

PINE NUTS

Joe Tahoe makes passionate appeal to Queen of England

Along with Race Director Les Wright, we have Pheidippides to thank for Saturday's Lake Tahoe Marathon. Back in 490 BC, Darius, the emperor of Persia, was attempting to conquer the Greeks, when he got short-sheeted at Marathon. The joyful Greek generals, having not a cell phone to their names, ordered a private by the name of Pheidippides to RUN the 26 miles to Athens and deliver the happy news. Pheidippides complied, ran the distance, and with what little breath he had left, shouted the news, then died.

Word spread far and wide, not only that the Greeks had won at Marathon, but that 26 miles was as far as a man could run without expiring on the spot.

For untold decades nobody came along brave enough to try to run a marathon. But eventually a young daring buck took a flyer, ran a marathon, and lived to tell about it.

In the first modern Olympics of 1896 the marathon was resurrected, and has remained the most revered event of the Games to this day.

Then along came the queen. It so happened in 1906, when the Games were held in London, that the marathon started at Windsor Castle and the organizers designed it to finish in front of the queen's box. Well, they had to lengthen the marathon by two tenths of a mile to accommodate the queen.

Now two tenths of a mile might not sound like a long distance to you, but when you've already run 26 miles, that 385 yards seems like egregious embroidery, especially when the queen's box is no longer there, not to mention the queen.

So I composed a letter to the queen asking her to appeal to the Olympic Committee to rescind those two tenths of a mile. I shall include a copy of that letter here.

Dear Queen Elizabeth,

With all due respect, your mother caused the marathon run to be lengthened two tenths of a mile back in 1906, when organizers of the Olympics decided to extend the race to finish in front of the Royal Box. That was good for the London Olympics, but the distance has STUCK! And just between you and me, maam, those 385 extra yards came close to closing me out last Saturday here at the Tahoe Marathon. After the 26 mile marker my legs sued me for divorce, and came within an ace of winning that suit.

In the name of the great Greek runner, Pheidippides, I beseech you to make a personal appeal to the Olympic Organizing Committee to repeal that superfluous two tenths of a mile. You would be doing me a favor, not to

mention the millions of marathoners worldwide who would send you flowers, and the thousands of British pedestrians who would cheer you when they saw you passing along in your carriage.

Sincerely,

Joe Tahoe, Lifeguard emeritus, Dig Me Beach, Lake Tahoe

PS: Next time you get to the Lake of the Sky, look me up at my lifeguard tower and I'll pour you a hot toddy...