

## Mark Stanforth looks back on his Chicago Marathon victory

By Matt Beardmore



**T**hirty years since he crossed the tape at the Mayor Daley Marathon (now the Bank of America Chicago Marathon), Mark Stanforth, 58, can still remember as much about the events preceding his 1978 victory as he does the moments during his 26.2-mile trek through the city.

"I remember there was a protest," Stanforth says from his home in Colorado Springs, where he's retired following 15 years coaching cross-country and track at the United States Air Force Academy. "Now people would laugh at it, but some were saying that noon was too late (to start the race) and 10 dollars was too much (to enter)."

With thousands donning black arm bands and objecting to the early-afternoon start to the 2nd annual event, Stanforth and 5,200 others finally began at 10:30 a.m. and paid the \$10 entry fee (U.S. runners paid \$110 and international runners paid \$130 to compete this year) in the first marathon in U.S. history to begin from a dual start.

Although the supremely fit 28-year-old, who, for five of six weeks leading up to the race, had run more than 150 miles per week in the 100-plus-degree heat of Phoenix, Ariz., the conditions on Sept. 24 were anything but ideal.

"I think by the finish it was in the 80s with 80 percent humidity," says Stanforth, who was working part-time at a bank as part of the Olympic Job Support Program. "It was really hot."

The same cannot be said of his start. "I just felt horrible from (miles) 5-7," he recalls. "At 7, I was already a mile behind the leaders. I didn't know how long I could keep going. I just said to myself, 'Start running, you dumb@%&#!'"

So he did, setting a blistering pace from miles 15-20 and pulling away. "I didn't catch the leaders until somewhere after 20," Stanforth says. "They were hurting worse than I was."

He recorded a then-personal-best 2:19.20, and his 4 minute, 53-second edge over second-place finisher Barney Klecker still ranks as the second largest margin of victory in the race's 30-year history.

But unlike Kenya's Patrick Ivuti, who received \$125,000 for last year's photo-finish win over Moroccan Jaouad Gharib, all Stanforth earned for his effort was an offer by race officials to fly him and his wife, Pat, back to Chicago for the following year's event.

"I always joke that I won before the good guys started," Stanforth says. "The prize money now attracts a little different level of competition."

A veteran of nine marathons, including two in Honolulu and one in Boston, Stanforth never ran the Chicago Marathon again. But the memory of crossing the line and being greeted by his younger brother, Todd, was something they both vividly remember.

"I'd never been to Chicago," says Todd Stanforth, who made the 150-mile drive northeast from his home in rural Kewanee, Ill. "I didn't get to see much but I got to see him finish."