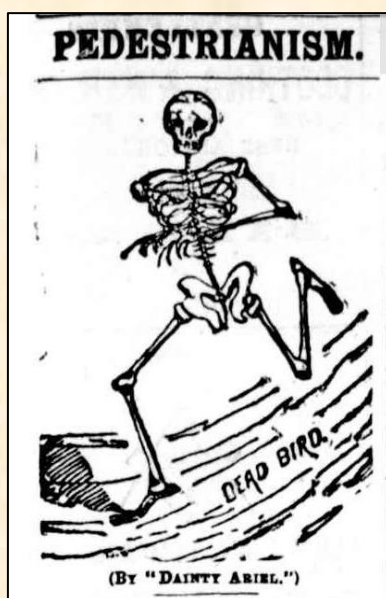
Some versions of the corks had an elastic strap that went behind the back of the hand and looped over the other end of the cork. Others were more ornate and fitted with enamel tips at either end.

Prior to the use of corks, long distance pedestrians carried wooden sticks and even cylindrical pieces of ivory. See also Athletic Grips.



A pair of running corks circa early 1900's

Running Dead: Another term similar to roping where the athlete runs at less than their best and underperforms in order to get a better handicap or to allow someone else to win.



An 1888 drawing from the Referee newspaper that satirised the practice of Running Dead by some pedestrians.

Running stiff: A term indicating that the runner was not attempting to perform to his best. It was also used in horse racing and professional cycling. See also Roping and Running Dead.

Running to the book: A term used in England to explain when a runner disguised their true form to obtain better odds or a more favourable handicap. See also Running Dead.

Scratch: A runner starts from scratch when they run the full distance without a handicap allowance. A runner starting from scratch would mostly likely be the backmarker and a likely favourite. If a runner on scratch broke (false started) or won a heat comfortably they could be penalised and have to start behind scratch.

Sheffield: A steel and iron making city in Yorkshire England with a strong sporting heritage. It became the centre for pedestrianism in England from the 1850's. The city's importance to the sport can be gauged by the terms Sheffield handicap and Sheffield start that form part of the sport's

history and language. Not having a specific main competition venue like Powderhall and Stawell, Sheffield competitions were held various venues such as Hyde Park and the Queen's Bell Inn.

Sheffield Handicap: A term originating in the city of Sheffield that referred to races of 130 yards (now 120 metres). Sheffield was a strong centre for professional running. The Sheffield distance became the standard distance for many of leading professional races in Australia and England. The distance reportedly came about when a challenge for a race was issued to settle a dispute between two hotels that happened to be 130 yards apart.

Sheffield Start: See the Dab start.

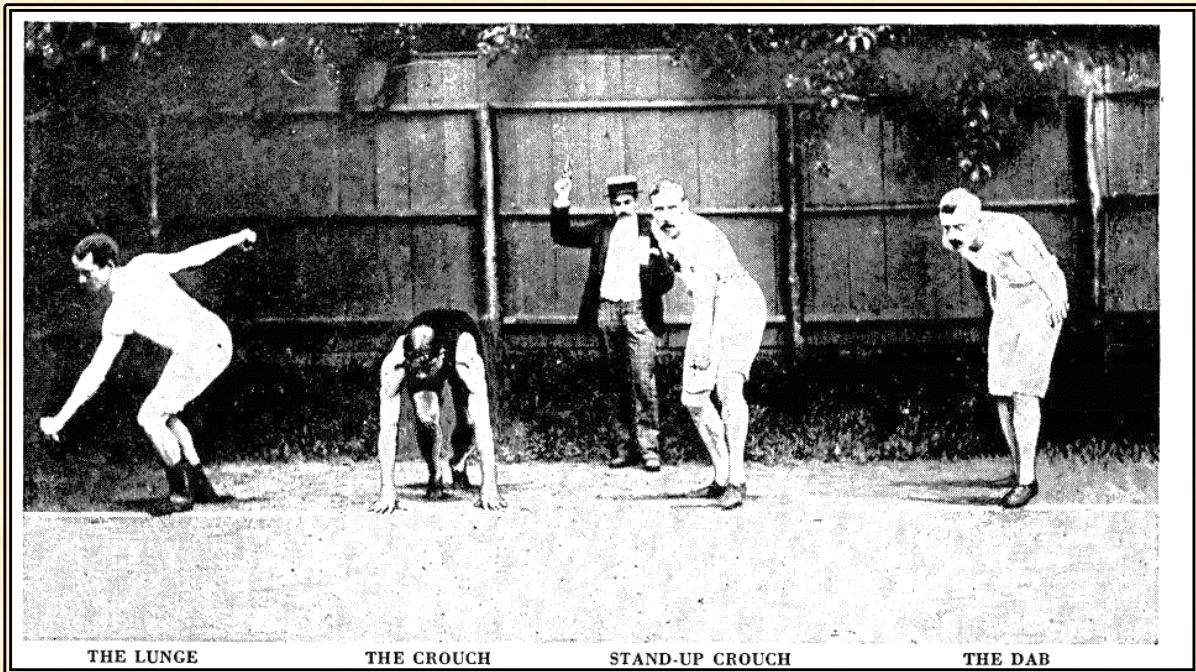
Six Day Event: As sports became more organised in the nineteenth century, the community and social mores of the day did not favour holding sporting events on Sundays. This gave rise to six-day events that were held from midnight on a Sunday to midnight on the following Saturday and so avoided any competition on Sundays.

