

HOW A CHAMPION RUNNER TRAINS

The picturesque village of Herbertstown, astride the main Limerick-Hospital highway, was the venue on Christmas Eve for three road races under the auspices of Herbertstown athletic and cycling club.

These were held over a one mile circuit, starting and finishing in the main street, where an inscribed banner, bedecked with festive decorations, welcomed all and sundry to this attractive East Limerick village last Sunday.

All Limerick's leading runners were present in force, spear-headed by the six times Irish champion, John Downes of Kilmallock A.C., a 23-year-old plasterer from Kilfinane. John got a great reception as he romped home to win the senior event.

THE DOWNES' STORY.

The "Nationalist" representative at the afternoon's sport later had a special interview with John Downes in the local Parochial Hall, while outside the excited cheering of the children signalled the arrival of the "Santa Claus Express," with a Christmas present for each pupil (under 10 years) in Herbertstown National Schools.

John is Ireland's leading runner over distances of from three, to ten miles. He began his athletic career four years ago, concentrating on distance events, for which he felt he was best suited, because the cross-country programmes each winter also dovetailed into this schedule.

But after three years of slogging round a field every Sunday John decided he was getting nowhere. He felt his running was all right—it was his training that was at fault. So off he went to consult P. J. O'Sullivan of Mungret (Limerick) who, with his brother, Benny, were then sweeping all before them in track and cross-country competitions. After questioning John Downes on his training methods, P. J. replied: "Come out of the field on to the roads. That's where you'll train from now on, and here's your weekly schedules." John glanced at a sheet of paper thrust into his hand by O'Sullivan. It reads as follows:

Training Schedule Monday to Friday—Two miles jog every night for one or two weeks (as a preliminary initiation) and then when this preliminary process was completed:—

Monday night—One mile warmer, followed by three single fast miles (with intervals), trotting back to start after each.

Tuesday night—11 to 13 bursts of 500 yards, trotting back after each to the start.

Wednesday—Seven half miles fast (trotting back after each to start).

Thursday night—Three single fast miles (trotting back to start after each).

Friday night—Seven half miles, trotting back after each to start.

Saturday night—Rest for Sunday's competition.

Sunday—Cross-country or track competition.

FORTY-FIVE MILES PER WEEK.

Total mileage for week:—Monday

(seven miles), Tuesday (12 miles), Wednesday (seven miles), Thursday (six miles), Friday (seven miles), Sunday (six miles). Grand total (45 miles approximately).

This training is done each evening from 5.30 to 7.00 p.m. (before tea), following which John has a brisk rub down and uses embrocation if needed. Said John: "The first two months is torture! But then you get toughened up and don't mind. It goes on all the year round, so that you haven't time to go stale—the athletes' nightmare!"

SHOES.

Light leather uppers with hard rubber soles and two rubber heel insets to absorb shock of road training.

This is training of the Herb Elliott system—a success through pain formula! Incidentally, Herb passed it on when last in Dublin, and that's how P. J. O'Sullivan and John Downes acquired it and now if all other young athletes imbibe it (by courtesy of the "Nationalist") it shouldn't be too long before we have a race of super runners in Munster and South-East Leinster.

Lastly, in the midst of his athletic triumphs John Downes hasn't forgotten his national obligations. He's an active "Sectioneer" of the 14th Infantry Battalion (Limerick), being attached to the Kilmallock Centre. That also makes John eligible to compete in this season's Command and All-Army Cross-Country Championships, with the first six home being selected to travel abroad in April, 1962, for the International Military Cross-Country Championship scheduled for Portugal next Spring. Thank you "SS" John Downes.