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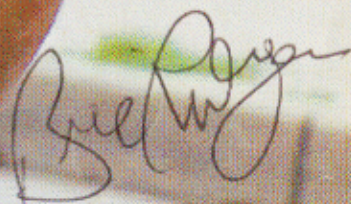
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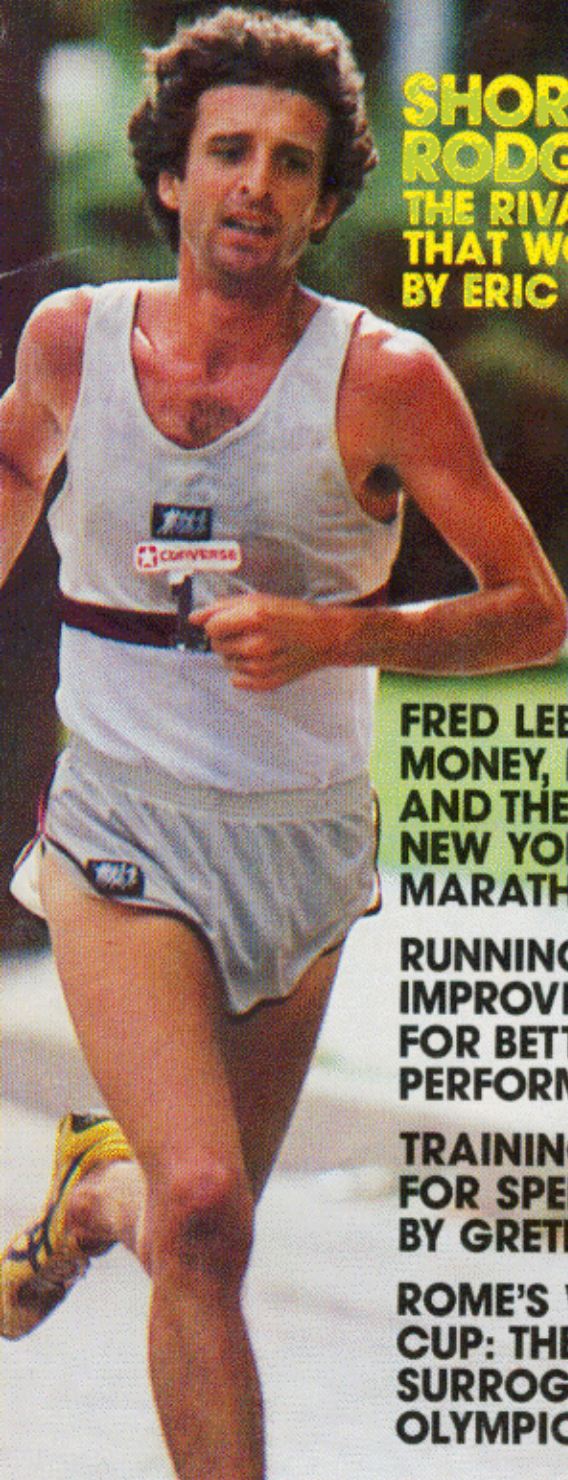
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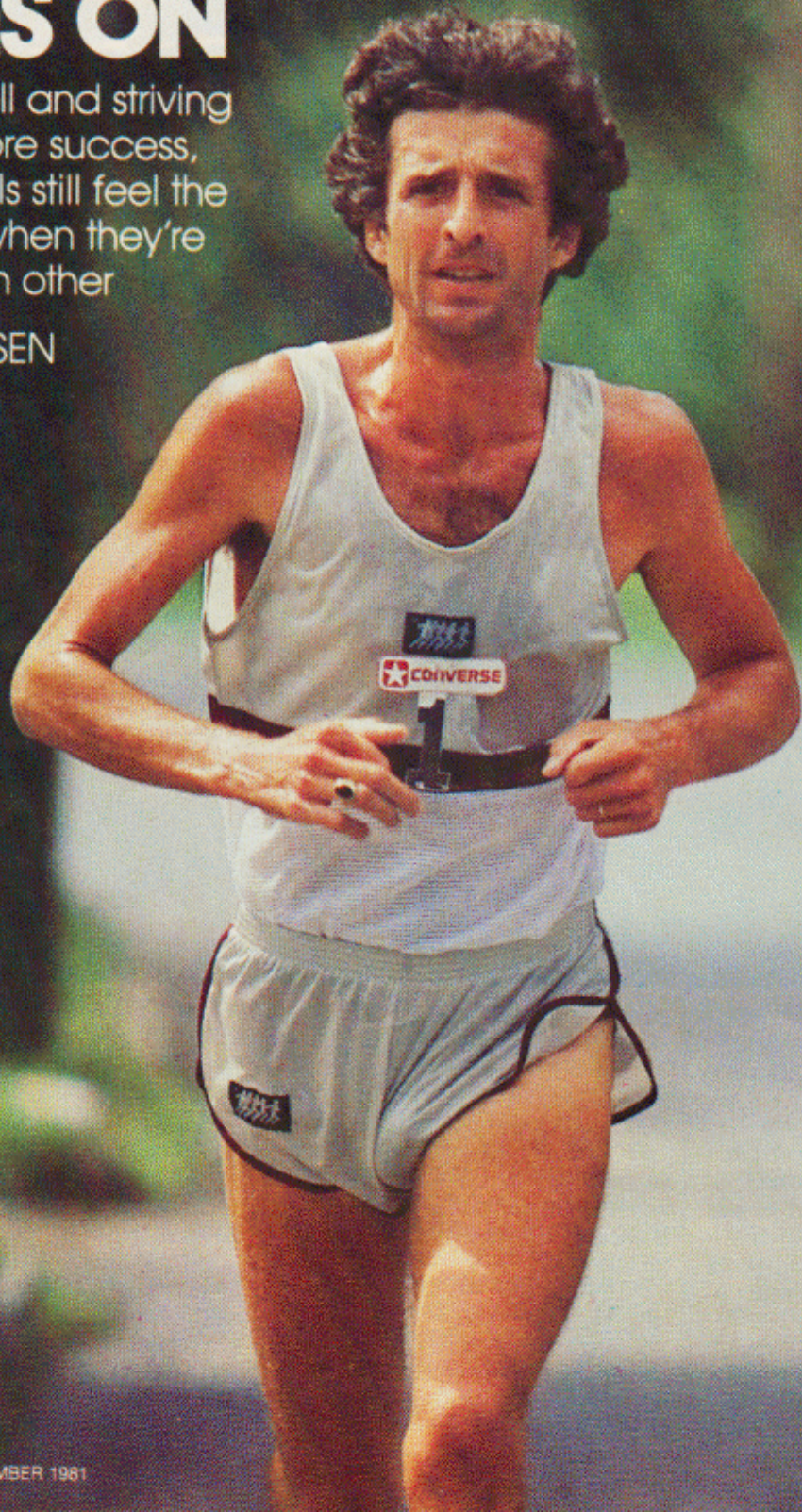


