

BEYOND THE SPEED LIMIT

Traveling at a breakneck pace, Joan Benoit and Steve Jones raced for the records at America's Marathon in Chicago

BY DON KARDONG

Running down Lake Shore Drive in America's Marathon/Chicago, Steve Jones hit 4:34 for his sixth mile. He'd run 23:54 for the first five. His 10K time was 29:30. Joan Benoit's sixth mile was 5:04. Her first five was 26:19 and her 10K was 32:51. They had 20 miles to go and had already run fast enough to have won most 10K races. If they kept it up, Jones would break 2:05 and Benoit would break 2:20.

Their mission was sealed. They put everything on the line. There was no turning back. They dared to take the marathon into unexplored territory—into the black hole of speed, challenging the conventional precepts of self-preservation—and threw the question of racing versus pacing into the face of the opposition.

Do you race the bold front-runner, letting him or her control you, or do you control your urges, run your own pace and play it safe? Coaches give conflicting advice. "Don't let them get away," they say. They also say, "Run your own race."

Is it better strategy to race, to follow in the footsteps, on the shoulder, or at least within eyesight of your rivals; or should you simply slip into autopilot, monitor your vital signs and hope the flight plan you've entered will bring you to your landing pad before anyone else?

Consider the competition in Chicago. The men's field was headed by defending champion Steve Jones of Wales, who last year dropped his pace a healthy notch to 4:45 and better for the final seven miles of his 2:08:05 world best—not the kind of runner one wanted around late in the race.

This year, after setting a world half-marathon mark of 1:01:14 in England on August 11 and finishing second at Falmouth the following weekend, Jones duplicated last year's pre-Chicago regimen by training for five weeks in Park City, Utah. He completed his marathon tune-up two weeks before Chicago with a 37:25 victory in Boston's Freedom Trail Eight-Miler.

"If anything," Jones was saying, "I think I'm probably a little fitter this year."

Then there was Rob de Castella, the 1983 world champion, who had come off a disappointing fifth place in the '84 Olympic Marathon to finish third in last year's Chicago race, and who had just spent six months training in Boulder, Colorado, his new home, for the rematch with Jones. On the same weekend Jones was in Boston, Deek was in the Chicago suburb of Itasca setting a new course record of 34:21 in the Octoberfest 12K. With the world record holder Carlos Lopes of Portugal nursing a sore Achilles tendon and out of the fall marathon picture, de Castella was the man many were picking to steal the race.

And then there was Robleh Djama of dirt-poor, marathon-rich Djibouti. Djama had finished third in last spring's World Cup Marathon in Hiroshima by cracking a 2:08:26, making him the second-fastest of a passel of Djiboutian distance runners. Isolated by language, Djama sat patiently through Chicago press conferences, smiling when addressed, seeming both calm and confident. Rumors of a 2:13 training marathon run a week earlier in Fontainebleu, France, where the Djiboutians had trained throughout the summer and early fall, seemed to underscore the threat Djama posed in Chicago.

And there were others: Allister Hutton of Edinburgh, Scotland, with a 2:09:16 best, set in London last spring. Henrik Jorgensen of Denmark, with a 2:09:43 best. John Graham of Scotland, runner-up to Lopes at Rotterdam in 2:09:58. Djiboutian Abdillahi Charmarke, 2:10:33. American Mark Curp, fresh off a 1:00:55 world half-marathon mark in Philadelphia, ready to run his first mara-

thon. Finns, Brits, Mexicans, French, Italians, Swedes, Africans, Germans. Even top Americans, such as they are: Don Janicki, Marty Froelick, Dave Gordon, Jon Sinclair and Ken Martin.

When asked if he thought that Lopes's mark of 2:07:12 was out of reach, Steve Jones paid his respects to the deep Chicago field. "I think it's a good record," said Jones. "But there's still four or five or six people here capable of running that sort of time."

So tell me, what do you do, follow these guys or run your own race?

Ironically, while the men were stewing with that question, most of the attention was focusing on the women's field, where Olympic gold medalist Joan Benoit of the U.S. would run her first marathon since the Games and do so in the company of Norway's Ingrid Kristiansen, who had taken advantage of Benoit's hiatus from the event by posting a 2:21:06 world mark in last spring's London Marathon. The new world record holder versus the Olympic gold medalist. Who could resist that one?

