

# RADCLIFFE WILL HAVE TO GO AT IT ALONE

By DON SIKORSKI  
*Special to the Bulletin*

The International Athletics Federation recently denied plans to allow Great Britain's Paula Radcliffe the support of male pacemaker in next month's Flora London Marathon. For those not familiar with what all the fuss is about, here's a brief summary: Radcliffe is fast. Extremely fast. So fast in fact that she averaged just a tad over 5:14 per mile for a 26.2 mile run through the street of Chicago last fall, a world record for the distance in just her second marathon attempt. Now Radcliffe, 29, plans on returning to London on April 13, the site of her marathon debut last year, and will try to run 26.2 miles even faster. But since London runs separate races for male and female competitors, Radcliffe and her fellow elite female marathoners won't have the advantage of competing alongside their male counterparts. So in an effort to set up a formidable world record attempt for Radcliffe, the London Marathon has requested the usage of male pacemakers to pull Radcliffe along to a possible world record.

Istvan Gyulai of the IAAF has now ruled that it would be "clearly against the rules" if London were to use male runners to set the pace in a women's race. Pacemakers would be allowed if they were officially entered in the same competition, but men cannot take part in a women's competition. Flora London Marathon Race Director David Bedford, a former elite runner himself, claimed that all of the other elite women entered at London had agreed to the concept with the exception of Kenya's Catherine Ndereba, the former marathon world record holder. Regardless, Radcliffe's request was denied by the IAAF.

Not that keeping up with Radcliffe is easy. Last year in London, Radcliffe clocked the fastest female debut marathon ever run with her unaccompanied 2:18:56 clocking. Then last fall, Radcliffe smashed Ndereba's world record by running 2:17:18 at the Chicago Marathon. One could argue that Bedford makes a legitimate gripe: he claims that all of the recent women's world record marathon races have used male pacemakers to some extent. But those were in mixed races where all competitors begin at the same time. The women's race at London starts separately from the men's event. Requests to do away with the separate start concept and run a mixed race similar to all other major non-championship marathons did not suit race broadcasters BBC TV in London, who provides substantially media coverage of the event. Why not just use female pacers? The reality is, there simply aren't any female runners that can run the pace Radcliffe hopes to run, even for half the distance.

London could be accused of altering their political stance on combined or separate races based on who is running. As recently as three years ago, it was the London Marathon promoting Joyce Chepchumba of Kenya as the marathon world record holder with her 2.22 clocking in an all woman's race even though faster times had been posted in mixed races. Now London, eager to compete with the Chicago's, Berlin's, and other major marathons of the world, are in a position where they would like to achieve a world record in their race, but also want to give the women's race as much publicity as possible. Considering their stance, the concept of male pacers begins to look hypocritical after witnessing London's prior policy of ignoring world records where women were paced by male athletes. Considering Radcliffe's mass appeal in her home country, it is difficult to fault London for allowing an individual to dictate the conditions of their race. London has been trying since its inception to get the IAAF to agree that there should be world best's for mixed and women's only races. Last year, the IAAF ruled that there should only be one world best for road race distances. But the debate whether or not to allow pacing is expected to continue.

So for now, we expect to see Paula Radcliffe take a shot at her own world record on April 13<sup>th</sup> in London. She will have to go at it alone.

## Racing Roundup

A number of Connecticut runners have posted terrific indoor track times this season. Hunter Spencer, a former standout at E.O. Smith, finished 5<sup>th</sup> overall in the One Mile Run at the NCAA Championships in a tactical 4:06.33.....Brian McGovern of Fairfield was 4<sup>th</sup> in the ACC Championships in the 3,000 meter run in 8:23.26.....Stonington's Tyler McCabe was the Big East runner-up in the 5,000. McCabe ran 14:31 to claim 2<sup>nd</sup> behind Notre Dame's freshman sensation Tim Moore.....Ireland's Mark Carroll has withdrawn from this year's Boston Marathon due to a hip injury. Carroll, who is based in Providence, ran 2:10:58 in his marathon debut in New York City last fall and was looking to challenge John Treacy's national record.....While Paula Radcliffe may be ready to toe the line in London, not all world record holders are so lucky. Pre-race favorite Khalid Khannouchi has pulled out of the Flora London Marathon with tonsillitis. The American world record holder has been suffering from the infection for three weeks and has missed a substantial amount of training. Due the first week in March, Khannouchi won the Kyoto City Half Marathon in Japan in 1:02:15 during his London buildup. Khannouchi won the 2002 London Marathon in a world record time of 2:05:38.

## This Month in History

March 4th, 1990 – Former University of Connecticut cross-country captain Jon Bell takes the lead at the ¾ mile mark and never looks back at the Kelly's Pace Hare Hop 5K in Mystic. Bell's winning time of 15:29 is good enough to outrun his three nearest competitors, Bob Stack (2<sup>nd</sup> in 15:51), Tim Kane (15:56) and Phil Garland (16:02). The overall race field is deep, with Jeff Kotecki, Guy Joseph, Steve Herrera, Dennis Tetreault, Steve LaBranche, and Chad Johnson rounding out the top ten finishers. In the women's race, former Montville high School standout Kelly Pickney cruised to a comfortable win in 19:03, 38 seconds up on runner-up Kris-Anne Pardo (19:41) and just missing Margaret Beardslee's course record on 18:58 set a year earlier.

**Don Sikorski writes a twice-monthly running column for the Norwich Bulletin. His "Coach's Corner" column can be accessed at [www.moheganstriders.org](http://www.moheganstriders.org). He can also be reached by e-mail at [kdcsikorski@netzero.net](mailto:kdcsikorski@netzero.net).**