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SHORTER AND RODGERS: THE BEAT GOES ON

Running well and striving for even more success, the two rivals still feel the heat most when they're racing each other

BY ERIC OLSEN

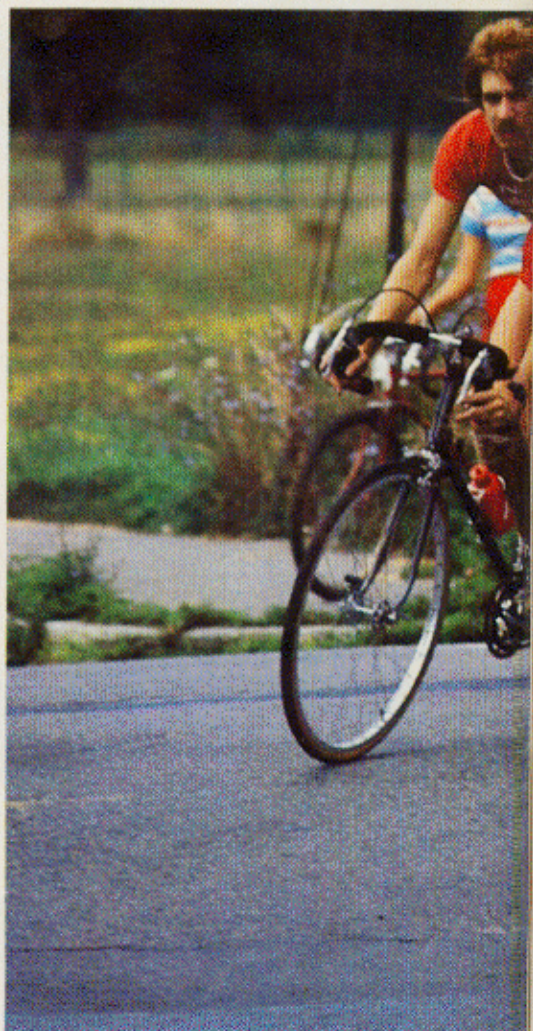




This summer Sunday dawned hot and wet in Middletown, New York. Some sort of tropical miasma had seeped up from the Amazon or someplace to wrap the entire East Coast in a rank, smothering, vegetable heat. Hard edges grew soft and people were beginning to doubt themselves. Certainly it wasn't Bill Rodgers's kind of day. But the people of Middletown couldn't have cared less that this brutal, steambath of a Sunday wasn't Rodgers's kind of day. The worse for him the better, as far as they were concerned. Frank Shorter was back and looking good, skinny and dark and slightly pigeon-toed, running a little flat-footed now to save his feet and legs, with his tousled, grey-flecked brown hair bouncing behind him in the wet summer air. Shorter likes the heat, and Middletown is Shorter's town.

