

26 Miles To Triumph!

RUN, JACKIE, RUN

by Mario Machado,
Feminine Fitness Sports Editor

On Patriot's Day, Jacqueline Ann Hansen won the Women's Division of the 26-mile Boston Marathon in 3 hours, 5 minutes and 59.2 seconds. Jacki is 24 years old, born in Binghamton, New York, on November 20, 1948. She is a college student at Cal State University in Northridge, where she majors in English. Although she has only been training as a runner for two years, she has already won some very coveted honors. In 1973, she was named the National Collegiate Mile Record Champion, when she covered the mile-long course at Hayward, California, in 4 minutes and 54 seconds. That same year, she became AAU State Champion, running two miles in 10 minutes and 38 seconds. The same year, she was clocked at 17 minutes and 26 seconds in the 5000-meter race.

Until last December, she had only raced short distances. At that time, she competed in her first marathon race, covering 26 miles and 385 yards in 3 hours, fifteen minutes.

She attributes her rapid progress to the intensive training given her by former Hungarian Olympic star, Laszlo Tabori. Since he began her instruction, the petite 5'2" athlete has lost 20 pounds, and is in top form at 108. She highly recommends jogging for anyone wishing to lose weight, or desiring to tone the system generally, but believes that everyone should first be examined by a physician before undertaking this exercise on a regular basis. She also stresses the importance of wearing proper shoes for running, to prevent injury to the feet and legs. SCENE: The Boston Marathon Race TIME: Patriots' Day, 1973

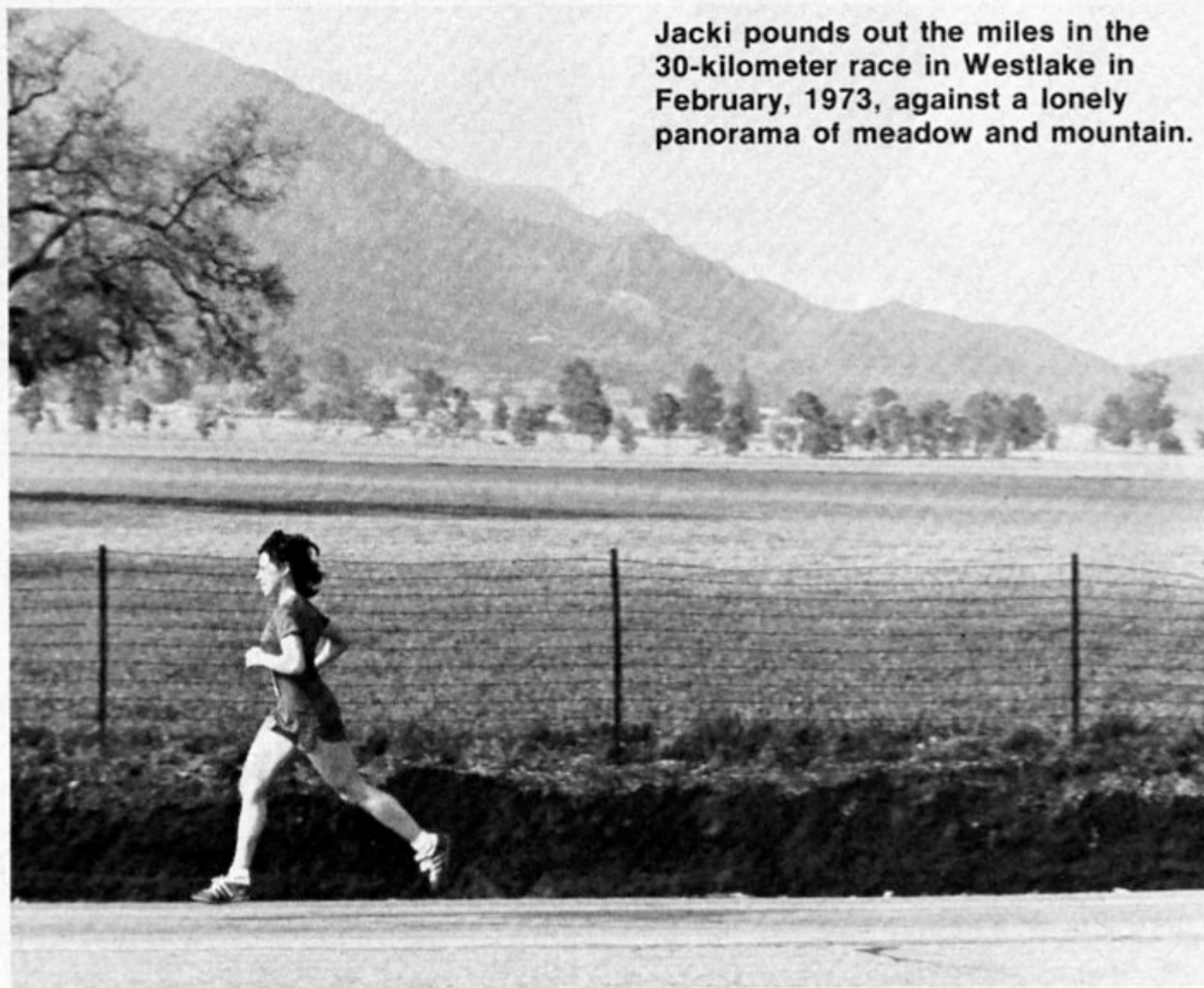
The long-awaited moment was at hand. Jacki Hansen was standing with fifteen hundred long-distance runners at the starting line, nervously waiting for the gunshot to announce the beginning of the Boston Marathon Race. The lineup of entrants extended for three city blocks—a long, twitching, many-headed snake of men and women, shoulder to shoulder, in the unisex costume of the athlete—all heads craning, all eyes straining to glimpse the figure of the starter, his arm upraised, his hand holding the pistol whose bullet blast would signal them to start.

