

## *A Marathon Odyssey*

BY MALCOLM ANDERSON

Scores of runners these days are writing extensively about their various running adventures, and many of them are turning out unreadable books. The resulting books are more like expanded running logs wedged between the covers of a book. "On Thursday, I ran 14 miles on my regular 14-mile course. It was sunny and warm, and I wore my Nike Thrill-Seeker GTs and no shirt. I looked like one of those skinny-runner guys on the cover of *Runner's World*, minus the six-pack abs."

The book goes on, in tedious detail, to tell a reluctant reader about every run and race for that particular year, with a stated goal of running at least one marathon a month. The only good thing is that, unlike the nouveau runner in person, who can push you into a corner and give you a cauliflower ear by relating every step of every run, you can either put a bookmark in the tome or you can consign it to a dark corner of a closet.

Enough already. Let that tree live, brother. Don't pulp it for yet another such book.

Every once in a while, someone stumbles along who manages to fashion a readable first-person running book, typically by leavening it with several factors above (below?) a step-by-step compendium.

The book covers more than that runner's runs and races, often taking on the whole phenomenon of running . . . or, in this case, marathoning, giving its history as he goes along, thereby making the book of interest even to nonrunners.

The author fashions stories that he inserts, either to make a point or to break up the narrative, and by so doing entertains the reader.

The guy has a serious sense of humor, which permeates the book and which assures the reader that, yes, this guy is serious about his running but, no, he doesn't take himself too seriously in the process.

Some people can do this juggling act; others can't come close. Some can keep this act going for a dozen pages or so, while others manage to go to marathon lengths and still not lose the fun along the way.

Such a book is *A Marathon Odyssey*, Malcolm Anderson's tale of his personal quest to run a meager three marathons in two months: Athens (the course closest

to the marathon's origin), Cayman Island (can you say "destination marathon"?), and Disney's Goofy Challenge (the "Donald Duck-inspired" half-marathon on Saturday and the Mickey Mouse-inspired marathon on Sunday).

Anderson peppers the book with numerous sidebars, everything from a study of the growth of marathon running to the rise of running for causes. He also inserts pages of photos from his adventures, with sometimes off-the-wall captions that further lighten the mood.

It's a light yet informative read, one with real legs.