Shorter grew up in Middletown with his nine brothers and sisters in a 22-room Victorian. His 82-year-old grandmother, Ethel Shorter, lives here still; so do a few old school chums. The Shorter clan goes back three generations in Middletown. Before he transferred to Mt. Hermon Prep in Massachusetts, Shorter went to Middletown High, which is right across

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JANEART



the street from the county fairgrounds where the *Middletown Times-Herald Record* 10,000-meter race began and ended. When Shorter was a kid, he liked to hang out at the fair eating hot dogs and admiring the carnies.

Now Shorter was running through the old neighborhoods along the same tree-lined streets he used to run when he was a skinny teenager dreaming of laurel wreaths and gold medals, and right beside him, for the first time since they raced one another a year and a half ago in Las Vegas, was Bill Rodgers, skinny and fair, looking slightly surprised the way he always does, running on his toes with his feet turned out and his tousled blond hair bouncing behind him.

"It was strange," Rodgers said afterward. "It was déjà vu or something."

"I think perhaps he was in a bit of a dilemma," Shorter said. "He was sensitive to the added pressure I was feeling,

just as I would have been if I were running against him in his hometown. I think he was worried that I might misinterpret his reasons for coming. All the pressure was on me. I had everything to lose here. People expected me to do well. I mean, even my own grandmother was watching.

"It was the heat," said Rodgers.

The two matched each other step for step for over five miles as if they enjoyed one another's company so much they just couldn't bear the thought of parting. Their feet met and lifted from the hot pavement as though synchronized. Their arms pumped together with a choreographed rhythm—right arms circling in across their chests, left arms thrusting back and forth across their sharp ribs. Oddly enough they have identical idiosyncrasies, the result of running in circles on a track.



What a marvelous 10-km race it was when Frank Shorter and Bill Rodgers hooked up last summer for the first time in 19 months. Left: Despite the heat, Frank's not thirsty, or at least he won't admit it. Below: Rounding a curve with two miles to go, the duel intensifies. Bottom: Frank pulls away from Bill in the last mile and feels oh-so-pleased at the finish. Then it was a time for autographs at the post-race festivities in Middletown, New York, the town where Frank grew up.



PHOTOGRAPH BY TRACY FRANKEL, JANECART



"It's interesting," Shorter noted after the race, "when Bill and I race together we often run side by side. He's the only runner I can do that with. I think we tend to pull one another along. It's because our styles are so similar."

"Actually," Rodgers added, "I don't think either of us was about to let the other get even half a step ahead."

Of course the locals were ecstatic about the whole affair. Shorter did manage to get half a step ahead and then some with about a mile to go. "The first time Frank surged," Rodgers recalled, "I thought, 'That's O.K. Go ahead. It doesn't matter.' Maybe it was the heat, I don't know, but I didn't feel like working that hard. But then I thought maybe I ought to catch him, just to let him know I'm still around, so I did. Later I guess I lost interest."

After Rodgers caught Shorter the two again ran stride for stride until

"When Bill and I race together we often run side by side. He's the only runner I can do that with."

Shorter made a second move out behind the fairgrounds with about three quarters of a mile to go, and that was it. Shorter won in 29:33. Rodgers was second in 29:42. The third-place finisher was so far back the crowd was already breaking up to go eat watermelon when he crossed the finish line.

"It was just like old times," Rodgers said later, happily sipping a beer. "Like the old days. A small race and just the two of us, bashing heads."

"What I want everyone to understand," said Shorter, "is that neither of us knew the other would be here when we agreed to come."

It's not like Rodgers and Shorter avoid one another. Not exactly. But Shorter took his time deciding whether to go to the race or not, and in the meantime the race sponsor, the *Middletown Times-Herald Record*, celebrating its 25th anniversary, decided to invite Rodgers. Everyone knows how hard it is for him to say no. Then Shorter decided he would

race and the sponsor wrote him back to say, Guess who's coming to Middletown, Frank?

"Imagine my surprise," says Shorter.

It probably wouldn't have made any difference to either of them even if they had known. And yet. . . .

