



by
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END OF AN ERA

Tom Hynes is dead. God rest his noble soul. His passing at the fine old age of 88 years brings to a close an era—a golden era in Galway's sphere in athletics.

In the opening decade of the present century, Galway produced, almost simultaneously, three of the greatest long-distance runners in the world, John J. Daly of Ballyglunin and the "Moycullen Marvels" John J. Joyce and Thomas Hynes.

Daly, who is still hale and hearty in New York where he has resided for the past 60 years, was built like a heavy-weight boxer, weighing almost 14 stones and standing just over 6 feet.

He blazed the trail for his fellow Galwaymen by 'hareing' through all local, county and provincial opposition with such ease that he was pressed into entering for the Irish Amateur Athletic Association's mile and 4 miles championships in 1902. The barrel-chested Ballyglunin boy created something of a sensation when he burst away from the mark and ran the opposition into the ground in both to score a really remarkable double.

INTERNATIONALS

John J. Daly soon found fresh fields to conquer when selected on the Irish team against Scotland, two weeks later, and although the ankle-deep mud at Ballsbridge should have been all against a heavily-built runner, the burly Ballyglunin boy ploughed his way through to win the 1 mile in 4 mins. 27 4/5 secs. and the 4 miles in 20 mins. 42 3/5 secs. In 1903 Daly won the Irish 2 miles title in the National rec- and then decided to have a 'go' at cross-country running. Making rapid progress in an event usually the preserve of such lanky runners as Tim Smythe or Murt Molloy, Daly won the Irish title at Clonskeagh and in the International at Hamilton Park, was third to World's Champion, Alfred Shrubbs.

FAME SPREAD

John J. Daly's fame as a runner spread so fast that in 1904 he was invited to cross the Atlantic to run in a mile race being put on in conjunction with the Olympic Games in St. Louis. Daly accepted and duly won the race in 'powerful' style. Across the Border to Canada, was his next trip and at Montréal his 'Canadian Caper' proved well worth the journey when he won that country's 2 miles' championship.

Then came the year of Ireland's emergence as an Athletic entity in the Athens

Olympics and after Peter O'Connor had hoisted the flag, John J. Daly made a death or glory bid for victory in the home of the Marathon. At the half-way stage in that gruelling 26 miles test, the Ballyglunin man, although in the leading group signalled that his rather crude running shoes were 'killing' him. At 18 miles with blood from his two feet leaving a trail in the Grecian dust, Daly was forced to drop out. Peter O'Connor who had served his Solicitor's apprenticeship in Clifden, was on hand to console him and afterwards declared: "I never in my life saw such a pair of feet on a human being."

THE JOYCE COUNTRY

John J. Joyce from Moycullen, who saw Daly win many of his early races in Ireland, first hit the headlines by winning the American 10 miles championship from a field of 50 runners in 1903 and retained it the following year to make it a 'great day for the Irish' at Madison Square Garden. Those great victories he supplemented fully with a dozen more U.S. titles. His finishing speed was remarkable and his time of 54 mins. 40 1/5 secs. for 10 miles over the Madison Square Garden 'short circuit' was something to be wondered at until the advent of the 'Flying Finn' the phenomenal Paava Nurmi to clock an almost unbelievable 50 mins. 15 secs. for the distance. Such stupendous feats by Joyce proved an inspiration to his near neighbour from Moycullen, Tom Hynes, who rapidly built up a great reputation, on the 'home front.'

FOOTSTEPS

Following closely in the footsteps of Daly and Joyce, Tom Hynes became a legend in his own time and many of the old-times, such as the late William J. Duffy and Johnny Farrell, of Loughrea, who saw both men in their prime, plumped for Hynes to be a better runner than Daly.

They travelled by train for the Irish Senior Cross-Country Championship at Elm Park, Dublin on 11th March, 1905 and so great was the strength of Galway at the period that even without the services of the exiled Daly and Joyce, the county romped to team honours with Tom Hynes winning by an unheard of 600 yards.