There was at least one footnote to the matchup, too, in the form of diminutive Rosa Mota of Portugal, Olympic bronze medalist, who had set a personal best in each of six previous marathon attempts. That included last year's Chicago race, where her 2:26:01 victory put her over four minutes ahead of Kristiansen. Mota was mentioned so often as someone not to forget that she was beginning to look like a co-favorite, showing up on quite a few pundit's picks for runner-up and, in that realm where marathon predictions are thrown to the wind, as winner. She had run 1:05:38 at the New Haven 20K on September 2, roughly the equivalent of a 1:09:14 half marathon. In Chicago, she was wearing number one.

"Rosa is in 2:25 shape," said José Pedrosa, her coach and companion. "But 2:20 is too fast."

That sounded suspiciously like the old run-your-own-race strategy, which made good sense, of course.

Benoit, eyeing 2:20, had dreamt of Kristiansen, who would stalk her for 20 miles.

when pre-race talk was centering on the possibility of someone running under the women's marathon "barrier" of 2:20.

"It's no secret," said Athletics West coach Bob Sevene last summer, when Benoit was still trying to decide if she was ready for a marathon, "that Joan wants to be the first woman to break 2:20."

Nor was it any secret that Kristiansen wanted the same. "A woman can break 2:20," she said last summer, "and I want to do it."

The matchup, then, had been brewing as a classic confrontation not unlike that between milers Roger Bannister and John Landy in 1954 as they approached the four-minute barrier. In this case, though, the two women might be deciding who was the better marathon runner at the same moment they were cracking the barrier that both had in their sights. And naturally America's Marathon had been eager to offer a course on which to settle the issue.

Kristiansen had decided last spring to run a fall marathon in Chicago after discussions with race director Bob Bright. According to Bright, rival marathon director Fred Lebow of New York had gone after Carlos Lopes, with Bright agreeing not to drive up the bidding, in return for which Bright was given a chance to pick a runner of his own.

"I surprised Fred by picking Kristiansen rather than Benoit," says Bright. "But I figured that if Joanie was in shape and ready to run a marathon, she'd want to run against Ingrid."

The gamble paid off as Benoit, after months of post-Olympic hassles, distractions, illnesses and injuries, finally began to feel good in June, only four months before Chicago.

Finally, in September, after winning the Philadelphia half-marathon in 1:09:44, Benoit announced she would give Chicago a shot. "The competition's here," said Benoit, "and I've been out to see this race before, and I'm very happy with everything I've seen."

One element of appeal was money, which Chicago had plenty of, thanks again to the sponsoring Beatrice Company. With \$270,000 in prize money, generous appearance fees and a series of cash incentives and bonuses that would have delighted Monte Hall, Chicago had managed to bring together yet another shout-it-from-the-mountain-tops field of runners. And yet, appropriately and wonderfully, none of the athletes seemed to be thinking much about money before the race.



PHOTOGRAPH BY JANEART

"The reason Joan Benoit is in this race, I can tell you," said Bob Sevene, "despite what all the newspapers say about money, is because Ingrid Kristiansen is in this race."

And that brings us back to the question we left the men stewing over. Do you race, or do you pace?

"I might feel a bit defensive," Kristiansen said in an interview during the summer, "but in general times are still more important to me than victories. I prefer to attempt fast times and possibly have to crawl in."

That comment might be forgiven as the view of someone who had had a year to ponder her Olympic disappointment and a few months yet to consider the full ramifications of entering the same race as Benoit. Was it so easy to run one's own race when the memory of Los Angeles, of Benoit leaving early and never coming back, was still in mind?

"I was very disappointed after Los Angeles because I didn't try to win. I didn't *try*," Kristiansen had confessed. "I should have gone with Benoit, and if I'd still only got fourth place I'd have been happy because I had at least tried."

Kristiansen seemed to be sending mixed messages. "If she's running very fast, maybe I'll let her go," she said as the day approached.

Benoit, meanwhile, downplayed any desire to unseat Kristiansen as the fastest female marathoner in the world. "I'm going to run my own race, and Ingrid will

run her own race."