The moment had been prolonged almost fifteen minutes now. Jacki felt her nerves jump with excitement; a

quiver like an electrical charge crackled along the human chain. The runners were restive and tense. They leaned forward over the starting line like wild things on invisible tethers, eager to escape. Some stood at such a tilt, eyes on the glinting gun, that they had to throw up their arms to keep from falling.

The day was hot and sultry, the sun a merciless golden eye watching from a cloudless sky. Jacki noticed that some of the entrants were sucking in deep breaths, their faces flushed, their hair damp with perspiration. Jacki was glad she had trained for this endurance contest in California desert country, where the temperature was always high.

Jacki pounds out the miles in the 30-kilometer race in Westlake in February, 1973, against a lonely panorama of meadow and mountain.





Jacki Hansen at the most thrilling moment of her career—crossing the finish line of the Boston Marathon, the winner in the Women's Division!

Ahead lay the course—twenty-six arduous miles across country, through villages, hamlets, meadow, woodland—a grueling route which winds uphill and down, encompassing in its length every possible challenge to heart and sinew.

Suddenly the gun exploded. Jacki heard the shot like a clap of thunder inside her head, and for a split second, she was frozen by the shock. Then the runners broke ranks and surged raggedly forward, some in the jostling mass spurting ahead recklessly, some running conservatively, with tiny steps, already pacing themselves for the long stretch ahead. Jacki felt herself being swept along by the momentum of those in back, bumped and elbowed by those jockeying for position, and she began consciously to discipline her strength as her instructor, Laszlo Tabori, had taught her. The urgency to compete made this difficult. The mass of runners was loosening up now, spacing out, hitting stride. Some dashed past as though they were finishing the race instead of just be-

ginning, and Jacki's muscles ached to keep pace, but she kept herself in check for approximately two miles, while at least half of the field passed her.

When she finally began to accelerate, she was well warmed up and breathing evenly. She felt that she had lots of strength in reserve, and she began to enjoy herself more, observing the crowd and the other runners.

The onlookers were out en masse, lining the course on both sides, streaming into the path in some places before the police could remonstrate to glimpse the approaching racers. The spectators were cheering, heckling, shouting words of encouragement. Some of them knew her name. "Go it, Jacki," they would yell. "Let's see some action!"

Ahead, Jacki could see a few women runners among the mass of men. One by one, she pulled ahead of them just as the course began climbing uphill. Jacki noted that most of the women were already badly winded, and she was proud that she

could climb steadily. She guessed that she was entering Newton Hills, one of the dreaded terrors of the course, where the topography was rugged enough to tax the most experienced runner. Quiet suburban homes lined Lake Street, and people engaged in gardening stopped their work to watch the runners pass, craning to see them over the heads of the people on the sidelines. Many had garden hoses in hand with which they drenched the straining athletes. The smack of the cold water came as a grateful shock. Jacki wished she could sprawl on the wet grass for a thorough soaking, but ahead the climbing road shimmered in the heat, and she could see several women in the distance toiling up the steep incline.

