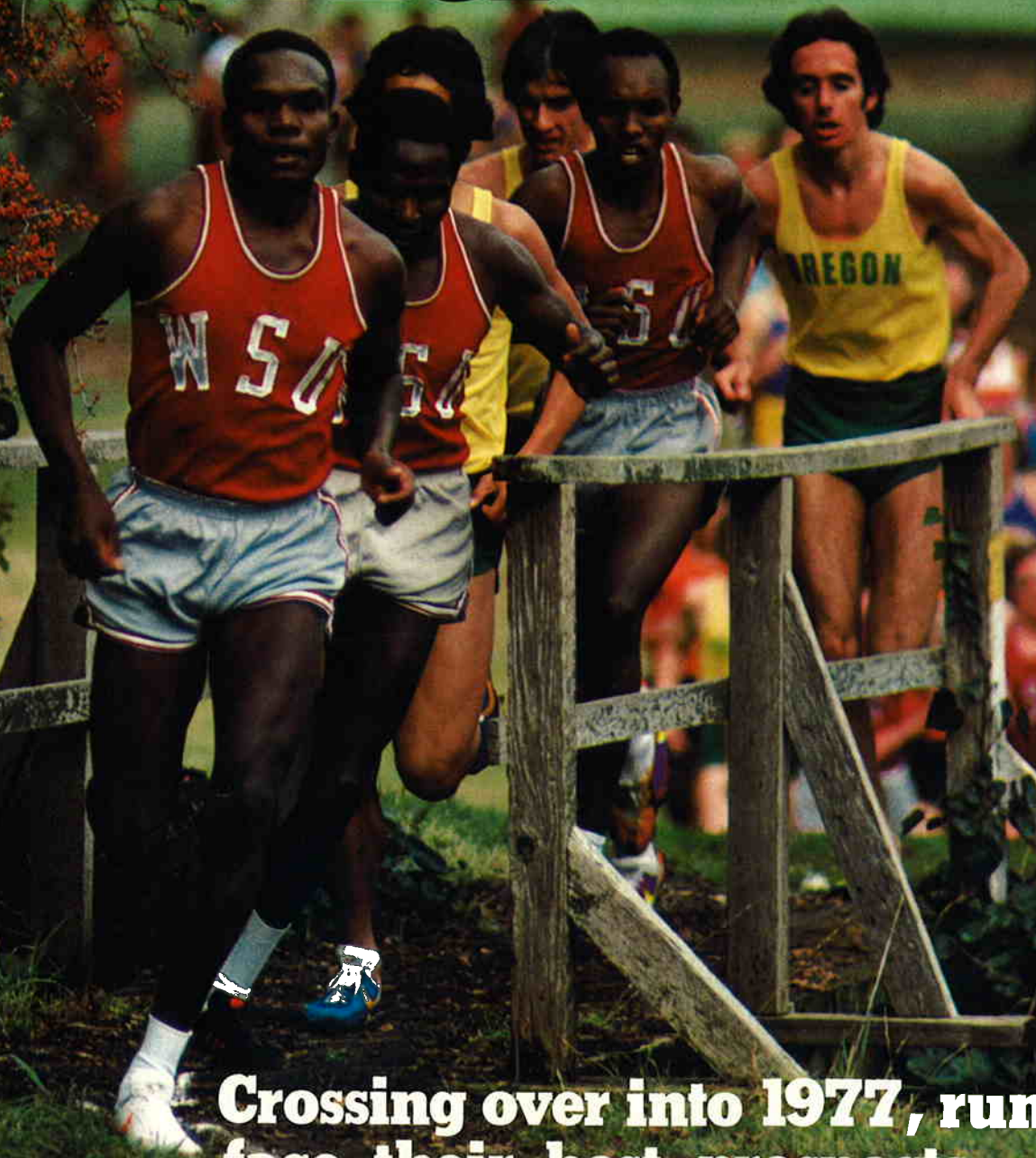
