

## *Out of the bushes, ahead of the ambulance, and into the spotlight: milestones in the history of women's (mostly distance) running, Part I*

BY CHARLES HOWE

- 1896  
*April 11* Stamata Rovithi, an impoverished 35-year-old mother who had lost one of her two children the preceding January, attempts to enter the first Olympic Marathon, but women are not allowed, and her application is rejected.
- Instead, Rovithi runs the marathon course the day after the official race. Departing from Marathon in the morning, she arrives at the outskirts of Athens 5½ hours later. Along the way, she had stopped to watch the ships sail by.
- 1926  
*October 3* Briton Violet Percy runs a marathon in London, from Windsor to Chiswick, in 3:40:22. Authoritative information is scant, and the performance is still regarded with some skepticism, however, this is often given as the first world marathon best for women.
- 1928 Under pressure from the Fédération Sportive Féminine Internationale (FSFI), women's athletic events are included for the first time at the Olympic Games in Amsterdam: the 100 meter dash, 800 meter run, 4 x 100 meter relay, high jump, and discus throw. After the 800 meters, several competitors lay down on the grass in exhaustion from the intense heat, and require assistance. Reflecting the appropriate dismay of respectable society at this unsightly display, antifeminist elements of the press seize on the incident as evidence of the unfitness of women for endurance events; for instance, the London *Daily Mail* quotes doctors who claim that races over 800 meters could cause premature aging. Even more in the extreme, International Olympic Committee (IOC) President Comte Baillet-Latour proposes returning the Olympics to ancient Greek tradition by eliminating *all* women's events. This fails, but the women's 800 meters is dropped from the Olympic program until 1960, when it is revived after long arguments and pressure from the East Block countries.
- c.1960 Road races in the U.S. and central Europe begin allowing women to participate. Often they are merely tolerated, as unofficial participants, and are usually scored together with men, or omitted from results entirely. Few take part, coming mostly from the ranks of active or retired middle distance runners.
- 1963  
*December 16* American Merry Lepper runs the Western Hemisphere Marathon in Culver City, California, in 3:37:07. Since women are not allowed to enter, Lepper, a 20-year-old college student, hides near the start with her friend Lyn Carman, a 26-year-old mother of three. When the starting gun goes off, the two leap from the bushes and join the race. Carman drops out at 18 miles with leg cramps, but Lepper is among the 35 finishers from a starting field of 67.
- This is a well-established event, in which several world best times have been recorded, but little else is known about Lepper, and her performance is also regarded as somewhat suspect.
- 1964  
*May 23* In what is generally regarded as the first authenticated world best for the women's marathon, Briton Dale Grieg, 27, becomes the first woman to run a marathon under 3½ hours, with a time of 3:27:45 at Ryde on the Isle of Wight. Running as an unofficial entrant, she is allowed to start four minutes in front of the men, and is followed by an ambulance the entire way. The British press hail her as the first woman to run a marathon in under 3½ hours. A secretary by occupation, Grieg set the record while on vacation.
- Grieg was one of a set of twins born in Paisley, Scotland. Although there was no sporting tradition in her family, and few athletic opportunities for women apart from short dashes, she joined the local harriers club, and later helped found another club, the Tannahill Harriers. She won the 1960, '62, '64, and '68 Scottish National Cross-Country Championships, and was one of the first women known to train over long distances.