Two weeks later the Annual International Cross-Country race was run in shocking weather conditions at Baldoyle Racecourse over 8 miles and the event produced an early sensation when John J. Daly found that he could not 'act' on the 'going' and dropped out. Aldridge who succeeded Shrubbs as England's No. 1, and then regarded as one of the world's greatest, killed off all opposition with a series of sprints and great tactical running, but could not shake off Tom Hynes, who pressed him hard up to the tape and 150 yards ahead of the 3rd man home. The Galwayman was given a tremendous ovation and his effort was to remain the best by an Irishman in the event until Tim Smythe broke the 'sound barrier' to win the event in 1931.

PROFESSIONAL

In 1909 the now defunct, Irish Professional Marathon Championship was run at Jones's Road (Croke Park) over the standard 26 miles 385 yards, and Tom Hynes, who had taken the unpopular decision to 'turn pro' started a 'hot' favourite. The Dublin runner, Pat Fagan pushed Hynes every inch of the lung-

bursting journey up to the final lap when Hynes lengthened his stride to win in 2 hours 51 minutes. Maintaining this great form, Tom Hynes came out again in October, 1909 at Jones's Road to win a 15 miles race in quite remarkable time of 1 hour, 25 mins. 1 sec. The merit of that performance can be gleaned from the fact that the American record in amateur ranks for the distance was then 1 hour, 27 mins 10 secs. In the following year, Tom Hynes retained the Marathon title run again at Jones's Road, before an immense crowd, in 2 hours, 54 mins. 33 secs.

Thirty-five years later, Tom Hynes was still as keen as ever on Athletics when we chatted with him at Duggan Park, Ballinasloe, as John Joe Barry the 'Ballincurry Hare' hit the headlines by winning the mile in 4 mins. 23 3/5 secs. and the 4 miles in 20 mins. 3 secs. beating 'our own' Martin Egan of Shanaglish, the holder, in the process.

PEAK FITNESS

"There is no short-cut to success in athletics" was Tom Hynes maxim. "Training, training and more training until peak fitness is reached, is the only way to the top." In his own day, Tom Hynes practised what he preached and by running out to Oughterard and back to his home in Newcastle, nonstop, on five nights per week, he showed that he was half a century ahead of Percy Cerutti and his spartan training programmes.

Tom Hynes took a keen interest in all sports right up to the end of his long and active life and his training methods had a distinct bearing on the fitness of his son Sean who won an Irish Junior Boxing title in 1938 before emigrating to the U.S. where he won a Golden Gloves championship.

UNUSUAL ROLE

Tom Hynes who was to become a 'permanent fixture' as time-keeper' at every Boxing Tournament held in Galway for many years had an unusual role in Galway's most controversial boxing sensation — the Mairtin Thornton — Bruce Woodcock affair at the Theatre Royal, Dublin. Mairtin the native-Irish speaker from Spiddal, had built up quite a reputation for himself in London, first as a racing cyclist and then as a hard-hitting heavyweight boxer. He rattled up such an impressive string of victories that he was matched with the holder, Paddy Sullivan for the Irish Title. The bout 'took place' in the Theatre Royal and O'Sullivan already ailing was pulverised by the "Connemara Crusher" in double quick time. As a result, Mairtin's date with Woodcock was a sell-out and as we arrived outside the Royal clutching a £5 ticket in blissful anticipation who should we meet but Tom Hynes, who had acted as a 'handler' for Mairtin Thornton, during his preparation. "How will he do, Tom?" we enquired in confident expectation of a 'thumbs up' sign for the Champ. "His timing is all wrong. He had no proper sparring-partners. He'll go about three rounds" came the shock reply. Before we could recover from the shock, former rugby Internationals, Kevin O'Flanagan and Ernie O'Keeffe, who were near us in the queue, enquired as to Mairtin's well-being. When we repeated Tom Hynes' prediction, they gave us knowing-winks. After Mairtin had duly fulfilled Tom's ever-so accurate forecast and departed the scene at the end of Round 3, we had the utmost difficulty in convincing Messrs. O'Flanagan and O'Keeffe that we hadn't 'cleaned-up' with the 'Books' on the sorry affair. Knowing Tom Hynes and his ability to weigh-up anything with muscles, we shoulda though.

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