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COOPER, PAMELA. *The American Marathon*. Sports and Entertainment Series. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1998. Pp. xvi, 217. Twelve photos, works cited. \$29.95.

Because the purpose of Cooper's *The American Marathon* is not clearly stated, it is difficult to assess the work. The chapters are thematically titled, though basically chronological, beginning with an overview of the marathon and its place in American society. Cooper has an interesting account of the impact of the 1936 Olympics with her note on prominent Jewish Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) officials who opposed Hitler's Olympics. They were "accidentally" removed from their positions in New York City, yet a pro-Nazi official was re-elected head of the Metropolitan AAU as late as 1948. Another chapter follows the New York Pioneer Club, a Harlem-based club with an interracial team that was a major national power into the 1970s.

Cooper's description of the change from blue to white collar runners in road racing ignores similar changes in American society. While she provides a good overview of women racers, it begins in the 1960s. She does not mention such opposition as Jock Semple trying to tackle a woman to remove her from the Boston Marathon. Cooper's overview of Katherine Switzer and the Avon race series is very strong. Those races disproved the International Olympic Committee argument that women were incapable of safely running elite distance races and were a major factor in the addition of the longer Olympic races in 1984.

Cooper overstates the marathon as a means of assimilating into American culture and defining one's own cultural identity. While there is much evidence in baseball, she cites none for the marathon. She comments that "Irish Americans running in the marathon symbolically reenacted a difficult overland journey to find opportunity and freedom" (p. 26). She cites no evidence that runners saw it that way, and since the Irish did not immigrate by land, it seems unlikely. She further states that "the social forces deriving from industrialization in twentieth-century America turned marathon practitioners toward increasing cohesion among

themselves and toward conformity to native culture” (pp. 58-59), again without evidence.

Many social questions go unanswered, even unremarked. Why did some races go from great success to nonexistence? One race died apparently after the police no longer stopped traffic for it; why did the force change its policy? Cooper mentions Charles Burden as an African American who won a marathon in New Orleans in 1909 (p. 56), but gives no other information. This event might be far more significant than Irish immigrants running races in Boston. Was it an integrated race? We are left with a mystery,

The author also repeats false history, attributing interval training to Emil Zatopek, probably taking Derderian’s inaccurate reference as gospel. His is becoming another Abner Doubleday, since interval training goes back to the 1800s (at least), while its formal development was by Reindell and Gerschler in the 1930s. There are, in fact, no “new” methods of training distance runners during this century, only changes in loading, emphasis, and intensity.

Cooper focuses heavily on runners from New York City to the New England region, so she misses the warp jump in performance in the 1960s, largely ignoring Buddy Edelen and Kenny Moore. Edelen, from Minnesota, raised his performance to levels undreamed of by other American road racers. His 1964 Trials marathon is not mentioned, though he won by almost four miles, a margin never approached before or since in an elite marathon. Instead Cooper comments that he never ran the Boston Marathon (p. 111)—so what? Kenny Moore, from Oregon, continued the transition to track-trained speed racers, running the marathon in two hours and eleven minutes in 1970. He was the best American between 1968 and 1972, when he was supplanted at the Olympic Games by Frank Shorter, who became a marathoner on Moore’s encouragement. Shorter became an elite racer only after moving to Florida and training with other transient runners in the Florida Track Club.

In another example of regional tunnel vision, the author stresses that John J. Kelley might have been faster, but for teaching high school English—as did (without mention) Edelen, who left the country and worked as a teacher to pursue his training. Most runners in that era had a full-time jobs, and while it is nice that Kelley’s wife is beautiful, the observation raises serious questions about the author’s objectivity.

Tables would have clarified the development of the event and the rates of participation. Instead, races appear out of the void, then return whence they came. The historical sources are good, though unevenly used, but the sociological questions are proven primarily by references to other writer’s opinions. The question remains: is this a history of the race, or some other aspect of the marathon? A clearer statement of purpose would have resulted in a more solid work.

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