- 1964  
July 21  
New Zealander Mildred “Millie” Sampson, 31, runs 3:19:33 at the Owairaka Marathon in Auckland. Sampson had taken up running just four years previously, winning the Auckland 880-yard championship in 1960, before turning to longer distances.
- 1967  
May 6  
Running as an official competitor, 13-year-old, 79 lb. Maureen “Mo” Wilton finishes the Toronto Marathon in a new world best time of 3:15:23, coming in sixth overall. Wilton had started running just three years prior after watching her brother compete, whereupon she decided to join him in training. She won the 1966 Canadian AAU cross-country championship, but because she was only 12 at the time, she was declared too young to be allowed to win, and the championship medal was awarded to the second place finisher.
- After her Toronto performance, Wilton stopped competing and dropped from public sight. Here whereabouts and status today are unknown.
- 1967-71  
(W. Germany)  
News reports of Wilton’s achievement are received with skepticism in Europe. To demonstrate its validity, German physician Dr. Ernst van Aaken, an advocate of women’s running, asks two female runners, Anni Pede, a 27-year-old mother of two, and middle distance runner Monika Boers, 19, to participate in a marathon in his hometown of Waldniel.
- German Athletic Association (DLV) rules did not allow female entrants, but race organizers tolerate their participation as unofficial competitors, and they are allowed to start 30 meters behind the men. Pede comes third overall in a new world best time of 3:07:26, while Boers finishes in 3:19:36.
- Under a similar unofficial arrangement, 51 women from five countries start the inaugural Schwarzwald Marathon on October 6, 1968; 49 finish, and the local press decalre the event a big success. The next year, the race organizing committee applies to the DLV for permission to allow women to enter. The request is turned down, just as it would be again in 1970, but the DLV expresses its support for the unofficial entrants, and does not threaten any sanction.
- In 1969, 876 runners participate, with 53 female finishers, and the next year, total turnout is 1,151 runners from eleven countries; 62 women start, and just one fails to finish. The Schwarzwald Marathon, according to the German running magazine *Condition*, is the biggest in the world. Finally on January 27, 1971, the DLV permits women competitors, thus becoming the first national federation in the world to do so.
- 1967-72  
(USA)  
Events at the 1967 Boston Marathon exerted a profound and enduring effect on the progress of women’s distance running.
- Founded in 1897 and conducted without interruption every year since, this race is arguably second in prestige only to the Olympic Marathon. In 1951, a woman “in red” is said to have run in it, but her name and time are unknown. In 1966, Roberta “Bobbi” Gibb tried to enter, but was rejected with the comment that women were neither able nor allowed to run a marathon. Undeterred, Gibb hid behind a bush, then trotted up behind the field of 415 men. She overtook 290 runners before arriving at the finish in 3:21:40. Race director Will Cloney denied any woman had taken part, but was later forced to admit as much. Gibb did it again in 1967, finishing with an unofficial time of 3:27:17.
- The experience of 20-year-old college student Kathrine Switzer that same year had immeasurably wider consequences. Because of the theatrical nature of her story, it has been retold many times, and inaccuracies have inevitably arisen. The account presented here is summarized from an excerpt of *The Spirit of the Marathon*, by Gail Waesche Kislevitz, which Switzer has posted at her own [web site](#).



Switzer submitted her entry for the 1967 Boston Marathon under the name “K.V. Switzer,” not to hide her identity, as some have suggested, but simply because that was how she signed her name. Her application was accepted, and she was given an official race number (261). Four miles into the race, a flatbed truck bearing photographers clambered by, while a bus with journalists, as well as Cloney and assistant director Jock Semple, followed behind. The photographers shouted “There’s a girl in the race” and started taking pictures, while the journalists began needling Cloney and Semple. After a while, Semple erupted. He leapt from the bus, grabbed Switzer, spun her around, and screamed “Get the hell out of my race and give me that number.” Switzer was terrified and tried to get away, but Semple had hold of her shirt and wouldn’t let go. Switzer was accompanied her coach, Arnie Briggs, and boyfriend Tom Miller, a 235 lb. hammer thrower. Briggs

attempted to wrestle Semple away from her but was unable, whereupon Miller slammed into Semple and sent him flying. Briggs shouted “Run like hell” to Switzer, which she did, eventually coming in at 4:20 to become the first woman to officially (if not legally) finish the race. The Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) honored her accomplishment by suspending her.

The episode was captured by the photographers and journalists, and pictures of the incident were circulated worldwide, resulting in embarrassment for the organizers and widespread public sympathy for Switzer, but more importantly, it caused road races to begin opening entry up to women, accelerating the development of the sport by years.

Switzer was herself transformed by the experience into a passionate and tireless advocate for women’s sports; remarkably, her impact had only just begun. Immediately upon returning to Syracuse University, she and Briggs founded the Syracuse Track Club, encouraged women to join, and held regular meets which offered them full opportunities for participation. She was not welcome at Boston and did not run there in 1968 or 1969, years in which 3, then 4 women took part unofficially, but she returned in 1970, and her time of 3:34 was officially recorded. In 1971, Switzer, Nina Kuisick, and Sara Mae Berman all ran Boston, then decided afterwards to unite in their efforts to get the race officially open to women, and beyond that, to get long distance races (including the marathon) added to the women’s Olympic program.

Finally, in 1972, the Boston Athletic Association bowed to intense pressure, and allowed female entrants. Eight women toed the starting line, with Kuscsik coming first in 3:10:21. Jock Semple offered a sincere welcome to Switzer, and all the other women as well, telling them he was very impressed with their performances. As Switzer put it in a telling phrase, “We grew from there,” and they eventually became good friends, such that by 1981, she was invited to a signing session for Semple’s book, [\*Just Call Me Jock\*](#). Organizers of the event persuaded Switzer to jump out from behind the curtains, wearing a gray sweat suit just like the one she had on at Boston in 1967, and yell at Semple ‘Get outta here, you’re not official, give me that book!’ After getting over his initial chagrin, Semple joined in the laughter.

