

Who'da Think It!

by John Farrow

This past weekend we were once again reminded of the transcending ability of sports to enable those who persevere to rise above improbable odds and accomplish feats seemingly beyond reach.

In Scotland at the British Open golf tournament with its field of the world's finest golfers, little-known Paul Lawrie began the final day 10 strokes behind the leader. He finished his round and then sat back to watch the rest of the field. Before the day was done, the leaders had collapsed and Lawrie found himself in a playoff for the championship, which he won by 3 shots.

That same day, David Cone was set to pitch for the New York Yankees against the Montreal Expos at Yankee Stadium on Yogi Berra Day. On hand were Don Larsen, the only man to ever pitch a perfect game in the World Series, and Berra, his catcher in that momentous game. Twenty-seven Montreal batters later, Cone himself had pitched a perfect game, only the 14th such feat this century. At 36, he is also the oldest man to pitch a perfect game since Cy Young in 1904.

Runners have similar guides. Roger Bannister was supposed to have a successful, albeit quiet, career in medicine. He did. Wes Santee and John Landy were in supposed to set the world's track records on fire. They did. But it is Bannister we remember as the Oxford medical student who became the first man to run a mile under four minutes and forever change the face of track.

And then there is Billy Mills. A little-known runner from the Pine Ridge Indian reservation, he took up running to get in shape for boxing. In the 1964 Olympic 10,000-meter final against the world's finest, he was given no chance.

He ran the first 5,000 meters within a second of his personal best at that distance. Most of us, in a similar situation, might simply say "Uh oh!" and ease off. Not Mills. He ran the race of his life and is still the only American man to win the Olympic 10,000-meter gold medal.

As Yogi once said, "It ain't over 'til it's over."

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Albuquerque Road Runners Club