

Clarence DeMar

Clarence DeMar was a U.S. marathoner, winner of seven Boston Marathons, and Bronze medalist at the 1924 Paris Olympics.

When did he do this? 1910s-1930s

How old was he? 20s-40s

Clarence Harrison DeMar

Born: 1888 in Ohio

Died: 1958 in Reading, Massachusetts

Biography

What was Clarence DeMar known for?

Clarence DeMar became a famous cross-country runner, winning seven Boston Marathons as well as a Bronze medal at the 1924 Paris Olympics.

Growing Up

Clarence DeMar was born in 1888 in a little town outside of Cincinnati, OH. With the death of his father when he was young, the family moved to Massachusetts where he grew up. As a child, Clarence was a very slow runner so he never dreamed of becoming a professional runner. Yet, he and his friends dreamed of becoming rich and famous athletes when they got older.

Becoming a Professional Runner

In 1910, DeMar ran his first Boston Marathon as a young man in his 20s. Upon his return to the race the following year, official doctors at the scene discovered that DeMar had a heart murmur. He was warned to drop out if he was fatigued or face death. DeMar chose to run. Two hours, 21 minutes, and 39 seconds later, Clarence DeMar won the race.

DeMar won the Boston Marathon six more times between 1922 and 1930 (he was 41 years old when he won his last Boston Marathon race). His record of seven wins in the men's open has never been broken and he remains the oldest winner of the event ever. In addition, DeMar won a bronze medal at the French Summer Olympics in 1924.

Moving to Keene

In 1929, DeMar accepted a teaching position at Keene Normal School (now Keene State College), teaching printing and industrial history. With DeMar on staff, the once female-dominated campus witnessed a dramatic increase in its male student population. DeMar also coached the school's cross-country team. In his autobiography, DeMar shared the fact that he ran, walked, and hitchhiked between Boston and Keene each week.

Remembering Clarence DeMar

Clarence DeMar was 69 years old when he ran his last race in 1958. He died of stomach cancer not long after. In 2000, he was inducted into the National Distance Running Hall of Fame. The Clarence DeMar Marathon has been held in Keene annually since 1978 in his honor (and as a virtual race during the coronavirus pandemic in 2020).