These six-day events flourished in the golden era of pedestrianism with competitions also held for pedestriennes. The famous Astley Belt races were six-day events. As competitive events they waned in public interest by the early twentieth century. See also Go as You Please, Mixers.

Stakeholder: The person or nominated business that would hold the deposits for the race's purse put up by the participants in a match race. Often a publican or a newspaper would act as stakeholders. It was the stakeholder's responsibility to pay out the monies as agreed in the articles after the race.

Starting Holes: As starting techniques such as the Crouch start became more common, runners started to dig out two small holes with trowels to place their feet in. The purpose of the holes was to give the runner a greater push off at the start. The rear edge of both the front and rear hole were near perpendicular to help with this push off²⁷. Starting holes remained in use into the twentieth century when they were replaced by starting blocks.

Starting Techniques: Over the history of pedestrian sprinting, runners developed a variety starting methods that encompassed the Australian start, Break Start, Crouch, Dab Start, Kangaroo, Lunge and Mutual consent techniques. Gradually the Crouch start became the preferred starting style.



The various starting styles still being used circa 1890's

Stawell: Stawell is a town in the state of Victoria that hosts the annual Stawell Easter Carnival. This is Australia's leading professional carnival and was first held in 1878. The carnival has attracted many good runners over its history and has been referred to as the "mecca of champions".

The events held at the carnival have evolved over the years. Currently the carnival conducts both sprints and middle-distance events from 70 metres to 3200 metres with the feature event the Stawell Gift.



Central Park Stawell, home of the Stawell Easter Carnival.

Stewards: This term used to describe the officials that oversee a professional carnival. It is another term that professional running shares with horse racing. The term steward was first used in England

and taken up in Australia where they undertook roles such as managing the withdrawals and scratching of athletes, supervising bookmakers, and the allocation of colours to runners.

Stiff Handicap: A runner who received a handicap that he considered too severe was said to have a “stiff” handicap. If runners considered the handicap too severe, they may choose to withdraw and not compete.

“Talking Horses or Dogs” : A somewhat disparaging term likening professional runners to racehorses and racing dogs²⁸. Apart from the gambling, there were some other links between horse racing and professional running. Like horse racing the person who prepared the runners was formally known as a trainer. Similarly, a trainer who had a group of athletes was referred to as having a stable of runners.

“Thou in a Thou”: Another term for the Barclay feat where a competitor had to complete a thousand miles in each and every of a thousand consecutive hours. See also Barclay Challenge.

Toe the scratch: A term indicating that runners were coming to the start line. Originally used in pugilism, from 1778, as a line drawn across the ring for the start of rounds.

Trainer: The name given to the person who prepared an athlete for a race. This involved both the physical and tactical preparation of the athlete. Effectively this person was a coach. A trainer may also determine what race a runner would be “set” to win. A group of runners working with a trainer were referred to as a stable. In Scotland, runners and their trainers would live in a training camp environment which was known as being in “preps”. See also Gaffer and Mentor.

Trial horse: Refers to a runner who acts as a simulated opponent for another runner in a practice trial or training workout. The purpose of the trial horse runner was to provide the leading runner with a training situation that resembled actual competition.

A man

to act as a “trial horse” is of great service, as it tends to make a competitor run himself out more. The use made of such trial horse should vary from time to time—now starting behind the pedestrian, now running the last portion of the distance with him.

*The work of a trial horse as explained in an 1868 training book*²⁹

26 Hour Race: Usually the races for a specified period time were in a multiple of six hours. The duration of this race appears to be been developed by promoters who were able to get two spectator audiences by turning out the original audience and bring in a new one as the race crossed into the second day.