And what sort of splits was she hoping to run?

"What are splits?" quipped Benoit.

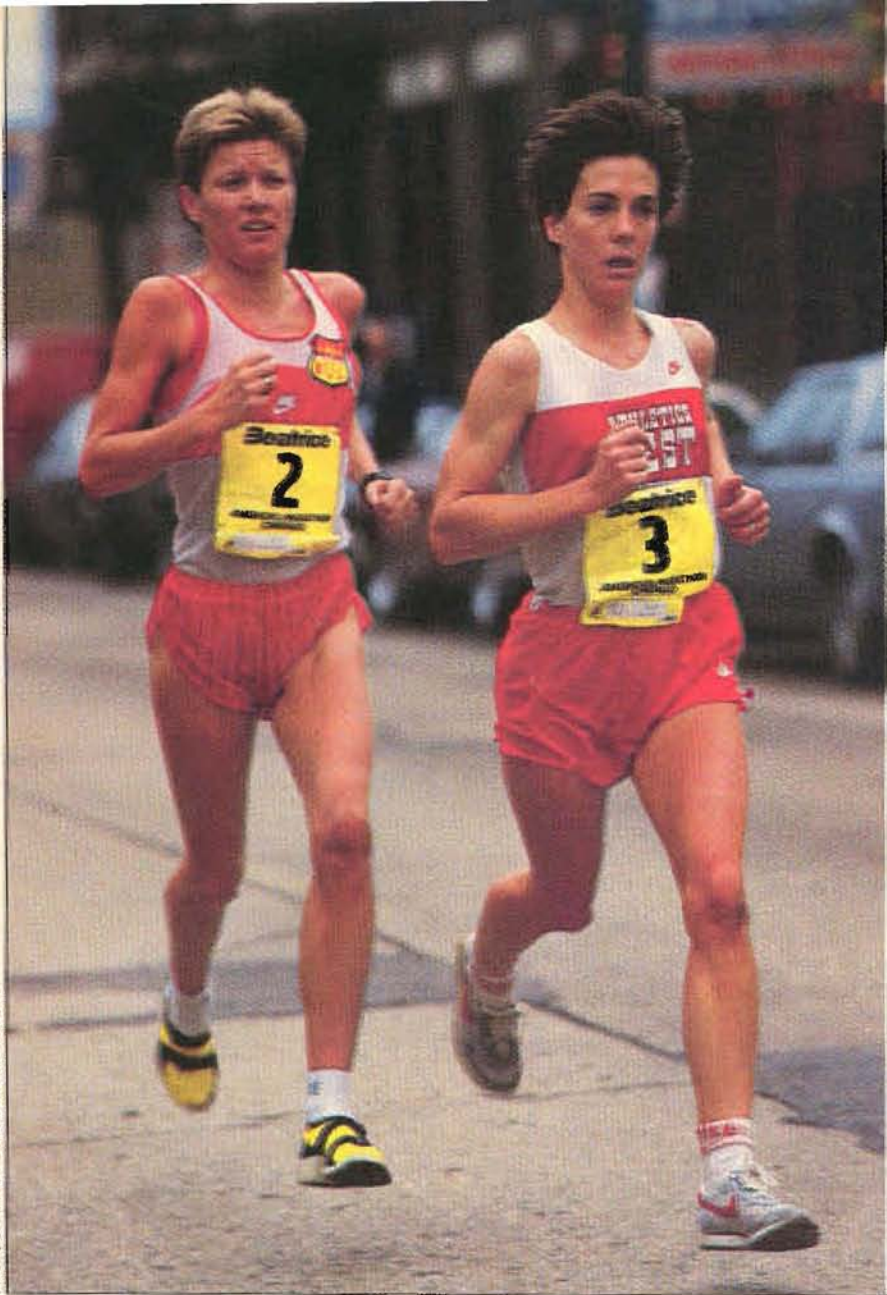
Thus was the stage set. The men would most likely be keying on Jones, while the women's division shaped up as a battle between Kristiansen, remembering Benoit's Olympic dash, but otherwise racing the clock, and Benoit, who would simply be racing to win.