"I mean," says Shorter, "sometimes you just don't want the pressure. I can go to a race and if Bill isn't there maybe there are still five guys who can beat me, but I won't feel as much pressure. I really don't know why this should be, not entirely, but I think part of this whole rivalry thing is the creation of the media."

"It's not a good thing," Rodgers agrees. "Sometimes this talk about a rivalry has made me a little more aggressive toward Frank than I should be, not just in a race, but when we're away from running as well. Maybe I have been a little wary of him."

"But look," Shorter insists, "we're friends."

"Well, from a distance," Rodgers

concedes. "He lives in Boulder. I'm in Boston."

An odd magic is always at work when these two meet for a race. They're the ones to beat. Even when Shorter is hurt and running poorly and Rodgers is tired from running too many races and the day is hot and muggy, they're still the ones to beat. The magic never fails, even now after all these years, or perhaps because of them.

As one commentator put it in a moment of excusable excess after considering Shorter's gold medal in the '72 Olympic marathon, Frank Shorter "invented" distance running. In 1972 America was ready for something grand and Shorter accepted the burden of greatness with his accustomed grace.

Winning races wasn't all of it, however. In 1975, he took on the amateur athletic establishment in an attempt to expose the hypocrisy of "shamateurism" and almost lost his own amateur status. Then he negotiated with the AAU and the international governing bodies to make it possible for athletes like himself to use their names on products and, ultimately, to give endorsements.

Rodgers came on the scene later, and like all runners in this country he's benefited enormously from Shorter's pioneering efforts, but he's had no less an impact on the sport.

He's won four Boston Marathons—the first in 1975—four New York City Marathons, the Fukuoka Marathon and scores of other key marathons and road races. He's been just about the best marathoner in the world since the end of Shorter's preeminence; he's had dinner at the White House, and he's a heck of a nice guy. By his competitiveness and consistency, as well as by his gentle nature, he's helped define the parameters of road racing and shown what the human body and spirit can do. Though both he and Shorter can be beaten, that odd magic still surrounds them both.

Coming into the Middletown race on July 12, both men were having fine seasons. Rodgers had set personal bests for 15 and 20 km, run one of the year's fastest marathons at Boston and won 15 of his 19 races. Shorter was having his best season in five years, winning 8 of 8 races, including the Bolder Boulder in which he defeated none other than his neighbor Herb Lindsay. But even if the two had not been in such good form, Lindsay or Virgin or Meyer could have been on the starting line with them that hot Sunday in Middletown and been almost as forgot-

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ten as a kid named Gary who'd vowed before the race to blow the two old guys off the course.

All the talk that Sunday was about The Rivalry, as if something, though no one was quite certain what, was about to be settled.

"Frankly," said Shorter when the Middletown 10 km was history and he had a chance to sit down and tend his blisters, "I think Bill and I are both a little puzzled by this whole thing, this let's-you-and-him-fight aspect, but"—he gave a tired sigh here—"I guess it's to be expected that there be a rivalry."

For a rivalry to work at all, though, even a low-key and circumspect rivalry like that between Rodgers and Shorter, the two principals must be fairly equal. It's the old chivalrous ideal of the worthy opponent. The only way to prove your worth is by defeating a capable challenger. The primitive and unspoken assumption in any contest is that the winner has God on his side, but God is never on the side of a bully. The whole notion has been refined a bit over the centuries, however: An athlete is always at his best when the competition is toughest, and true rivals can often bring out the best in one another when they aren't bringing out the worst.

"I think all this talk about a rivalry between us exists because we're so similar," Shorter says. "We're the same age and we're built the same and we run quite a bit alike. We both went to schools in New England and were late maturers; neither of us was a child prodigy by any means. And we both run the same events. I may be a little better on the track and Bill may have the edge in the marathon, but in the intermediate distances we're fairly even, I think. And we're both in business."

"If there is a rivalry," Rodgers says, "it's changed considerably. There are plenty of good runners out there now who can beat us both on a good day. I think there was more of a rivalry back in '75 and '76 when we were running well. Frank had the gold and he was the guy to aim for, so I aimed for him. But it got out of hand; there was all this hyped-up stuff in the papers about Frank being ready to do this and me being ready to do that, and Frank said this and I said that. I got pretty tired of it after a while."

And yet a tension does exist between them. There's more to it than the pressures imposed by adoring fans and eager sportswriters. For one thing, both men are competitors; they like to win. On the

other hand, neither is afraid to lose, and they're too intelligent and well-schooled to believe that all there is to a race is being first, or at least ahead of the other guy. The sport is too complicated.

