

# Ian Clark - in his own world class

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Ian Clark has been running most of his young life for the chance to be the best in the world. Now, just as it seemed possible that that dream could come true, at the World Junior Cross-Country Championships in Paris a week Sunday, a leg injury may get in the way.

The GDHS student is suffering from a micro stress fracture of the bone in his lower left leg. Although he is treating it with whirlpool baths and ultrasound treatments, while still trying to keep up his training with swims and bicycle work, he still isn't sure whether his doctor will allow him to compete. He hopes so. He says he would run if he got the medical okay even though he could reinjure the leg further. The final decision will take place this weekend. Recently he spoke with Colin Gibson about his career.

Ian Clark should be leaving Canada Saturday and travelling to Paris - France, as a member of the Canadian team which will compete in the World Junior Cross-Country championships scheduled for March 9.

This would be Clark's second crack at the World Junior Cross-Country field where in 1979, he made an auspicious debut. He finished fifth in a field of over 100 runners and this represented the second-best showing ever by a Canadian at this world event. The previous year, Rob Earl of Toronto, placed second.

The Canadian team placed eighth out of 25 teams in the 1979 competition. Clark is optimistic about Canada's chances at the upcoming championships.

The Georgetown runner won't be 19 until September when he will no longer be a junior and his 135 pounds is stretched economically over a five feet 10 inch frame. He is presently completing grade 13 at Georgetown and District Secondary School and hasn't allowed his athletic exploits to interfere with classroom work. He is an A student and sports a highly creditable 78 per cent average.

### INTEREST SPARKED IN JUNIOR HIGH

His interest in running was sparked when he entered junior high school. Clark wanted to get involved in sports, both for the camaraderie and the competitive aspect. As cross-country was the first sport on the school calendar, he joined up.

His running talent was easily noticeable as he left junior high with five county championships in track and cross-country under his belt. He was accepted with open arms into the high school track program and continued to develop under the tutelage of coaches Donna Metcalfe and Karen Cosgrove.

Leading into this spring's Ontario Federation of Secondary Schools Athletic Associations' track and field season, Clark has emerged as the dominant figure on the Ontario scene.

In five years of competition, he has won four Ontario cross-country championships and placed second only once. He is also a club runner of some note with the powerful Scarborough Optimists. His coach is Brian Barnes who, through various methods, always seems to squeeze the utmost out of his charges.

Clark was taken under Barnes' wing in the fall of 1975 and the relationship continues. As a club competitor for the Optimists, he has won three Ontario Track and Field Association titles at cross-country distances. He also claimed two junior crowns and one bantam championship.

His association with the Optimists led Clark to the national junior cross-country championship staged in Vancouver, British Columbia, in the fall of 1978. There he did remarkably well competing as a first-year junior and stunned a majority of those in attendance by handily winning the event. This led to his 1979 debut on the world junior cross-country scene.

The prestigious Toronto Star Maple Leaf Indoor Games, staged at Toronto's Maple Leaf Gardens, has also proved to be a showcase for the talented runner. Last year, he won the afternoon high school 3,000 metre race and this year competed in the evening Open 1,500 metre competition finishing a very respectable third in the 10-man field, with a time of 3:56.3.

Clark's best time in the indoor 1,500 metres is 3:53 and had he been able to attain that in this particular race, and won, it would have again been regarded as something of an upset as he was going against a highly competitive field.

### GOOD TRACK RECORD

The year 1979 also provided other highlights for Clark as a runner to be reckoned with.

At last year's Ontario Senior Indoors championships, Clark placed fourth out of 10 in the 3,000 metre race against experienced runners. His time of 8:04 broke the old Canadian junior mark held by Rob Earl by more than three seconds.

This past June he competed in the Pan American Games Trials in the 5,000 metre event and placed fourth. His time of 13:52, however, set a new Canadian junior standard for the outdoor 5,000 metres. Clark is the present holder of two Canadian junior track records and is well within striking distance of three others.

