

Cheers for McCluskey

Plucky Bids Praised by Fans Even Though Joe Has Yet to Win

By CHARLES E. PARKER.

That rather hard-boiled paraphrase, "All the world loves a winner," appears to need a bit of editing when applied to indoor track, for the young man who has been receiving the longest and heartiest cheers of the current season has yet to win a race.

His name is Joe McCluskey. He has engaged in three contests leading up to his appearance on Saturday night in the two-mile run of the Millrose A. A. games in the Garden. He finished third in his initial effort—a 3,000-meter event in which the winner set a new American record; he finished second in his next start—a two-mile run in which the winner set a new armory mark—and was second again in a two-mile test last Saturday, when the winner set a new meet record for that distance.

Had the foregoing paraphrase applied, the big cheers would have gone not to McCluskey but to the respective winners of those races. But they didn't.

In the first on the list it was the persistent and repeated challenging by McCluskey that made the race a thriller and sponsored what proved to be an American record race. Even when announcement came that his conquerors, Archie San Romani and Don Lash, finishing almost in a dead heat, had wiped Jole Ray's last record from the books, applause was longest and loudest for McCluskey.

In his second start Joe challenged early and often, but Lash opened up an 80-yard lead. As the race progressed, however, Joe began eating up those separating yards. He had consumed 70 of the 80 as Lash hit the final turn and, unable to overhaul him, his gallant effort once again sponsored applause far greater than accorded the victor.

Joe Cheered By Boston Fans.

Joe went to Boston for his third race of the year, and his reward in cheers was even greater. On this occasion it was through a pack-leading effort almost all the way and a courageous, albeit losing, attempt to fight off Lash's final spurt. It wasn't until they were four strides from the tape that Lash, the world recordholder, nipped him, and the salvos for Joe were the longest and loudest of the night. Lash was voted the outstanding competitor of the meet, but McCluskey was a close runner-up—28 1-3 votes to 23.

And it is because this yet-to-win athlete has captured fandom's fancy that Saturday night's Millrose two-mile run assumes a place of primary importance in the reckoning of those who are to cram the Garden benches.

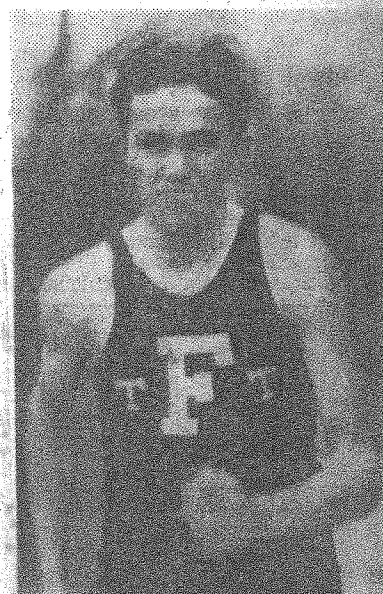
Don Lash, the recordholder, again will be among Joe's rivals, and there will be such other talented distance men as Norman Bright, Tommy Deckard, Floyd Lochner and Bill Feller. It hasn't the number of record men that are to be found in the sprints, the hurdles, the mile and the high jump, but because of Joe McCluskey's plucky history—his record-forging and his almost-winning efforts over the recordholder last month—interest in the two-mile run has an appeal not to be found in any other contest.

1937

C. E. Parker, N.Y. Herald Tribune sports writer

referring to Millrose Games at Madison Sq. Garden and Prout Games in Boston

Improving with Age



Nine years is a long time to stay on top in distance-running, but Fordham Joe McCluskey not only stays on top—he continues to improve! Although nosed out by Don Lash in Boston last week, McCluskey ran his two miles in 9:04.8. He had never beaten 9:11 previously. And Joe promises to upset Don in Millrose meet at the Garden Saturday. Photos show McCluskey as boy wonder of Fordham track nine years ago and as he looks today.

Local Sport Chatter

Our sports columns this week have been filled with the latest exploit of the redoubtable Joe McCluskey but his achievement in running a 9:04.3 two-mile at Boston last Saturday was truly great and merits a lot of notice... here's an account by Roy Murpton of the Worcester Telegram that we think should be passed on to our readers... it's seldom we have opportunity to brag about a native son but Joe has certainly given us reason to feel proud....

"Donald Lash and Glenn Cunningham raced on with the major victories in Saturday's hair-hoisting Prout games at Boston—the first stop on the annual winter tour for the short pants and spiked shoes brigade; but it was a grand old veteran, Shuffin' Joseph McCluskey, who seemed to provide the chief thrill for the Garden's overflow congregation of more than 13,000 spectators.

"Joe didn't win but then, nobody had expected he would. However, he did run by far the greatest race of his long and colorful career, only to discover that it lacked a step or two of being fast enough to stave off the last rush of the favored Lash in that blistering two-mile scramble.

"McCluskey long has been a prime favorite with the track pecans, particularly those in Boston. The long-legged, shuffling lad who once carried the colors of Fordham always has been an outstanding gamester among the footracers and he has provided his full share of excitement and victories through the years.

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"Joe is only 26 now, but he's really an old man among the distance runners, for he has been pounding the big league boards and cinders, winter and summer, for nine years. That's a long time. It is only reasonable to believe that such rugged campaigning should take a heavy toll on his speed and stamina. So, in the last couple of seasons, Joe has been generally relegated to the also rans.

"But the track enthusiasts are a loyal lot. They don't forget their hero easily, not even when they are on the backstretch of their careers and obviously fading. So when Fordham Joe moved out to take the lead shortly before the halfway mark of that hectic Boston two-miler, the customers leaped to their feet and thundered a tremendous ovation at him.

"It is likely there wasn't a man or woman among those 13,000 who believed Joe could stay there. Immediately back of him were such great two-milers as Lash, the world record holder; Tommy Deckard, another great one from Indiana, Lloyd Lockner of St. Louis and Ray Sears of Butler. Each is rated superior to McCluskey these days.

"But Joe surprised everyone by staying with all these runners as they jockeyed back and forth through the fierce pace and as the lead frequently shifted. And when McCluskey moved back in front two laps from home, the crowd let out a roar which was exceeded only as the ex-Fordhamite fought off his challengers.

"It appeared then that what had seemed impossible was going to happen. They weren't going to coach Joey. But Lash, great champion, that he is, came off the last corner with terrific speed, drew even with Joe a few scant steps from home and nipped him at the wire.

"Lash's 9:04.6 clocking was the second fastest ever produced in Boston. But it didn't seem nearly as emphatic as McCluskey's similar figure. Don had run faster previously; yet Joe, who has been campaigning for nine long years, never had been able to break 9:11 until this race. His was the greatest performance. And that two-mile race was perhaps the most exciting ever run chiefly because Joe made it that way.

"The sports writers of Boston, basking afterward for the outstanding athlete of the games, awarded the Fitzgerald trophy to Lash. He was great; there's no mistaking this. But if I had been voting, I'd have dropped one in the box for McCluskey. And I think most of the 13,000 customers felt the same way about it."

Undated
Newspaper
article re
1937 Prout
Games, Boston
& Joe McCluskey