

[Emil Zatopek, greatest of distance runners.]  
after the Amsterdam Games

The world had to wait twenty years to see another Nurmi appear on the Olympic scene - Emil Zatopek, a 26 years-old Czech army officer.

At the London Games in 1948, Zatopek was narrowly beaten in the 5000 metres by Gaston Reiff, of Belgium, but he won the 10,000 metres convincingly.

However, it was another four years before the name of the great Czech became a household word like that of Nurmi, and burst upon the scene he did!

It was at Helsinki where he started off by winning the 10,000 metres in record time, being 16 seconds faster than the second place-getter, Mimoun, of Algeria, who, four years later at the Melbourne Games, was to win the marathon.

Again in the 5000 metres he broke the record to become the second man in Olympic history to win this double, Kolehmainen, of Finland, being the first in 1912.

Since Zatopek's effort, Kuts (USSR) at Melbourne, 1956, and Viren (Finland) at Munich, 1972, have also won the double.

It is interesting to note that while Zatopek was winning the 5000 metres his wife, Dana, was preparing to throw in the women's javelin event, which she later won with a record distance. It is the only time in Olympic history that a husband-wife team has won gold medals at the Games.

Great as were his performances in winning the double, it was in the marathon that the great Czech proved what a remarkable distance <sup>runner</sup> he had become.

Completing the long race, Zatopek entered the stadium for the last lap alone, and spectators later said that he appeared to run it at the same pace as he would a lap of the 5000 metres! Whatever their judgement, so great were the Czech's physical powers, that a minute later he was chatting to friends across the railings and joking with the Press as he watched others in the field stagger home.

It was the first marathon in which he had competed and his time was six minutes better than any which had been run.

That the mantle of Nurmi fell on worthy shoulders there can be little doubt. Emil Zatopek was a worthy successor to the great Finn.

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