No amount of training, determination and strategy, of course, can undo the effects of bad marathon weather, a fact that causes race directors, especially those who have spent a fair amount of money to coax top performances, to wake up early on race morning to place a quick call to 1-800-WEA-THER. Conditions were almost ideal with temperatures in the mid-fifties and skies overcast. A bit of wind and a subtle sort of humidity would be the only villains.

The Chicago course offers spectators the opportunity to watch runners at the start, at four miles and at 16 miles as it winds through the downtown part of the city. For a writer interested in observing the women's race on foot, it is also possible to run most of the first six miles, then cut across to the 14-mile point and continue through 20, finally cutting to the finish for a final view of both men's and women's winners. With the approval of race officials and sufficient training to run at 5:20 pace, I chose that plan as an

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PHOTOGRAPH BY STEVE SUTTON/DUOMO

Women's race. Left: Running in tandem through a 1:09:33 half, Benoit and Kristiansen were on target for the world record. Below: After breaking away, Benoit came close in 2:21:21. Far left: War stories. Bottom: Rosa Mota was third in 2:23:29.



PHOTOGRAPH BY PAUL SUTTON/DUOMO



PHOTOGRAPH BY PAUL SUTTON/DUOMO

excellent way to observe whether the race would be defined by racers, intent on stealing the show early, or pacers, working their way slowly, surely, and steadily toward the finish.

Before the start, few would have argued with Rob de Castella's prediction about how the men's race would develop. "You'll see a big group," said Deek, "eight to ten runners, in front for 15 to 20 miles. In the last three or four miles the pack will fragment. Then we will see who's on form."

Steve Jones, though, wasted no time in destroying that scenario. Running 4:46 and 4:42 for the first two miles, Jones seemed impatient with the pace of Carl Thackery of Sheffield, England, who had been hired to lead the men through a 1:03:30 half-marathon. By two miles, Jones began moving to the lead, then passed three miles in 14:16, with only Simeon Kigen of Kenya as company. It's not uncommon to see someone open a

marathon at breakneck speed, only to collapse shortly after. Top runners, used to that, are generally unperturbed.

But Steve Jones? Did the former world record holder know something no one else did, or was he simply plunging into the kind of drastic and soon-to-be-regretted experiment that Geoff Smith had suffered last spring at Boston? Faced with Jones's challenge, what should a 2:08 or 2:09 marathoner do?

While the rest of the men mulled that over, Jones accelerated to 4:39 for the fourth mile, slowed to 4:59 on the hilly fifth mile, then turned in miles of 4:34, 4:39, 4:37, 4:39, and 4:38 through ten, which he passed in 47:01, nearly two minutes faster than he had in 1984. No one had run five straight sub-4:40 miles in a marathon before. His split converted to a 2:03:16 marathon!

By that point, though, nearly everyone in that next pack—de Castella, Djama, Curp—must have felt they knew what was up. Jones's splits were suicidal. Just stick to one's own pace, right?

"I was pretty surprised he was able to keep going," de Castella said later. "In the clinic yesterday Steve was telling everybody how he hadn't been doing as much mileage this year, hadn't been doing his long runs, and I thought, 'Oh, good, he'll really struggle over those last few miles.'"

And how was the wild one himself reacting to his superhuman splits?

"I wasn't really taking too much no-

Top Ten at a Glance

Men	Time
1. Steve Jones (GB)	2:07:13
2. Robleh Djama (Dji)	2:08:08
3. Rob de Castella (Aus)	2:08:48
4. Giammi Poli (Ita)	2:09:57
5. Ralf Salzmann (WG)	2:10:56
6. Jose Gomez (Mex)	2:11:08
7. Don Janicki (US)	2:11:16
8. Francisco Pacheco (Mex)	2:11:57
9. Ken Martin (US)	2:12:00
10. Henrik Jorgensen (Den)	2:12:03

Women	Time
1. Joan Benoit (US)	2:21:21
2. Ingrid Kristiansen (Nor)	2:23:05
3. Rosa Mota (Por)	2:23:29
4. Carla Beurskens (Hol)	2:27:50
5. Veronique Marot (GB)	2:28:04
6. Glenys Quick (NZ)	2:31:44
7. Mary O'Connor (NZ)	2:33:41
8. Mary Lelut (Fra)	2:34:02
9. Sylvie Bornet (Fra)	2:34:05
10. Rita Borralho (Por)	2:36:03

tice of them," Jones would comment. "I felt comfortable. I knew it would hit me at some stage in the race, and it was just a matter of carrying on until it did."