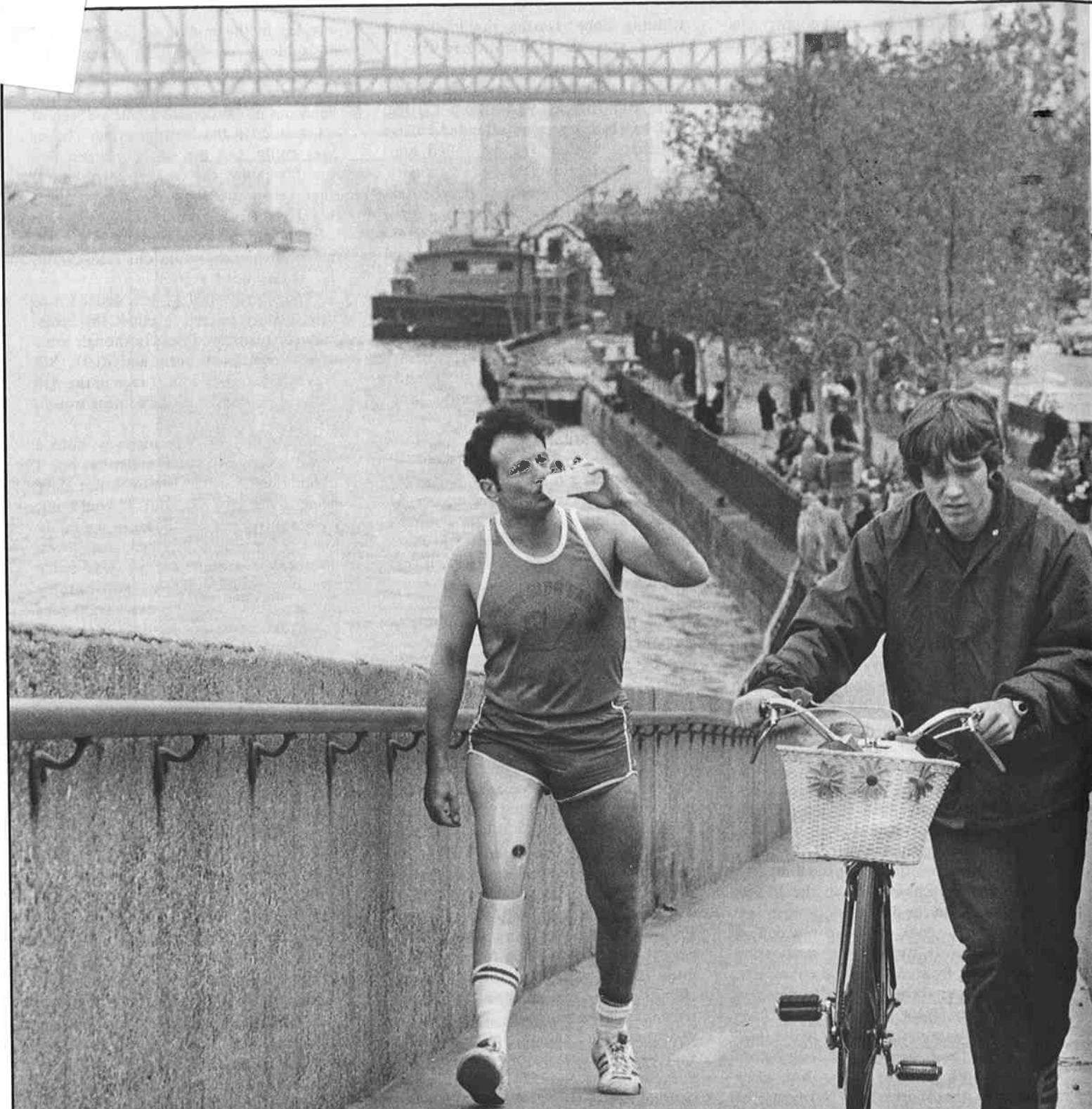


