

# Back in the Chase

## When the Olympic Festival Needs a Distance Runner, the Call Finally Goes to a Very Reluctant 38-Year-Old

By RANDY HARVEY,  
Times Staff Writer

DURHAM, N.C.—Jacqueline Hansen had just returned from conducting a running camp at the Mammoth Athletic Club Monday when she received a call at her Topanga Canyon home from Anne Phillips, the Pomona-Pitzer College coach who is in charge of the West team at the U.S. Olympic Festival.

Because of an injury to one of the women who was supposed to compete here, Phillips explained, the West needed another runner for the half-marathon (13.1 miles).

As chairperson of The Athletics Congress' international selection committee for women's marathons, Hansen gave Phillips a list of about a dozen names.

"If you can't get anybody, you can get me," Hansen told Phillips.

"I was joking," Hansen would say a few days later.

But when Phillips called again, she said she had exhausted the list without finding anyone who could run here and asked Hansen what she would be doing this week.

"It's pretty bad when you're selecting the selection committee," Hansen said.

So Hansen made her Festival debut Friday night at age 38.

"Isn't the Festival for the youth, the up and coming?" her husband, Tom, asked her before she left.

"Well," she said, "I'm a re-generated runner, coming back once again."

On a Friday night that even the North Carolina natives considered unusually hot and humid, Hansen finished ninth in a field of 12 in a time of 1:23:15.6.

Kathy Pfeiffer of Albuquerque, N.M., won, crossing the finish line in Wallace Wade Stadium at Duke University in 1:17:49.3.

"I just hoped to be competitive and have a good time," Hansen said. "Tom told me to go for the win. But I wasn't trying to prove anything to anyone. I've got 21 years of experience."

That is longer than one of her West teammates, Pauline Stehley, has been alive.

"I realized during the race I was old enough to be her mother," Hansen said.

Hansen, an "original Valley Girl" from Granada Hills, ran for Coach Laszlo Tabori when she really was an up-and-coming runner for the San Fernando Valley Track Club, her team after she graduated from San Fernando Valley State College.



DON TORMEY / Los Angeles Times

Jacqueline Hansen (39) runs in the women's half-marathon at the Olympic Festival in Durham, N.C. Hansen, 38, finished ninth.

Valley State later became Cal State Northridge, which recently nominated Hansen for its Hall of Fame, an honor she earned as one of the best women's distance runners this country has ever had.

In only the second Boston Marathon open to women, Hansen won in 1973 and then set world marathon records in 1974 and 1975. She became the first woman to break 2:40, running 2:38:19 in 1975.

She would have been favored to win the women's marathon in the 1976 Summer Olympics in Montreal except that the closed minds in control of the International Olympic Committee at the time did not allow women to compete in distances longer than 1,500 meters. That was a time when there were no women among the more than 90 IOC members.

"Montreal should have been my year," she said. "That really set me off. I'm not saying I would have won, but I should have had the right to try."

"I told myself then that no other woman should have to wait to get into the Olympics. That's when I started my battle in earnest."

Hansen has been a force ever since in the effort to expand the Olympic track and field program for women. They have won some and lost some. The women's mara-

thon was added for 1984. The 10,000 meters has been added for 1988.

On the same day in 1984 that a group of 89 women from 26 countries, assisted by the American Civil Liberties Union, took the IOC to court in Los Angeles to have the 5,000 and 10,000 placed on the program for the 1984 Summer Olympics, Hansen was not able to attend because she was at the Boston Marathon, attempting for the final time to qualify for the Olympic trials.

"I had two television crews following me around, one because I had won the race 11 years before and the other because of the lawsuit," she said. "One of them wanted me to wear a microphone around my neck during the race. I'm glad I didn't go for that."

"The weather was hellish, 30 degrees, raining and a headwind. At Mile 25, I was in 10th place and feeling pretty good about my chances to get a qualifying time. But for the first time in my life, I started to black out. For the rest of the race, I can honestly say I ran over my head. I kept telling myself, 'I deserve to finish, I deserve to finish.'"

"When I crossed the finish line, I

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# HANSEN

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did black out. When I came to, I was in a hospital bed, looking at an IV-bottle. They told me I had hypothermia and my body temperature was 93 degrees.