Having cast the die, Jones held on, passing the first of the two marathon halves in 1:01:42 (in his world record, Lopes's split was 1:03:24) and thinking to himself, as he said after the race, "Let's try and run another one."

While the men had decided, at least for the time being, that Jones was better off running a crackpot pace by himself, the women's race had shaped up a little differently. Benoit had gone out brutally, much as Jones had, running 5:09, 5:07, 5:21, 5:08, 5:24, and 5:04 for the first six miles and passing 10K in the aforementioned 32:51, a pace of 2:18:37 if held the entire distance. The difference, though, was that she wasn't alone. The world record holder was on her heels.

"I am a runner like Benoit," Kristiansen had said. "I like to be out front and feel I am running my race, not another's."

But was she? In a way. Benoit was defining the terms of the race—surging, floating, but always making the moves—but Kristiansen couldn't be criticized for following as she did. Benoit's 10K split was not that much faster than the 33:00 Kristiansen had planned en route to a sub-2:20 marathon, and almost exactly what Kristiansen had run while setting her record in London. Why rock the boat?

Perhaps the stress of London made Kristiansen too presumptuous of Benoit's capabilities under like circumstances. "I know I am faster than her for 10K, so if she runs faster than 33 minutes, it will be harder for her than it will be for me. It's not just running one 10K. There are three more after that," Kristiansen explained.

After five miles Benoit and Kristiansen had drawn away from the thin crowds. One keen observer did pop out, Tommy Leonard, bartender of Boston's famous running hangout, the Eliot Lounge, had leaned into the roadway and shouted, "C'mon Joanie, the whole world wants you!" An endless array of Norwegians who brought Kristiansen fluids and encouragement from the sidewalks throughout the race might have taken exception to that.

As the two traveled down stretches of lonely asphalt on Lake Shore Drive, Benoit stared into the distance with a kind of dreamy concentration, perhaps wandering back to her pre-race dream of counting spoons with Kristiansen. The Norwegian stared intently into Benoit's back, her forehead etched with will, exerting silent pressure from behind.

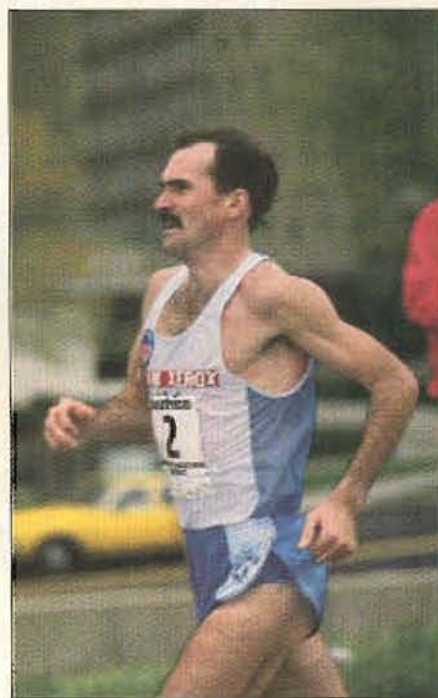
The two were a contrast in running styles as well—Benoit a study in efficient form and relaxation, Kristiansen with a more erratic body carriage, like a miler fighting against oxygen debt but still looking dangerous, ready to strike.

They weaved their way through South Chicago. The pace began to suffer from gusty winds, and by the halfway mark they were traveling along at a more reasonable 5:23 pace. Their half-marathon time of 1:09:33, though, was still 36 seconds faster than Kristiansen's London pace. The question of whether the 2:20 mark would be broken or, if not, which of the women would be, was tantalizing.

In the midst of the battle, there was a moment when Kristiansen offered her water bottle to Benoit, telling her it contained a solution with salt, when she meant sugar. The ensuing misunderstanding, smiles and resolution seemed strangely out of context, as if they were actors muffling their lines in the middle of a dramatic *mise en scène*. The interlude was brief, and the two returned quickly to the business of the second half of the race.

