

# Chicago Tribune

Breaking News, Since 1847

Home News Business Sports A&E Travel Health Opinion Real Estate Cars Jobs Deals

Breaking Bears Bulls Blackhawks Cubs White Sox College Preps Plus Golf Smack Scores Columnists

Home → Collections

Ads By Google

## Racing `Mom` A Real Battler

July 25, 1987 | By Phil Hersh, Chicago Tribune.

DURHAM, N.C. — The truth hit Jacqueline Hansen midway through Friday's half-marathon at the U.S. Olympic Festival.

Hansen, 38, saw it when she looked at West squad teammate Pauline Stehly, 20.

"I realized I was old enough to be Pauline's mother," Hansen said.

The truth is that for women's distance runners, Hansen is mother of them all.

Ads By Google

### Free Online Advertising

See What \$75 of Free Google Ads Can Do For Your Business. Try It Now!

[www.Google.com/AdWords](http://www.Google.com/AdWords)

### Westlake Village Deals

50% - 90% off the best Restaurants and much more!

[www.spreebird.com](http://www.spreebird.com)

### More Than A Marathon

Marathons are too easy! Take on the Tough Mudder Challenge.

[toughmudder.com/events](http://toughmudder.com/events)

### Gauntlet Blitz-San Diego

Mud Run & Obstacle Race-Sign Up Now March 10th 2012-Pala Raceway

[gauntletblitz.com](http://gauntletblitz.com)

"I'm just beginning my second life," she said after finishing ninth among 12 runners. "This is the first half-marathon of my second career."

In the first, she was Boston Marathon champion in 1973, marathon world record-holder in 1974-75, leader of the battle that got a women's marathon included in the 1984 Olympics and leader of the battle that got the women's 10,000 meters into the 1988 Olympics.

In the second, she wants to be a leading masters runner in the 5,000 and 10,000 while leading the battle to make the competitive opportunities for women equal to those for men. Not to mention wife of running-team manager Tom Sturak and mother of their 7-year-old son, Mike.

"(Former Olympian) Dick Buerkle once told me, 'I can't imagine what it must be like to have to fight for everything. I was born with the right to run anything I want,'" Hansen said.

That was in 1976, the year Hansen might have won an Olympic medal if women had been allowed to run a marathon. She was the first woman to break 2 hours 40 minutes, a woman ahead of her time.

That was the era in which overprotective men decided women could race no longer than 1,500 meters, an event added to the Olympics only in 1972. Prior to that, the longest Olympic race for women was the 800.

That was the era in which people threw beer cans and aimed pointed questions at Hansen when she trained on the roads near her home in Los Angeles. It seems so long ago that women like her Festival roommate, 25-year-old Ellen Lyons, had only a vague idea of what Hansen had done.

When she got a history lesson, 10,000-meter runner Lyons said,

"Thanks."

"That's all the reward I need," Hansen said.

She got a more tangible reward when her friend and house guest, Joan Benoit Samuelson, won the first Olympic women's marathon.

"I got to hold the medal for a little while," Hansen said.

### Related Articles

[Marathoner Shows True Colors](#)

February 16, 2001

[Boston's Marathon Takes A Hit](#)

April 16, 1990

[Kempainen Guts Out Olympic Berth](#)

February 18, 1996

[9th Chicago Marathon: Oct. 20, 1985](#)

September 27, 2002

[A historical run](#)

March 28, 2008

She had competed in the U.S. trials in 1984, not because she thought she had a chance to make the team but simply because it meant so much to be there. ``I lobbied so hard to get a women`s marathon, it was a matter of principle for me to get into the trials,`` she said.

It wasn`t easy. Hansen needed three tries in two months to run a marathon faster than the trials qualifying time of 2:51. Her eventual success, at Boston, became a moment of triumph and defeat.

Ads By Google

[ZOOMA Women's Race Series](#)

Boutique women's half marathons & 5K/10Ks. run. laugh. celebrate.  
[www.zoomarun.com](http://www.zoomarun.com)

[San Diego Half Marathon](#)

EPIC Stadium finish in PETCO Park! Register Now and Save  
[www.sdhalfmarathon.com](http://www.sdhalfmarathon.com)

In 30-degree weather, Hansen finished the race suffering from disorientation and hypothermia.

When she finally regained her wits, it was on a hospital bed with an intravenous tube in her arm. Someone told Hansen her temperature was 93 degrees.

``What was my time?`` Hansen asked.

It was good enough to qualify, but she couldn`t enjoy it very much. Later that day, Hansen learned she had lost the lawsuit she brought against the International Olympic Committee to get the 5,000 and 10,000 in the 1984 Olympics.

A month later, when Hansen went to the Olympic trials, only the spirit was willing. She walked, ran and jogged to the finish, and then her body gave out.

``I had a lot of mental and physical stress in the Olympic year,`` Hansen said.

It added up to three ensuing years of recovery from three different leg surgeries. She has not run a marathon since 1984, and Friday`s half-marathon was her longest run of this year.

Hansen had not expected to be here. She was teaching in a running camp at Mammoth Lakes, Calif., when West team coach Anne Phillips mentioned that she needed runners for the half-marathon at the Festival.

In her role as chairman of the U.S. selection committee for women`s international marathons, Hansen gave Phillips the names of several runners. None were available.

``I said if you can`t get anyone, you can always pick me,`` Hansen said.

That made her the mother of invention. It also put her in a dormitory room for the first time in her life.

``It`s pretty bad when you select the selection committee,`` she said.

It wasn`t the best night to run 13.1 miles, either, with the temperature at 82 degrees on a hilly course. Hansen wanted to break 1 hour 20 minutes, but was content to finish in 1:23:15.6, some five minutes behind winner Kathy Pfeifer, a youth of 27.

``I want that bumper sticker that says, `When you`re over the hill, you pick up speed,` `` Hansen said.

Such logic works for Jacqueline Hansen, who scaled mountains of tired ideas to let women runners go full speed ahead.

Ads By Google

[Become a Personal Trainer](#)

Get ISSA Certified At Your Own Pace Turn Your Passion Into Your Career  
[www.ISSAOnline.com](http://www.ISSAOnline.com)

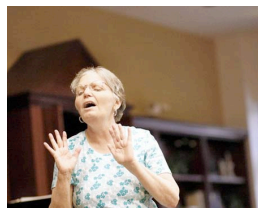
[Gorgeous Engagement Rings](#)

Perfect Engagement Rings For Every Style And Budget In Los Angeles!  
[www.RobbinsBrothers.com/Los-Angeles](http://www.RobbinsBrothers.com/Los-Angeles)

---

**Featured Articles**

---



MORE:

[Top 10 Black Friday deals](#)

[Occupy Chicago demonstrators block LaSalle Street bridge, Loop streets](#)

[Doctors rethinking prescribing Abbott's Niaspan](#)

[Henderson edges Rua in slugfest for the ages](#)

[Savvy Shopper: Best of Black Friday](#)

[Cain accuser has history of financial troubles, legal squabbles](#)



[Index by Keyword](#) | [Index by Date](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Terms of Service](#)