"A lot depends on what I think's important and what Bill thinks is important," says Shorter. "Sometimes we have different priorities. I don't think we've ever raced against each other when we've been at our bests. In '72 and '73, Bill wasn't running. In '77 and '78 when I think he was at his best, I was hurt. In '75 and '76 when I think I was at my best, we were close, but I think I was still a little ahead because Bill was improving. I would hope that a time is coming when we'll both be at our bests."

But setting aside the notion of competition as the basis of that peculiar tension which exists between Rodgers and Shorter, what, then, is going on? After all, in 1972 Shorter and Kenny Moore and Jack Bachelor were all tough competitors and they all wanted to win and they were all on the Olympic team—and they were

great buddies.

"I wish it could be like it was with Jack and me," Shorter says. "In the early '70s Jack and I were both winning races and running against one another fairly often, and we were very close friends. For some reason, though, that just hasn't developed with Bill and me."

Granted, Rodgers and Shorter did finish first in the Lynchburg, Virginia 10-Miler in 1975 while holding hands, an expression of that special but fleeting affection two men can feel for one another after they've tried running one another into the ground. But it's hard to imagine them ever slapping one another on the back and saying, "Gee, it's good to see you again."

People seem to assume that since the two are so alike they ought to be good friends, and since they aren't, they must be enemies. But life isn't so simple, and oddly enough it's probably the fact that they are so much alike that makes it difficult for them to be close. Set against the background of their similarities, their

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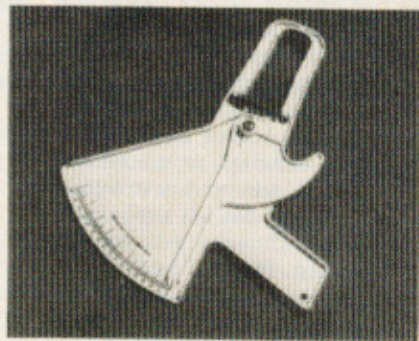
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Looking back: The 1975 Virginia Ten-Miler, the 1976 Olympic Trials 10,000 in Eugene, the 1978 Boston Marathon. For results, see next page.

subtle but sometimes profound differences take on greater importance.

"I remember when I first became aware of Bill," Shorter says. "It was the Boston Marathon in '75, when he ran 2:09:55 and broke my American record. I remember seeing this picture of him stooping down to tie his shoe and he was wearing some sort of weird cut off T-shirt. It looked like he'd hand-lettered 'Greater Boston' onto it. I remember thinking, 'if you can wear a shirt like that and stop to tie your shoe and still run a 2:09:55, you've got to be good!'"

In fact, Rodgers stopped to tie his shoe four times during that race. He's never gone about running in quite the same way as Shorter. There's a certain element of whimsy in his approach. Not that there's anything whimsical about his training or racing, but just consider how he got into the sport in the first place.

Through high school and college, Rodgers's only ambition as an athlete was to run two miles under nine minutes, which he eventually did his sophomore year at Wesleyan University in Middletown, Connecticut. His goal achieved, it never occurred to him there might be more. He became, as Marc Bloom put it in his book, *The Marathon*, the sort of runner even *Track & Field News* never talks about, and before long his athletic career succumbed to political zeal.

Rodgers ended up as a \$71-a-week orderly at Peter Bent Brigham Hospital in Boston, working off a two-year sentence as a conscientious objector to the Vietnam War. He was smoking a pack a day and hanging out in Jack's Bar in Boston, where he met his future wife, Ellen Lalone, from whom he has since been divorced. Rodgers was living on food stamps, now and then considering taking a freighter to New Zealand to spend the rest of his life raising sheep or



whatever it is people do there. He didn't know. All in all, he was fairly miserable—and then someone stole his Triumph 650. So he started jogging to work, a couple of miles each way. It was quicker than the bus.

Rodgers didn't entirely lack direction at the time, however. He was busy trying to organize an orderlies' union at the hospital, something his employers frowned upon. Frustrated with the bureaucracy, Rodgers finally took a more direct route, and began writing on the hospital walls. "Broken glass, broken glass, up the ass of the ruling class," was one of his favorites. It still is for that matter. With the help of the Boston police and a handwriting expert, Rodgers's employers identified him as the culprit and gave him the old heave-ho. The Boston police issued a few stern warnings and a wanted poster which probably gave the best description of him at the time: a skinny kid with a long blond ponytail and ragged clothes.

So there he was, broke and unemployed and without his motorcycle. There may not seem to be any logical connection between the loss of a job and a motorcycle and the 1976 Olympic marathon, but there it is again, Rodgers's

sense of whimsy.

"It's not like I sat down and decided I was going to the Olympics or anything like that," he maintains. "It's just that I had a B.A. in sociology, and what're you going to do with a B.A. in sociology?"

Right. So he ran.