Nor had Steve Jones the luxury of late-race respite. By 14 miles, his eyes had begun to reflect, ever so slightly, that despair that marathon runners know when the body begins to balk at the pace. Jones finally began to "slow down," running just above 4:50 per mile from 14 through 20. At that mark, passed in 1:35:22, he was looking at a projected, and still scary, 2:05:01.

Finally, though, the lender came to collect on the overdue debt. Jones ran his 21st mile in 5:02, the next in 5:07, then



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PHOTOGRAPHS BY PAUL SUTTON/DUOMO

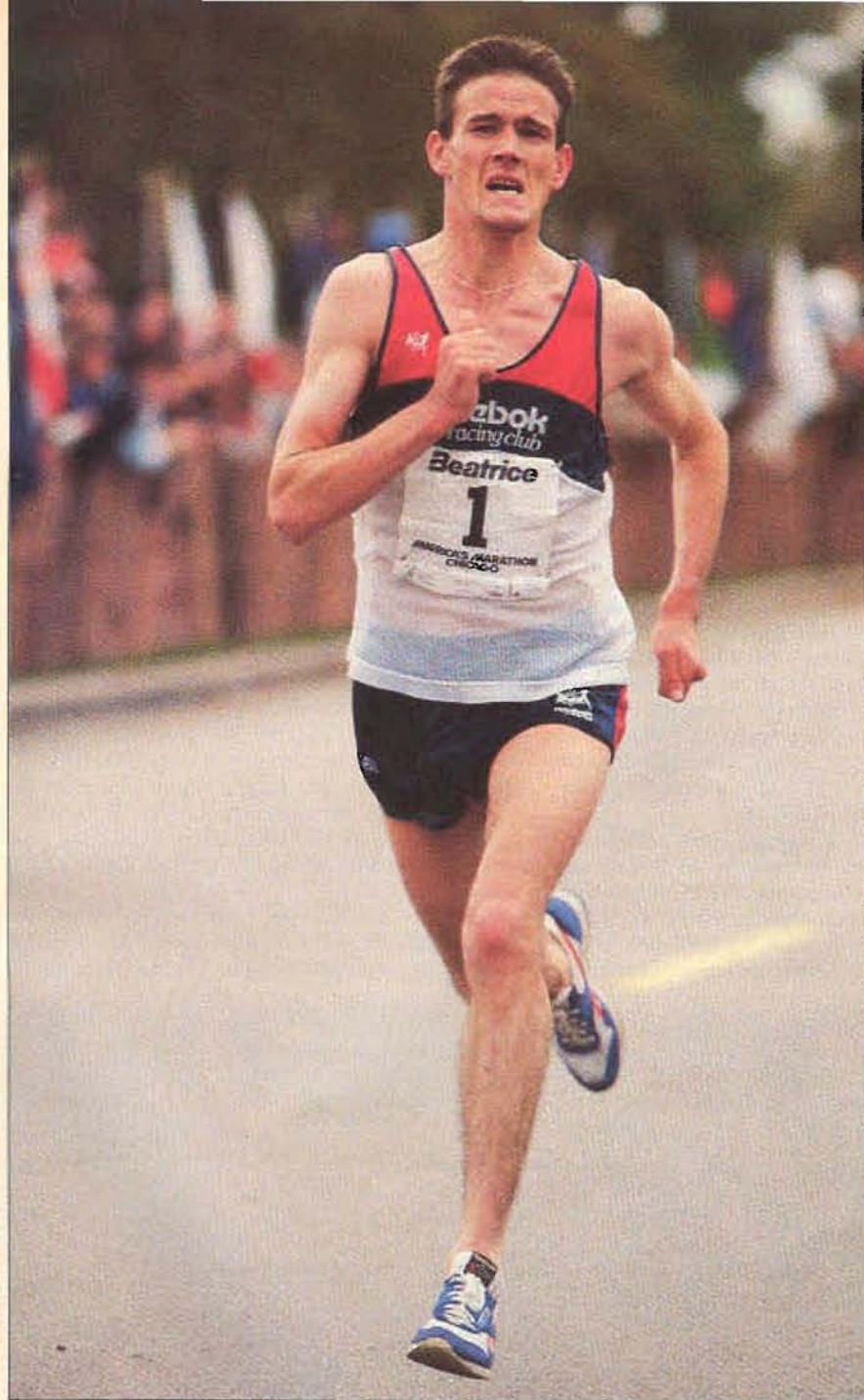
5:06. It wasn't exactly a wall; maybe a few bricks.