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Runner's World



Crossing over into 1977, runners face their best prospects or their biggest problems. This issue focuses on the courses to be taken.



One Leg Does All the Work

by Bob Glover

Daddy, is that the Bionic man?" "Hey, did he break his leg or something?" "Is that a new way of running, like on the Olympics?" "I don't believe it!"

Central Park in New York City presents a constant parade of the unusual. But very few of these sights elicit the initial reaction of amused curiosity or profound awe as Dick Traum runs past on an artificial leg.

Eleven years ago, Dick lost his right leg above the knee as a result of a freak accident, apparently ending his athletic career. He had been a standout high school and college wrestler, and also was a high school shot putter. But he was never a runner. His only running, he relates, "was after wrestling practice, but only when we couldn't avoid it."

After the accident, Dick completed his education and began a career. He earned a masters degree in human resources and a doctorate in the behavioral sciences. At the age of 35, he is president of Personnelmetrics, Inc., a New York-based organization which deals with computer applications in the personnel area.

A year and a half ago, Traum decided to join the fitness programs at the West Side YMCA. He said, "I always wanted to get back into shape, but didn't know how. I really needed a physical release from business pressures."

"The instructor (during the first class) asked whether I could run. Having jogged the length of an apartment hallway a few times, and guessing that a 'no' would result in not being admitted to class, I said 'yes.' I really didn't know." He took off running but couldn't last beyond three minutes at first.

"I don't 'run' but hop, swing my artificial leg and take a step. If you can visualize yourself running with a cast on one leg, you have a close approximation," he said.

His "running" is done while wearing his strap-on "work leg." Traum trains at a 15-minute mile pace which has left him free of major injuries. He usually trains indoors so he'll be near home base in case of mechanical problems.

Dick progressed through the beginner, intermediate and advanced levels of the fitness program and then joined the "Y's" runners club. After building up to 45-minute workouts, he felt he was ready for his first competition and entered the YMCA Five-Mile championship. Traum finished last in 72 minutes and was welcomed warmly by amazed

runners and spectators at the end.

Everyone was impressed except Dick, who said, "I felt that I ran too conservatively. It was my first race and I placed all my emphasis on finishing rather than time.

If the ultimate goal for a runner with two legs is the marathon, what's the goal of a runner with one leg? A half-marathon. We figured Dick's time for an upcoming half-marathon would be equivalent to running a marathon. Traum's training program gradually was extended to nine-mile workouts.

The half-marathon over the hilly Central Park course was conducted on a horribly hot, muggy day in late August. Nearly one-third of the starters dropped out. Dick coasted through the first nine miles and after about 2½ hours, then "hit the wall" with which many of us marathoners are all too familiar.

"I guess I was too cocky. Everything was easy up to that point. I certainly learned a lesson in training beyond one's collapse point," he said.

After finishing in 3:27, Dick pulled off his leg, turned it upside down and poured the water out as passers-by nearly fell off their bikes.

"Bob," he asked me, "do you think I could have done one more lap?"

The next goal was established—a 30-kilometer event scheduled for the same course in late September. Traum's training schedule kept increasing.

He said, "I get the best results by running three times a week including one long run. I make the long run approximately two-thirds the distance of the next race. The training for the 30-kilometer race included one 13-mile workout and two seven-mile workouts each week."

Dick's training peaked with a 40-mile-plus week which consisted of two, three-hour runs, and two, two-hour runs (all on the 23 laps per mile indoor track).

"Actually I didn't plan it that way. I missed a couple of workouts the previous week, felt guilty and tried to make up for it," he said.

On race day, he whizzed by the 13.1-mile mark 15 minutes faster than the prior race and was very strong at the finish. He smiled and said, "I could run a marathon today." He finished in 4:52.

Traum then began preparing for the New York Marathon in October. He said as he planned for his greatest challenge, "I will run a few four-hour workouts. During the race, I will have a handler on a bike, plenty of extras like shoes, socks, vaseline, liquids, crutches, spare parts for my leg and a tool to replace

it should it come off. I'll also have a spare leg available. If it comes to it, I could handle a few miles on crutches."

He would begin at 6 a.m., 4½ hours before the official start, so he could finish in time to make it to the post-race reception.

With his headstart, Traum finished the course in 7:24, a remarkable time which included 30 minutes he spent relocating after getting lost on the course. Afterwards, he commented, "I just finished an ultra marathon."

Traum has had only one sports-related accident with his leg. "I was riding on an indoor bike. My artificial leg came off the pedal which clipped it on the next rotation, knocking the leg right off. It didn't hurt, but really shook up some of the other guys in the room. It must have looked very funny as I hopped back to the locker carrying my leg under one arm."

Concerning running in general, Traum observes, "I really enjoy the opportunity to organize my thoughts away from business interruptions. Sometimes I just 'tune out' for hours and release tension. It takes about a half-hour to completely unwind, at which time I feel very high, as if I were running without any effort whatsoever."

Other runners are motivated by Dick's achievements and, Traum is quick to add, this works both ways.

"Runners offer me tremendous positive reinforcement. When I am lapped in the park the majority of runners cheer me on," he said. Runners have to respect a man who plans to run for eight hours, even if he "only" covers 26 miles 385 yards.

The most amazing thing about Dick Traum is his complete confidence in reaching his goals despite his handicap. He just plans his activities carefully to take into consideration the fact that he runs slowly and has an artificial leg.

He answers the inevitable question, would he run a marathon if he had two legs? "Yes, the challenge is certainly there."

Dick has the ability to bring out the best in himself as well as in those who are associated with him. Despite his handicap, he has an advantage. By being forced to run slower, he enjoys the beauties of running that many of us miss in our quest for speed. ●

Bob Glover is the director of the physical fitness program at New York City's West Side YMCA. Richard Traum began his running at the YMCA under Glover's supervision.