About the same time, Shorter was studying for the bar and training for the upcoming '72 summer games in Munich. To the Boston police, at least, Bill Rodgers was just a skinny kid probably headed for a stretch in the cooler. Those who knew Shorter were sure he was bound for glory.

Shorter is the patrician, the son of a physician, a prep school and Yale graduate, a former medical student and now a lawyer. There is about him the unavoidable touch of the aristocrat, a certain reserve and an impatience for stupid questions. Shorter does not suffer fools lightly. On the other hand, it's quite easy to imagine Rodgers having coffee with one, and being so darned eager to please that he'd insist on doing it again sometime.

We pretend that ours is a classless society, so of course we probably tend to exaggerate class differences. But since class here is not a matter of privilege and birth, it becomes a question of attitude,

Rodgers vs. Shorter: A Chronology

1975

2-9	IAAF XC Trials, Gainesville, FL	15 km	(4) 47:02	(1) 46:32
3-16	IAAF XC Champs, Rabat, Morocco	12 km	(3) 35:27	(20) 36:24 a
6-13	Hall of Fame, Charleston, WV	2m	(3) 8:58.2	(1) 8:45.4
8-17	Falmouth (MA) Road Race	7.1m	(2) 33:39	(1) 33:24
9-20	Virginia 10-Miler, Lynchburg, VA	10m	(1) 48:17	(2) 48:17*
9-28	Springbank Race, Ontario, CAN	12m	(3) 55:32	(2) 55:01 b

1976

5-22	Olympic Marathon Trial, Eugene, OR	26.2m	(2) 2:11:58	(1) 2:11:51
6-13	Akron (OH) Road Race	10 km	(2) 29:33	(1) 29:23
6-22	Olympic Track Trials, Eugene, OR	10 km	(4) 28:04.4	(1) 27:55.6
7-31	Olympic Marathon, Montreal	26.2m	(40) 2:25:15	(2) 2:10:46 c
8-15	Falmouth (MA) Road Race	7.1m	(2) 33:36	(1) 33:13
9-18	Virginia 10-Miler, Lynchburg, VA	10m	(1) 47:48	(2) 48:53
10-24	New York City Marathon	26.2m	(1) 2:10:10	(2) 2:13:12

1977

3-19	Springfield (MA) Road Race	8.4m	(1) 40:22	(3) 40:44
5-28	Wheeling (WV) Distance Run	20 km	(1) 1:00:55	(2) 1:02:32
7-4	Peachtree (GA) Road Race	10 km	(1) 29:21	(2) 29:26
8-21	Falmouth (MA) Road Race	7.1m	(1) 32:23	(5) 33:34
9-11	Cleveland Half-Marathon, OH	13.1m	(1) 1:04:21	(29) 1:46:26
10-23	New York City Marathon	26.2m	(1) 2:11:29	(DNF-16m)

1978

2-13	Gasparilla Classic, Tampa, FL	15 km	(1) 44:29	(7) 47:16
4-17	Boston Marathon, MA	26.2m	(1) 2:10:13	(23) 2:18:15
9-16	Virginia 10-Miler, Lynchburg, VA	10m	(1) 48:34	(14) 52:16
9-23	Diet Pepsi Finals, Purchase, NY	10 km	(1) 28:37	(24) 30:45
10-22	New York City Marathon	26.2m	(1) 2:12:12	(12) 2:19:32
12-16	Schlitz Lite Finals, Tampa, FL	10 km	(5) 30:48	(3) 29:29 d

1979

4-16	Boston Marathon	26.2m	(1) 2:09:27	(79) 2:21:56
4-28	Trevira Twosome, New York City	10m	(2) 47:37	(3) 48:35 e
7-21	Diet Pepsi Series, Denver, CO	10 km	(3) 30:03	(1) 29:18
8-5	Badgerland Classic, Milwaukee, WI	10m	(3) 47:58	(1) 47:34
8-19	Falmouth (MA) Road Race	7.1m	(3) 32:29	(5) 32:42 f
9-22	Virginia 10-Miler, Lynchburg, VA	10m	(2) 47:14	(5) 48:23 g
10-21	New York City Marathon	26.2m	(1) 2:11:42	(7) 2:16:15
12-7	Las Vegas Half-Marathon, NV	13.1m	(3) 1:03:22	(9) 1:08:55 h

1980

None.

1981

7-12	THR 10 km, Middletown, NY	10 km	(2) 29:42	(1) 29:33
7-25	Bix Road Race, Davenport, IA	7m	(1) 33:26	(2) 33:59

- a) Ian Stewart won, 35:20.
 b) Jerome Drayton won, 54:52.
 c) Waldemar Cierpinski won, 2:09:55.
 d) Garry Bjorklund won, 29:23.