"About 21 miles," Jones admitted, "I really started to feel quite tired and my legs tightened. I had to concentrate really hard to maintain form and pace."

The question now was whether the accumulation of fatigue and overall slowdown would end up devouring the time cushion that Jones had created for himself. At 25 miles he was still under 2:07 pace; but his pace continued to slip.

A few minutes back, Benoit appeared to be winning her battle with Kristiansen. Though she would confess after the race that she had been having trouble between 15K and 30K, and kept expecting Kristiansen to take over, it was not to happen. Instead, Benoit's pre-

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JANEART



Men's race. Left & Above: Finally realizing a world record was possible, Jones kicked desperately, only to fall one second short in 2:07:13. Bottom: Refusing to take Jones's gamble, de Castella (2) and Djama (3) held court from behind. Far left: Wise they were, finishing keenly in second (Djama) and third (Deek), both under 2:09.

vious six weeks of training, during which she had been over 130 miles four times and over 120 the other weeks, paid off.

With that strength on her side, Benoit ran steadily at just under 5:30 per mile, then made a break from Kristiansen at 25K as the two turned onto Wacker Drive. "Stay with her!" Kristiansen's coach, Johan Kaggstad, shouted from the side of the road, perhaps sensing a turning point.

Kristiansen did, but faltered again just before tenaciously pulling Benoit back in. One was inclined at this point to remember that Kristiansen is an accomplished track racer, holder of the world 10,000-meter record of 30:59.42, and that she would not be easy to shake.

"I know Ingrid has a little more speed than I have at this point," Benoit had said the week before. But would Kristiansen be able to stay in position to unleash her speed?



Masters Leaders

Men

1. Antonio Villanueva (Mex)	2:23:55
2. Des Austin (GB)	2:24:49
3. Guenter Mielke (WG)	2:27:04

Women

1. Elaine Kirchen (US)	2:50:28
2. Ann Jamison (US)	3:00:04
3. Evelyn Leiter (US)	3:07:31

At this stage, the deceptively strong Rosa Mota was harnessing a surge. A minute off the pace at the six-mile point, she'd kept the two leaders within striking range and would gain on the faltering Kristiansen, much as she had in the Olympics.

Near 20 miles, Benoit made one more push and broke her rival for good. From that point forward, Kristiansen was looking at the ground instead of Benoit's back. Benoit passed 20 miles in 1:47:26 with a ten-meter lead, then began her race to the finish. She seemed to be gaining speed and strength as she neared the line.

The same could not be said of Jones. Believing he had missed the record, Jones had slowed down to enjoy his victory. "I was waiting to start waving to the crowd and shaking hands with my friends," said Jones later, "and it wasn't until I was halfway down the straight that I realized that people were going wild and I could see the clock at 2:06:40, and I thought it was within my grasp."

Close, but no see-gar. Jones sprinted

for all he was worth and crossed in 2:07:13, missing the world record and the \$50,000 bonus by a scant second. That slim margin led one to wonder if Jones's time might have crept under the world record had he not been bothered, as he reported, by course vehicles and sirens, or at least if he'd known how close he was to the mark. "If I had seen a clock, I might have started my kick earlier," he said.

But his disappointment was softened by reward. "I still picked up quite a bit of money," he said. Counting bonuses, but not appearance money, Jones earned \$58,000.

Finishing close behind were Djama and de Castella at 2:08:08 (an African record) and 2:08:48, times that in other circumstances would have been hard to argue with. In this race, though, those performances seemed earthbound.

Of the top Americans who had traveled in fast company for most of the race, Don Janicki of Tucson held on to seventh and ran a PR 2:11:16, while Pittsburgh winner Ken Martin took ninth in 2:12. Mark Curp, however, succumbed to a bad cold and dropped out at 23 miles.