These 26-hour races were conducted as runs, walking events, relays and sometimes races against horses. They were common during the heyday period of pedestrian long-distance events. They declined gradually with a few events still occurring up to the 1930’s.



A 1930 Men vs Horses 26-hour race in Montreal, Canada.

Walk Over: A term used to describe the situation where a runner is the only competitor in their event. As a result, they could literally walk the distance to be declared the winner. Though not a common happening, the expression “won in a walkover” describes the situation.

Worsted: The term applies to a woollen yarn that was spun into a long thread. These were strung between the two finish posts on either side of the track. The purpose was to assist in identifying the winner – the person who broke the worsted first.

If the reader has other phrases and techniques relevant to pedestrianism please contact me with the details at PaulCircosta@outlook.com or at PaulCircosta.com.

Notes

- 1 Throughout this document the term professional has been used mostly in its historical sense. In the 1980's with the move to open athletics the distinction between amateur and professional largely disappeared. Athletes were able to compete across both types of competitive formats.
- 2 For details of the Corinthian amateur see Erik Nielsen, *Sport and the British World, 1900-1930, Amateurism and National Identity in Australasia and Beyond*, 2014.
- 3 See Roe, *Front Runners, The First Athletic Track Champions*, p 174 for another example of an Article of Agreement.
- 4 See Doherty, *Modern Track and Field, Promotion, History, Methods* p 50 and Sears, *Running through the Ages*, p 88.
- 5 James W. Benson, *Time and Time-Tellers, 1875*, p 124.
- 6 See *Horsham Times*, 31 March, 1896, p 3.
- 7 See Brown and Donoghue, *One Hundred Bay Sheffields*, pp 149-151.
- 8 *The Star*, Ballarat, 23 September, 1858, p 3.
- 9 See Peter Mewett, “Discourses of Deception: Cheating in Professional Running”, p 301.
- 10 Details of the break start technique were recorded by William Curtis and noted in Kenneth J. Doherty, *Modern Track and Field, Promotion, History, Methods*, p 48.
- 11 Hahn (ed), *How to Sprint, The Theory of Sprint Racing*, p 189.
- 12 See Piper, *Peds of the Past, 1837-1920*, p 82.

- 13 Peter Mewett has developed a typology for the forms of cheating in professional running. He has classified these actions as “good cheating” and “bad cheating”. He explained good cheating as the types of deception noted throughout this glossary. Dirty cheating involves getting a financial gain by deceiving one’s stablemates or trainer. See “Discourses of Deception: Cheating in Professional Running”.
- 14 See Sears, *Running Through the Ages*, p 47.
- 15 see David A. Jamieson, *Powderhall and Pedestrianism*, p 28.
- 16 *Referee*, 22 January, 1913, p 9.
- 17 See Doherty, *Modern Track and Field, Promotion, History, Methods*, p 49.
- 18 Explanations for the terms “left hand in and right hand” in were supplied by Peter Lovesey.
- 19 See Hahn (ed), *How to Sprint, The Theory of Sprint Racing*, p 201.
- 20 See Sears, *Running Through the Ages*, pp 67-8.
- 21 see Doherty, *Modern Track and Field, Promotion, History*, pp 48-9, and Glenn Piper *Peds of the Past, 1837-1920*, pp 135-6.
- 22 See Piper, *Peds of the Past, 1937-1920*, p 193.
- 23 See Harry, Hall, *The Pedestriennes, America’s Forgotten Superstars*, 2014 and Edward S. Sears, *Running through the Ages*, 2015.
- 24 Dahn, Shaulis, “Pedestriennes: Newsworthy but Controversial Women in Sporting Entertainment, *Journal of Sport History*, Vol 26, No 1, Spring, 1999, pp 29-49.
- 25 see Joe Bull, *The Spiked Shoe*, pp 197-212.
- 26 See Peter Lovesey, *The Official Centenary History of the Amateur Athletic Association*, p 15 and Glenn Piper *Peds of the Past, 1837-1920*, p 219.
- 27 See Hahn, *How to Sprint, The Theory of Sprint Racing*, p 77.
- 28 The term is mentioned in Glenn Piper’s book *Peds of the Past, 1837-1920*, p 6. It is also referred to in Roy Hay, *Albert, Pompey Austin, A Man Between Two Worlds*, p 57.
- 29 See H.F. Wilkinson, *Modern Athletics*, p 85.

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