- e) Craig Virgin won, 46:33.
 f) Craig Virgin won, 32:19.
 g) Herb Lindsay won, 47:02.
 h) Kirk Pfeffer won, 1:02:32.

*They finished in an intentional tie, but race officials broke it up, giving Rodgers the "win." The scorecard, through midsummer 1981: Rodgers 20, Shorter 14, and one tie.

Other Rodgers-Shorter competitive trivia:

- In only eight of their 35 races did one of them not win.
- In the 27 races in which one of them won, the other was second 11 times.
- Breaking up the scorecard by type of event and distance: cross-country (1-1), track (2-0 Shorter), road 10 km (5-1 Shorter), 10 mile (4-1-1 Rodgers), marathon (5-2 Rodgers), other distances (9-3 Rodgers).

—COMPILED BY WALT MURPHY

and Rodgers, this Yankee firebrand, anti-war activist, union organizer and slogan writer, is about the closest thing the running community has to a genuine working-class hero.

"But I almost went to law school," he likes to remind people.

Sure, but almost isn't close enough. Shorter's the one who did.

Whenever two men who are so alike want the same things and struggle with each other for them, what we end up noticing is not so much their struggle but their styles and attitudes and the unique skills and idiosyncrasies they bring with them into the fray.

Always, we want to know not only which man is best, but which man is

right, the unspoken assumption being, again, that God is on the winner's side. And when two men like Bill Rodgers and Frank Shorter win some and lose some and jockey back and forth for preeminence, there is the added, but unspoken wonder that perhaps, in their case, God can't make up His mind.

Certainly, the contrast between Rodgers's emotional, sometimes whimsical approach to the sport and Shorter's patrician reserve is more than stark enough to help fuel this rivalry.

But Shorter bridles a little at his reputation for coldness and calculation. "Look," he insists, "I'm not the kind of guy who reads the same part of the paper each morning while he's sitting on the can. About the only thing I'm compulsive about is my running. In everything else I tend to play it by ear. You could even say I'm a little slovenly, I suppose."

What we see in the contrast between Rodgers and Shorter is the contrast between the intuitive and the analytical, the emotional and the calculating, two sides of the same coin really: you can't have one without the other, just as Rodgers and Shorter couldn't be who they are without each other.

"Yes," Shorter says, "but when people ask me what was going on in a race and I start to tell them, what I tell them isn't really what went on. To me, tactics are just the trained ability to react. I don't think about it."

"I do think I tend to operate more on an emotional level than Frank, however," says Rodgers.

Now we see this difference again in the open running controversy. The day before the first race in the new open circuit, the Cascade Run Off in Portland, Oregon last June (*The Runner*, Sept.) Rodgers sat in a restaurant eating a tuna salad sandwich and vowed to bring the whole amateur athletic establishment down with him if anyone tried to muscle him. Shorter, meanwhile, was behind the scenes trying to work out a deal with The Athletics Congress.

"I do think Frank's a little more cautious than I am," Rodgers concedes.

"I've got to be," Shorter says. "I've already been in trouble once. TAC has power. I didn't run in Portland because I thought my efforts should be put toward working out that trust fund idea with TAC rather than fighting a battle myself. But I do tend to be moderate in most things, even my racing."

"Yes, I think you can see the differences between us in our running," says

"Frank's special to me We have a special empathy for each other. We both know what the pressures are like."

Rodgers. "I'm more of an emotional runner. Frank is more calculating, and, I think, sometimes smarter. I make a fair number of mistakes."

But racing and making mistakes weren't on Rodgers's mind in 1972 when he watched Shorter win the gold medal in the Olympic marathon. What Rodgers was thinking was, "Gosh, it must be hard to run a marathon."

"He was probably thinking," says Shorter, "that if this slug can win a gold medal, maybe I can too."

But Rodgers didn't immediately jump in. He had some training to do. One doesn't run marathons with a smoker's hack. It took him three years to develop his natural talent, and his first meeting with Shorter wasn't until early 1975, when they raced at 15 kilometers through a cow pasture in Gainesville, Florida in the IAAF World Cross-Country trials. Rodgers remembers running beside Shorter and noticing his heavy breathing "like a steam bellows." It seemed to Rodgers at the time like the breathing of a man who could be beaten. Then Shorter took off. "What do you know?" Rodgers says. "He breathes like that all the time." Shorter was first in 46:32. Rodgers was fourth in 47:02.

Five weeks later at the championships in Rabat, Morocco, Rodgers placed third in 35:27 while Shorter was 20th in 36:24. "That was my first breakthrough," Rodgers says. "I know Frank had a bad day then, but a month later I took Boston and I began to realize that I could run with him."