Benoit's strong finish in 2:21:21—a course record, a personal best, an American record, and the fastest women's time ever run on a loop course—seemed strangely anticlimactic after all the early race possibilities for a sub-2:20. Benoit, like Jones, was unperturbed.

"I was just hoping for a PR," she said, "although deep down I was hoping for the world record, and even deeper down a sub-2:20. But yesterday I went for a run along the lakefront and I thought, 'No way, I'm going to have to change my race strategy completely because of the wind.' The wind may not have been a huge factor, but it was a factor today."

Kristiansen, meanwhile, ended in 2:23:05 and told reporters, "My breathing was pretty good, maybe because of

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training in Boulder, but I couldn't get my legs going." Fortunately for her, they kept going well enough to hold off the ever-improving Mota, whose 2:23:29 made her the third fastest woman ever, and two minutes faster than Grete Waitz as a matter of fact. Was she happy about that?

"You bet!" Mota gushed, in impeccable English.

Personal records were plentiful. Carla Beurskens of the Netherlands, fourth, lowered her best to 2:27:50. Veronique Marot of Britain, fifth, dropped her best by three minutes to 2:28:04. After Benoit, there was not another American in the top 15.

Chicago officials couldn't resist celebrating what they felt would be considered, in spite of two near-misses instead of two new world records, to be yet another successful upstaging of New York. "We're second to none" was the theme of the weekend, some might say ad nauseum. While the event was hardly a municipal happening, entries were up 17 per cent to 11,800 and there was more

Splitting The Difference

	Jones		Benoit	
Mile 1:	4:46		5:09	
Mile 2:	9:28	4:42	10:16	5:07
Mile 3:	14:16	4:48	15:37	5:21
Mile 4:	18:55	4:39	20:45	5:08
Mile 5:	23:54	4:59	26:19	5:24
Mile 6:	28:28	4:34	31:23	5:04
Mile 7:	33:07	4:39	36:39	5:16
Mile 8:	37:44	4:37	41:56	5:17
Mile 9:	42:23	4:39	47:20	5:24
Mile 10:	47:01	4:38	52:42	5:22
Mile 11:	51:45	4:44	58:11	5:29
Mile 12:	56:27	4:42	1:03:34	5:23
Mile 13:	1:01:11	4:44	1:08:57	5:23
Half:	1:01:42	—	1:09:33	—
Mile 14:	1:06:01	4:50	1:14:27	5:30
Mile 15:	1:10:52	4:51	1:20:00	5:33
Mile 16:	1:15:46	4:54	1:25:32	5:32
Mile 17:	1:20:37	4:51	1:31:02	5:30
Mile 18:	1:25:31	4:54	1:36:31	5:29
Mile 19:	1:30:25	4:54	1:41:58	5:27
Mile 20:	1:35:22	4:57	1:47:26	5:28
Mile 21:	1:40:24	5:02	1:52:58	5:32
Mile 22:	1:45:31	5:07	1:58:26	5:28
Mile 23:	1:50:37	5:06	2:04:01	5:35
Mile 24:	1:55:42	5:05	2:09:29	5:28
Mile 25:	2:00:55	5:13	2:14:53	5:24
Mile 26:	2:06:05	5:10	2:20:11	5:18
Final:	2:07:13		2:21:21	

spirit to the local ambience.

There are still a few unsettled questions, of course, such as world records

and sub-2:20s. Though Benoit has tried to minimize her marathoning, and there were rumors that she was looking for a rest from top-level racing for a while, there can be no doubt about her desire to break the barrier. "I didn't run 2:20, so I guess I'll be running another marathon," she said.

Jones, meanwhile, had many things to think about, including his early pace and to what extent it deterred a record. Given his remarkable talent, what time did he have in him?

"A minute, maybe a minute and a half faster," Jones mused. "It's hard to say until you actually run it."

In other words, 2:05, 2:06. In '84, after he'd run a low 2:08 his first marathon, he said you could hardly call him a marathon runner. And now, after a low 2:07? "I'm just a runner," he said.

At least this nonmarathon runner is getting a taste of what the event is all about. Paying homage to the demons all mortal runners face, Jones concluded, "If there's such a thing as a wall, then I think I almost hit it." **FINISH**

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