"They said, 'You're not doing too well.' I said, 'What was my time?'"

She was one for two that day.

The lawsuit was lost, but she beat the qualifying time of 2:51 by about four minutes.

"She was on 'Nightline' that night to talk about the lawsuit," said her husband, Tom Sturak. "I think she was pretty chagrined. She looked like a drowned rat. They asked her about the race, and she couldn't remember a thing."

Three weeks later, she ran in the first U.S. women's Olympic marathon trials in Olympia, Wash.

"I was a pretty sick puppy by the time I got to the trials," she said. "I walked and jogged the last six

miles. But I was just so happy to be there. It meant so much to me personally."

When Joan Benoit won the first women's Olympic marathon, Hansen said she cried.

Her son Michael, 4 at the time, was upset when he saw his mother's tears and also began to cry.

"I told him mine were happy tears, but I don't think he understood," she said. "He said, 'Well, she's not as fast as Carl Lewis.'"

Due to various leg and foot injuries, Hansen did not compete again until April of this year, when she started on the road to the Masters (over 35) world championships this November in Melbourne, Australia, where she plans to enter the 5,000 and 10,000.

The Festival was a temporary detour.

"I'm not sure Anne knows what's she done," Hansen said. "I think I'm older than she is."

She is certainly older than any of the other women track and field

athletes, some of whom are less than half her age.

"I don't know any of them," she said.

But she is being treated just like everyone else, living in a dorm with a roommate on the Duke campus.

"I've never stayed in a dorm in my life," she said. "It's pretty bleak."

"It could be depressing except that I run in the Catalina Marathon where you have to sleep the night before the race in a sleeping bag at the finish line. So it could be worse."

Her roommate here is Elle Lyons, 25, another distance runner from Santa Monica.

"She asked me a little about those days when women first started running the distances," Hansen said. "She said she had no idea what we had to go through to get where we are. That was all the reward I need, for someone to say thanks."

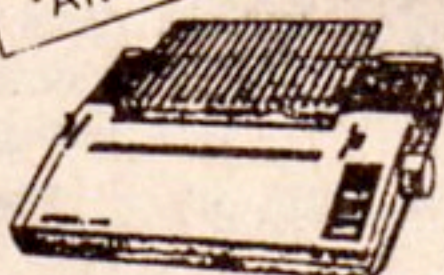


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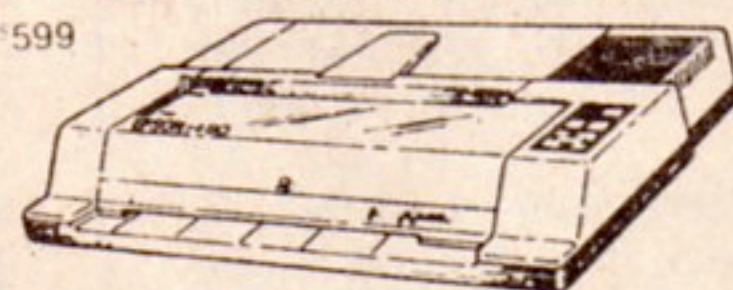


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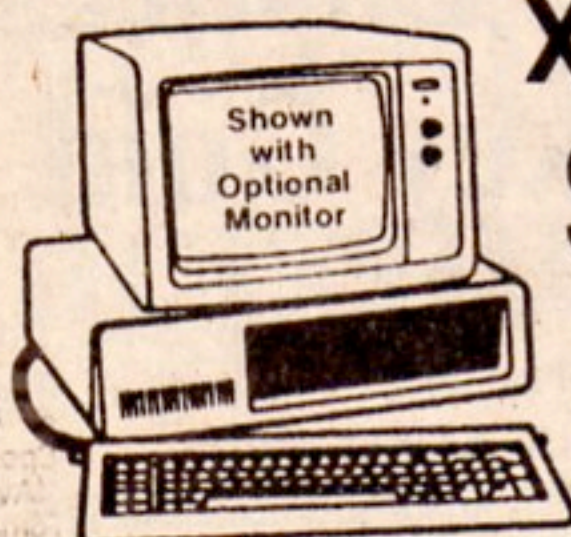
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