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JIM BEATTY:

The Miler Who Wouldn't Quit

By JOSEPH N. BELL



IN 1959, a slight, rather frail-looking 24-year-old restaurant manager from Charlotte, N.C., went to Philadelphia to see a track meet between the cream of American runners and jumpers and a similar team from the Soviet Union.

The young man's name was Jim Beatty, and he watched in dismay as the Russians ran away from the Americans in the distance races. Beatty had a special interest in these races; for six years, in high school and college, he had been one of the best of a mediocre crop of American distance runners.

Leaving Philadelphia that evening, a friend told Beatty: "You could have won today."

"I know I could," answered Beatty, "and I think I'm going to do something about it."

Three years later, when the AAU Track and Field Committee approved 56 American records, six of them belonged to Jim Beatty. Between that day of decision in 1959 and the end of the 1962 outdoor season, Beatty surpassed every established American record from 1,500 to 5,000 meters. In the process, he has become the nation's most articulate proponent of stronger American representation in the Olympic Games and has put the United States back in the forefront of the world in the distance races.

Beatty also won the AAU's Sullivan Trophy as the outstanding amateur athlete of 1962, and the U. S. Junior Chamber of Commerce named him one of the Ten Young Men of the Year.

All this has happened to a "senior citizen" by American track and field standards—a guy who had given up running to go into business and who returned to it only at a considerable personal sacrifice. Jim Beatty's story is a dramatic example of what is required if the free nations are to challenge state-sponsored athletes of the Communist bloc. Beatty's achievement requires a dedication on his part that would stagger most Americans. "There simply is no substitute for training," he says.

To him, training means reporting every morning at 5:30 to a track near his present home in Pasadena, Calif. He works out until 6:30—often in the dark. Then he goes home, showers, has breakfast with his wife, and heads for work at an insurance company at 7:30. When his working day ends at 4:30, he reports back to the track, where he runs until 7:30. His wife has dinner waiting for him when he gets home at 8 o'clock, and he's usually in bed by 10. Saturdays he works out for three hours and Sundays for two. This regimen goes on every week of the year.

At 28, this "senior citizen" of U.S. track is showing the youngsters—and the state-supported Red athletes—what old-fashioned American self-discipline can accomplish

"We don't kid ourselves about the work involved," he says. "We either do it or we give up those rosy dreams of records. It's as simple as that."

The "we" Beatty refers to includes the members of the Los Angeles Track Club, a unique organization which may be the device that leads the United States out of the jungle of bickering among the crotchety old men who control—and, some would say, strangle—amateur athletics throughout the country.

The Los Angeles club was formed by runners and track buffs to provide competition and coaching for a half-dozen American distance runners who wanted to train under the most advantageous conditions for the 1964 Olympic Games. The key man in this setup is the coach: a track magician named Mihaly Igloi, who left his native Hungary after the 1956 revolution and brought his top distance runner, Lazlo Tabori, to the United States with him.

Beatty was a senior at the University of North Carolina when he first met Igloi. The great coach was training Tabori there for a few months, and Beatty thought that he might like to train under Igloi someday, too. But winning his degree took precedence over running at this stage in Beatty's life. When he packed away his spikes after his last college race, he didn't intend to get them out again.

FOLLOWING A HITCH in the Army, Beatty settled down to learn the restaurant business. Then came the Philadelphia meet—and Jim knew what he had to do. He quit his job and headed for California, where Igloi was coaching at a private club. Following Igloi's rugged training rules, Beatty improved remarkably, running his first sub-four-minute mile in May, 1960. A week later, he set new U. S. records in both the 3-mile and 5,000-meter races. He was beginning to know himself and his capabilities.

"I have better than average speed," he says, "and better than average stamina. There are faster runners with better stamina, but not too many with both."

Beatty easily won the 5,000 meters in the Olympic trials in 1960 and then returned to Charlotte and married his home-town sweetheart. Jim took Barbara Ann to Rome with him for the Olympics, but he won no triumphs for her. He injured his foot and failed even to qualify for the finals. He was desperately disappointed, and one of the major driving forces in his life since then has been to show the people of Europe that Americans can run the distance races.

He already has proved his point several times. In 1961, he captained a team that toured Europe, ending up in Russia. He ran the mile seven times—and won every race. Last year he repeated this succession of triumphs, climaxing a tour through Europe with a 3:56.5 mile in London, the fastest mile ever run by an American.

But these triumphs are just warm-ups to Beatty. His sights—along with those of his teammates at the Los Angeles Track Club—are set on the 1964 Olympics. Since 1961, L.A.T.C. members have carried the United States

to near-ascendancy in distance races. Beatty is the star of the show, but he gets stiff competition from Jim Grelle and Bobby Seaman. Both men were pushing him a year ago when he ran the first indoor mile ever recorded under four minutes, and Seaman was in there again when Beatty broke his own world record last month by running the indoor mile in 3:58.6.

It looks as if there will be more glory ahead for both Beatty and the United States. At 28, he seems to be getting stronger and better every day. He's a small, well-proportioned, dark complexioned man who weighs in at 127 pounds and eats as if he had no worries about his weight. His blue eyes glint with humor, and he has an easy-talking, easy-going Southern way about him that gives little hint of his zeal—until the subject turns to track and his eyes become earnest and intense.

"We want to show the world that Americans aren't soft—that we can work and train hard when we set our minds to it," Jim says, "and we want to prove that we can do it with men who earn a living and work full time."



Jim gets congratulations from wife Barbara after another victory. He holds the world record for the indoor mile.

"We also hope the Los Angeles club can set an example other communities will follow. In the U. S., athletes find it almost impossible to continue training after they leave school because they haven't the facilities or the backing. Six months before every Olympic year, we start trying to do something about it. This simply doesn't work."

"Our athletes can give a top account of themselves only if they are able to keep in training all the time—and this means the development of club teams similar to the one we have in Los Angeles. Only in this way can we get good coaching, training, and competition."

Beatty has become a man with a mission. For his country, he wants supremacy in distance running. For himself, he seeks two triumphs: to win the Olympic 1,500 meters for the United States in the 1964 Olympic Games, and to beat Australian Peter Snell's 3:54.4 world record in the mile. Chances are very good that Jim will do both.

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