

## Beating Bill Rodgers and winning Cowtown -- priceless

Runners who participate in Cowtown no doubt have their favorite memories. For some, including this website runner, Cowtown marked my first 10K. It's something I'll always recall as I battled my way through thousands of runners and walkers, hoping I could actually finish 6.2 miles without stopping for help.

Calvin McGill of Arlington, who was among the best runners in the Metroplex in his prime, also has a Cowtown memory that is hard to top. He not only won the 10K in 1990 with his personal best time of 30:10, but he also beat one of the world's premier runners in Bill Rodgers, who had won four New York and Boston marathons.



Here's Calvin's look back at winning the 10K:

By Calvin McGill

Over the course of my running career, I won just over 100 races, but the Cowtown 10K in 1990 would have to be rated as my most dramatic.

In previous years, I had placed consistently in the top 5 (second in '85) but never won. It was always one of my favorite races ever since I ran 32:16 as a 16-year-old in high school. That year, Stann Vernon ran the course record of 29:17.

The 1990 story has to begin the night before the race. The Elite Track Club was a very big deal back then. I was the distance coach and consistently went to high school meets every Friday night to support the athletes I coached in the summer. With the sprint and field athletes, they were spread out over many schools, so there was always someone to watch. On this particular Friday, the day before Cowtown, I was asked to go eat at Bobby Valentine's with a few families of the sprinters. That fact is important because there was always a little friendly jabbing going on between the sprinters and distance runners.

As we had dinner, we began to talk about me running the next day. I told them what a big deal it was going to be because Bill Rodgers would be there. Of course, I had to explain to most of them why that was a big deal. The parents of the most prominent and well-known sprinter on the team were so impressed by Bill's attendance at the race that they said they were coming to watch. Of course, I didn't believe them and said, "Right, you're going to get up super early and come watch a DISTANCE race!"

The sprinter's father, Leonard, said they would be there, but I still didn't believe him.

The next important bit of info is that I almost didn't run because I had no way to get there. I was without a car and had to bum a ride off one of my athletes. There were actually quite a few of my athletes running the 10K through their own school participation.

I got out there, registered, went through my normal warm-ups and was ready when the gun went off.

As the race started, the four key players in the story were myself, Agapius Masong of Tanzania and who was living in Fort Worth, James Jackson from my high school days, and of course Bill Rodgers. Masong was 21<sup>st</sup> in the Olympic marathon in '84 and had won two Cowtown 10Ks, and James and I had many memorable battles in high school (he at Lewisville and me at L.D. Bell )and he would win the 10K in 1992. Bill was hoping to run the American master's record of 29:50 something. The drama started early at the 1-mile mark when I heard my name being cheered from the side of the road. I looked over with astonishment to see Leonard and his wife, Vicki. They had actually shown up. I couldn't believe it!

Later at the 2-mile mark, James' old Lewisville high school coach was right there cheering him on. I made the remark to him that "I wished my high school coach would come out to watch me." We chuckled about it, and he and Masong proceeded to pull away from me going up the big uphill at the Main Street bridge going into downtown Fort Worth. In those days, the race started on Main in front of Billy Bob's in the Stockyards, ran up the bridge, circled around downtown, then went back down Main into the Stockyards for the finish on Exchange St.

I was really struggling by the time we got up the hill. As I began to contemplate how hard I could actually run that day, Bill Rodgers caught me. I thought there was no way I could just let BILL RODGERS run by and not run with him for a while.

So, I sucked it up and ran alongside him. As I did, we passed by a marker with someone calling out splits. The person called out "14:58." Then Bill said, "That's not the 3-mile is it?" I said, "No, 5K." Then it hit me. I'm running and talking to Bill Rodgers, four-time winner of both the Boston and New York marathons. It was a short adrenaline boost that really helped me feel better, but not as good as what was about to happen going back down the bridge.

I really liked the old 10K course. When the leaders came down the bridge, the majority of the 9,000 or so runners in the race were still going up. As we started coming down the bridge, Jackson and Masong had opened up about a 70-yard lead on us. Then the real adrenaline boost came in. As we headed down the bridge, many of the runners going up were naturally cheering for Rodgers. However, sprinkled throughout the many Go-Bills coming from the crowd of runners were quite a few Go-Calvins, including some from my athletes who were running.

That really clicked in my head as motivation to run really fast down the hill (almost too fast).

By the 4.5-mile mark, the momentum I created going down the hill had closed the gap and all four of us were now running in a group.

It stayed that way until about 600 yards to go. My confidence was obviously beginning to soar. I analyzed each of the competitors. I knew I had more foot speed than Jackson and Masong. Since Bill was 42 then, I figured a kick with him would be in my favor also. Knowing that, I decided it was time to make my move. I pulled ahead of them and slowly began to pull away. We made the right turn onto Exchange. When I made the turn, you could hear the announcer saying “here they come,” and the huge spectator crowd was cheering loudly.

The adrenaline, motivation, emotion, inspiration, and excitement was overwhelming as I ran down the hill pumping my fist and continuing to pull away. I was wearing my Elite TC singlet and filling up with pride with every step. I crossed the line in 30:10 and jumped into the air. Masong came across next in 30:16, Rodgers at 30:17, at Jackson at 30:19, the same time he would win with in ‘92.

It was the fastest 10K I have ever run and the closest finish in race history.

When I won the regional high school cross country championship in ‘83 (a race that Jackson was second at), I thought it was cool that I had three different newspaper writers around me asking questions. The media coverage on this day, however, was twice as exciting. Along with the newspapers, KXAS had a field reporter and cameraman there. It was great!

Remember my comment to Jackson about his high school? While being interviewed, a big tall body was suddenly grabbing me in a big bear hug from behind. I turned around to see Coach Steve Stewart, my high school coach. He was there to support his wife, who was probably one of the people cheering for me on the bridge.

It was a great experience that was made better by many other personal factors in the 5-6 months before that day. What’s even better is that I now know how blessed I was to have had that experience. I think it really helped to instill that passion I now have for the athletes I coach and my relationships with them. It’s just too bad I can’t create that kind of excitement for them anymore.

They just have to create all the excitement for me.