For a young man who has more than just a hint of future greatness in the track world, Clark is quietly unassuming. His attitude closely parallels that of American Olympic speed-skating phenom, Eric Heiden.

Despite all the hoopla and gushing superlatives sprayed at them, both appear to have the uncanny ability to put things in perspective and not become either overbearing or over-egged by their athletic accomplishments.



the upswing, is fleeting and represents just a part of Ian Clark, the person.

Asked why he runs, the immediate response is, "Because I enjoy running and enjoy competing." He especially enjoys the atmosphere of competing against the best and feels that last year's World Junior Cross-Country Championships had a positive effect on him. "I got caught up in the atmosphere," he admits, "but it was a positive thing and I want to stay at that competitive level."

As for how long his running career will last, Clark again provides a realistic response. "I don't have any long term goals," he says, "although some things are in the back of my mind, but I prefer setting short term goals and taking things one step at a time. I always have."

He says his immediate goal is to do well at the upcoming world junior cross-country championships.

This summer he will compete in the Canadian Track and Field Associations Olympic Trials (if a boycott is not in effect) in the 5,000 metre event, for which he qualified. Then it is eyes south as he has made up his mind to accept an athletic scholarship in the United States.

### ATHLETIC SCHOLARSHIPS

Clark has been contacted by over 10 major United States universities, concerning an athletic scholarship including Notre Dame, the University of California at Berkeley, Princeton, Villanova, Kansas, East Tennessee State, Western Kentucky and Clemson.

He is leaning towards the University of California at Berkeley for a number of reasons, not the least of which is the university's excellent academic reputation. He plans to major in business and get a solid educational foundation because as he puts it, "You won't be running all your life." Berkeley university also offers an excellent track program, against high calibre competition and it's location in Northern California is ideal for distance running training.

He first began to perceive his potential as world class runner two years ago, but this realization has not altered either his training methods or his overall outlook.

With the exception of three weeks during his competitive 1976-77 season, when he suffered an injury, he has been in continuous training - 365 days a year - from the fall of 1975.

He trains daily in and around the Georgetown community and commutes to York University, in Toronto, twice a week and makes use of the indoor facility there. His training schedule calls for him to log approximately 70 miles a week but this naturally varies according to the weather and the season.

Clark, in his usual low-key manner, refuses to speculate on just what the future holds for him in highly competitive world-class running ranks.

"I really can't say," he muses. "I don't want to rush things. I'll just take things as they come and let my actions speak for themselves."

He is definitely committed to running at least four more years for a United States University - and in summers, for the Scarborough Optimists - but beyond that, he refuses to speculate.

The 1984 Olympics, if they are ever held, obviously loom on the horizon, but Clark again, is non-committal on that particular subject. He wants to go as far as he can in his sport, to reach the absolute peak. When he has accomplished that, regardless of the time frame, he will know it is time to hang up his spikes - without regret - and continue with his life.

A laudable objective and one few of us ever attain, regardless of our vocation.

In Clark's case, family background undoubtedly has a lot to do with his even-keeled outlook and lack of pretension. His older brother John, now in his fourth year at Queen's University in Kingston, was a starting safety for the varsity football team. His older sister, Cathy, now in her second year at Queen's was quite a high school runner in her own right. Her high school running career was highlighted by a fourth in the 1978 OFSSAA 3,000 metres and a second place finish in the 1979 OFSSAA cross-country championships.

His parents, Beth and Don, have also provided solid support for Ian throughout his running career. Mr. Clark, more often than not, can usually be found quietly hovering behind the scene whenever Ian competes.

### CREDIT TO HIM

However, the lion's share of the credit for Clark's commendable attitude must go to the runner himself. In this age of overblown, overpaid and often, overrated athletes, Clark has set his own standards and sticks by them.

He has always enjoyed the team aspect of sports and throughout his years has never held himself above the team. Indeed, at meets, before and after his own particular race, or races, Clark could always be found at the front of the pack offering vocal encouragement to his competing teammates.

He also realizes that his athletic ability, while still on

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