

A GALLANT MARATHON FAILURE

Thousands of people, including King Edward VII, watched a small figure stagger towards the finishing line of the marathon race at the London Olympic Games in 1908, and they were silent, for it was a tragic moment.

When, to a great roar of cheering, a little Italian, Pietro Durando, had entered the Stadium shortly before, the rest of the field, headed by John Hayes, an American, was not in sight and it seemed the lonely figure would win easily, after leading most of the way. But the 26 miles, 385 yards journey was taking its toll of Italy's pride, and he moved slowly and unsteadily around that long last lap. He made the entrance to the straight where, with the tape in sight, he weaved from side to side for some distance before crumpling to his knees as John Hayes came into the Stadium.

To the silent thousands watching it seemed minutes before he got to his feet, where he stood wavering before taking a few more steps towards his goal. But again he went down, this time apparently for "keeps".

Unable to bear the strain any longer, his excited countrymen ran to the fallen man, lifted him up and helped him to the line, only yards away. Hayes, just plodding along, followed him through and, when correctly the Italian was disqualified for receiving assistance, was declared the winner.

The decision resulted in much heated discussion among the officials of many nations, and Hayes felt some reluctance in accepting the gold medal, feeling like the thousands present a great sympathy for a gallant loser.

This sympathy was later manifested when, to commemorate the occasion, a special medal was struck, and presented to [^]Pietro Durando by King Edward.