She began to count the women she had passed—one dozen, two. She wondered how many were still ahead. Where did *she* place? Her legs pumped harder, and she felt the agonizing strain of the climb tearing at her muscles, robbing her of breath.

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judges for the Miss California competition, and he told me I just had to come to Hollywood and let him give me some makeup tips before I went East. So I did, and he did, and it was wonderful. Even so, in the finals I wore only a base, a bit of mascara, pencil on my eyebrows and lipstick. Good heavens; now the girls can do anything!"

Good heavens, indeed, for as she was speaking, Lee Meriwether was sitting absolutely bare-faced, looking radiantly, stunningly lovely.

"I guess it goes to prove," she admitted, "what outdoor living can do for a girl. That and the fact that I watch our diet. I am not a faddist, but I do try to see that my girls and I get a good, sound, nutritious diet. I do also look at ingredient listings on packaged items. If there are a lot of preservatives in something, I don't buy it. I want us to stay healthy."

Clearly, she must be doing something—everything—right, or she could not maintain a schedule which to many would be killing. Lee, however, considers it to be life-giving.

"I think my being a working mother is good for my girls," she said firmly. "It makes the quality of my time with them much better. When I didn't work, I became much more irritable. I was not as patient, nor as understanding. Now, I come back home revitalized, able to give of myself totally to them."

"I see my friends who are not active outside their homes. They are keeping lovely houses and even rearing happy children. But *they* are not happy."

Ah, yes. Happiness is the last ingredient in the Lee Meriwether recipe for being fit—perhaps the most important item of all.

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Some of the residents along the course had set up refreshments for the runners. Lawn tables held cups of Gatorade and buckets of ice cubes, marvelously tempting to the thirsty pack. Jacki popped a slippery cube in her mouth, and felt the cool trickle on her parched throat. Some distance further, a small boy handed her a cup of orange juice, and—refreshed—she panted up another endless hill. She was frankly tired now, and the downgrades came as an intense, but short-lived, relief.

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The course wound ahead through open country, and Jacki, with fatigue pursuing and threatening to overtake her, still managed to pass a few more women. One, a woman of marvelous athletic build, was weaving with weariness. Observing her plight, Jacki had



In 1973, Jacki won the AAU State Track meet in 10 minutes and 38 seconds. Here she is hitting the wire after two fast miles.

a moment of personal despair. What made her think she could win, when she had only been in training as a racer for two years? How could anyone whose only other sports exposure was jogging succeed against all-around, seasoned athletes? She was outclassed in this group! True, she had played "at" volleyball, basketball and tennis,

The course wound ahead through open country. Jacki felt fatigue pursuing and threatening to overtake her.

but never seriously. Wistfully, she wished that her training had commenced in junior high school instead of when she was 22 years old. School programs weren't fair to girl athletes, she told herself. All the money was spent on training boys! Her younger sister, who was presently in junior high school, would agree. They had recently discussed how frequently the boys were given priority in the use of the gym, while the girls listened to records. How could girls ever *hope* to

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develop into top athletes on such half-hearted programs? She suddenly realized the enormity of what she was attempting, and her heart sank.

She passed a road sign welcoming her to another little town, the name of which she had never found on a map. She wondered how far she had come. By now, she felt as though she had been running for days.

To pluck up her courage and give herself a second wind, she concentrated on what the coach, Laszlo Tabori, had taught her. Laszlo was Hungarian by birth, one of the earliest racers to complete the mile in under four minutes. Since March of 1971, Laszlo had coached her three nights a week. He would have her run two miles at a slow pace to warm up. Then they would both do stretching exercises involving the whole body—leg stretches, back stretches, rotating of heads, arms, waists and hips. Lying on their backs with their legs in the air, they would flop both legs over their heads, then each leg in turn, to relieve the stiffness in the spine.

Just thinking of those limbering-up exercises made Jacki long to do them now. Her back felt stiff and on fire—like a hot poker. In an effort to relax, she tried to pretend that she and Laszlo were in a training session. He would be saying, "Time for wind sprints!" in his guttural Hungarian accent, and they would be doing ten or fifteen 100-yard dashes to get their hearts pumping, their blood moving. Then they would begin their work-out, running about seven miles.