"Obviously, people are always coming up," says Shorter, "and you even hope for that, though it makes it harder. But the pressure's good when it comes from someone as tough and as consistent as Bill."

But just because Rodgers finished ahead of Shorter in one race and then broke his American marathon record in another didn't mean Rodgers had lost his sense of awe of him. He still hasn't, for that matter.

"But now I know I've raced as hard and achieved good successes of my own," he says. "That feeling of awe doesn't knock me back as much. In the old days I'd have this feeling when I raced Frank, not that he couldn't be beaten, but that, wow, how'd this guy put it together to win the gold medal? I mean, he had a hell of a reputation. Four Fukuokas. Four national cross-country titles. That's spectacular."

Rodgers made the Olympic marathon team in '76 but, suffering from leg troubles that first showed up in the trials, finished 40th in Montreal in 2:25:15. Shorter was second to Waldemar Cierpinski of East Germany. It was a rainy day. It should have been Rodgers's day, actually, but for his trouble he achieved that profound sort of obscurity reserved only for those everyone expected great things from.

But it was a minor setback. That October Rodgers won the New York City Marathon in 2:10:10. "That was my Olympics," he says, "three months too late, but I won it and I really hammered." Shorter was second three minutes back. "I know he was down then, but I felt I had to reestablish myself. I knew after that that I really could run with Frank."

"That was the dividing line for me," Shorter says. "That's when the foot troubles began. It was a hard race and my foot hurt and I was very frustrated. Nothing felt right, but I wasn't so much concerned with Bill's winning as I was with what was going on with me."

Beating Shorter was not entirely the point, nor is it now. In fact, Rodgers has beaten Shorter 20 of the 35 times they've raced, but they're both a little uncomfortable with such score keeping. Perhaps what is more to the point, for Rodgers, is that he was playing catch-up with Shorter back then and he's still playing catch-up now. Even when he's in the lead, he's playing catch-up. "Frank was there first," he admits. "I still sense that." No number of victories will make up for that, or for the fact that Shorter's the one with the gold medal.

"I wish I had one," Rodgers says. "They say you're only as good as your last race, but when it comes to the Olympic medal, that's not at all true. Gold doesn't tarnish."

Rodgers still has something to prove, and he won't be able to prove it until 1984. And who knows what can happen between now and then? More politics, an injury, a head cold at the wrong time. His stand on open running has not endeared him to TAC. He may lose his amateur status. But until he's proved himself to his own satisfaction, he won't be able to relax; there will always be that sense of something left undone. Rodgers will always be scrambling, even when he's way out front.

As for Shorter, he doesn't have it any easier. Being in front is tough; it can wear you down. People expect things of you, and when you blow it, it's always a

big deal. Even though gold medal winners are human, they're not really supposed to be; it's seen as a tragic flaw. And then there's always someone coming up from behind, pushing. If not Rodgers, then Sandoval or Virgin or Lindsay or Seko or maybe any one of a couple dozen African runners with unpronounceable names who come down out of the hills every now and then and run the socks off everyone. But Rodgers is special because he was the first one to really push, and he's been pushing so long and so hard, and he's so darned nice and down home, and he used to smoke a pack a day, just imagine, and he used to write things on hospital walls, and there's just no figuring him at all.

There will always be this between them, pulling them apart at the same time it draws them together. Neither man can work out his destiny without the other, which, when you come down to it, is the essential part of any real rivalry. The fact is, Bill Rodgers and Frank Shorter need each other.

They're both 33, almost 34. For both of them now it's mostly a matter of maintaining, of holding. "I think we can help each other keep going," says Shorter. "If he can do it, so can I, you know, that sort of thing. It's easier than if you're 33 and laboring along and wondering well, gee, do I still have it? Now I can look in the paper and see that Bill ran 2:10 and think that's great."

"We have a special empathy for one another," Rodgers says. "We both know what the pressures are like and how difficult it is to get to the top. I remember when Frank was injured and not focusing on his running so much, and I started thinking, 'Wow, this is going to be strange without Frank.' I started thinking how I'd like to retire too."

But it doesn't look like either man is about to retire. Shorter's back and running well and Rodgers seems as fit as ever. They'll likely be bashing heads for years to come, though their heads may turn a bit grey. And maybe they do get a little tired of all this rivalry business, and perhaps Rodgers is too down home for Shorter's taste and Shorter too aristocratic for Rodgers's, and maybe they can't sit down over a couple beers together without both of them getting edgy, thinking about how maybe one less beer and another ten miles at a six-minute pace could make the difference next time. But they wouldn't have it any other way: When they're going at it, they're having a ball.

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