Between the triweekly sessions with her coach, Jacki worked out alone, running an hour in the morning, and about 15 miles during the pleasant sunset hours. On Sundays, she averaged another 10 to 15 miles. She hoped all the training had increased her endurance, for she certainly needed stamina today.

She was running doggedly now, her face expressing the effort expended, her open mouth dragging in the sultry air. Some farmers leaning on a roadside fence shouted at her. At first, she couldn't understand the words. They were cheering and gesticulating, raising clasped hands over their heads to signify victory. At last she got close enough to hear what they were saying.

"You're the first woman!" they were yelling. "Keep it up, gal! Good luck to you!"

Jacki could scarcely believe her ears.

The farmers must be mistaken; surely there were other girls up ahead! But in spite of her skepticism, Jacki found herself grinning broadly. Wouldn't it be great if they were right?

Suddenly, her leaden legs, which had dragged like two anchors, had wings! She flew along the dusty road, propelled by hope. At the curves, she glanced back. Some distance behind her, Eric Segal was tenaciously following. Jacki couldn't repress a smile. She wondered if Eric was finding the race more difficult than writing his best-selling novel, "Love Story." Jacki could imagine him wishing that he were pounding the typewriter, instead of the concrete roadway, this minute!

Now the onlookers were more numerous. Both sides of the road were filled with spectators, all of them craning at the approaching racers. The crowd was cheering madly. "Here comes the first woman," they were roaring. "Go it, California! The finish line is just ahead."

"You're the first woman!" they were yelling. "Keep it up, girl! Good luck to you."

Jacki's legs were pounding like pistons. She was concentrating fiercely on how she was running. Through her head ran the admonitions of her trainer. If he were running beside her, Laszlo would be saying, "Don't run on your toes! You'll pull your Achilles tendon, or—even worse—your calf." The spectre of such an injury haunted Jacki constantly. She was always standing on a curb, her heels hanging over, and gradually lowering her heels to stretch and strengthen the muscles in her foot. Today, with the heat, the fatigue, the sustained activity, her muscles were one searing ache. She was consciously straining against overwhelming exhaustion to make them perform.

Far ahead, she saw the finish line. Some few contestants, all men, were running ahead of her. Heart pounding and breath strangling in her throat, she gave her last great burst of speed. With the blood hammering in her ears, she crossed the finish line!

Instantly, the crowd converged and engulfed her. Everyone was shouting and cheering. Every face wore a broad

smile. Jacki grinned back happily. Official-looking men, obviously judges, elbowed their way through the crowd. Pushing a path through the milling spectators, they called, "All right! Back, now, everybody! We want to take the little lady right inside."

In vain, Jacki tried to protest. Her muscles were so sore that she longed to jog around for a few moments to loosen them up. But the judges herded her inside where two white-uniformed orderlies pushed her down onto a stretcher for the medical examiner's check. The abrupt cessation of activity made her dizzy. For a moment, she was afraid she might pass out. The chatter was deafening. Someone was calling out Jacki's time to the person chalking the scoreboard. "Three hours, five minutes and fifty-nine seconds for Jacki Hansen," she heard him say.

Jacki closed her eyes against the dizzily whirling room. She was happy she had won, but how she wished she had made it in three hours flat! To join the "three hours club" was every long-distance runner's dream. Very few women were numbered in this elite group. She resolved that next December when she ran the Culver City Marathon, she would break her own record by five minutes and 59 seconds.

A few minutes later, she was facing the grandstand, where fans cheered her in a deafening roar while the judge presented her with a trophy. His words of congratulation were almost inaudible over the noise of the crowd. Her smile joyous, Jacki looked back over the arduous course. Eric Segal was just crossing the finish line. He was surrounded by many reporters snapping pictures, while, overhead, an ogling television camera zoomed in for a closeup.

Jacki clutched her trophy ecstatically. "California, here I come!" she told herself. "The way I feel now, no other entry in the Culver City Classic stands a chance." As she bowed and waved to the fans, she had a sudden heady vision of what it would mean to win the Olympics. Perhaps, by the time she was good enough to enter, the archaic laws limiting women to race a mile at most would be revised, and she could stretch her legs with the marathon contenders in those international games. Imagine bringing home a gold medal, and becoming Uncle Sam's first niece in the long run!

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