1970  
*February 28*

16-year-old Caroline Walker runs 3:02:53 at a marathon in Seaside, Oregon. Walker is said to have stood just 5’ tall and weighed 89 lb.

1971  
*May 9*

Competing as an unofficial participant, 18-year-old Beth Bonner runs 3:01:42 at the AAU eastern regional championship in Philadelphia’s Fairmont Park.

1971  
August 31

Adrienne Beames, a 30-year-old mother of three, is the first woman to run a marathon under 3 hours, but her performance is denied recognition by deep hostility toward women's marathon running at the time.

All her attempts to enter an official marathon having been denied, she and her coach organized their own race, an invitational event to which a number of male competitors were invited. Over a certified course at Werribee, Australia, Beames ran 2:46:30, but the press dismissed it as a "time trial," and doubt was cast on her ability, since she had claimed to have run several world records over various distances, but never in competition. Any chance she had of running in the 1972 Olympics was denied when local officials suspended her for competing in a race in Sydney without their permission.

Embittered by these experiences, Beames moved to America to compete on the U.S. road racing circuit. In 1977, as an official entrant at a marathon in Phoenix, she ran 2:46:25, thus demonstrating her 1971 record time was more than feasible.

*Note: since Beames' record was disallowed, several other athletes have been credited with world best times that are slower. Nonetheless, each of these performances remains significant, and their 'backstory' alone merits inclusion here.*

1971  
September 19

Beth Bonner runs 2:55:22 to win the New York City Marathon in Central Park, followed by Nina Kuscsik in 2:56:04. Overall, they place 34th and 35th out of 163 finishers.

1971  
October

Vincent Chiappetta, president of the Road Runners Club of America (RRCA) and a strong supporter of women's long distance running, organizes an unofficial American Women's Marathon Championship. Since it was registered as a club race, sanction was unnecessary. Six women started and four finish, with Sara Berman coming first, followed by Nina Kuscsik.

**PROFILE**  
Cheryl  
Bridges



When Cheryl "Cherrie" Bridges started running as a high school sophomore in 1963 after reading an article about jogging by Bill Bowerman, it was a way to lose weight and escape an abusive home. Her school board required her to train on the opposite side of school grounds from the boys, but despite this isolation, Bridges persevered, found that she was (by her modest assessment) "reasonably successful" at running cross-country, and became more serious about her running. This paid off as she became the first woman to receive an athletic scholarship at a public university, running on teams where she was the only woman.

Bridges placed in the top ten 13 consecutive years at the AAU national cross-country championships, and competed five times at the World Championships (1968-70, '74, '76), coming in as high as 4th in 1969, and in the top 20 on two other occasions. She ran the 1970 Culver City Marathon as training, but was forced to walk/jog the last 6 miles. Angered she had not been able to run all the way, she returned the next year and ran a world best of 2:49:40. The only problem this time was some harassment from a male competitor at the 23-mile mark.

In 1976, she moved on to college teaching and administration, as well as the design and marketing of athletic products and clothes. In 1986, Bridges was diagnosed with ventricular tachycardia, told to stop running, and placed on medication

which caused numerous side effects, but she was able to run once again after undergoing a corrective operation in 1994.

## PROFILE

Kathrine  
Switzer

After women won the right to compete officially at Boston in 1972, Switzer continued to fight for women's competitive opportunities, but realized that, at age 25, she was in her prime as an athlete, and didn't want waste her main chance. In her own words, she "probably [trained] too much," running 20+ miles most every Sunday, and as many as 8 marathons a year, but it all paid off, as she won the 1974 New York City Marathon in 3:07:19, then ran a PR 2:51:37 at Boston in 1975, a year in which she was ranked sixth in the world and third in the U.S.

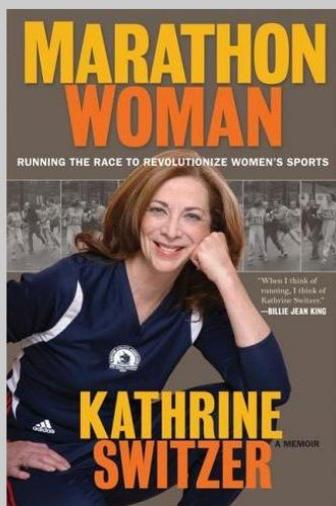
Switzer was proud of her accomplishment, and would continue to run, eventually completing a total of 35 marathons, but by the end of 1975 she had much bigger things in mind, and no intention of merely treasuring her achievements:

*"I thought of the time I could only run a mile, then 3 miles, then ran my first marathon in 4:20 only eight years ago and here I broke the three hour mark. I am constantly amazed at what the human body can do. I felt if I could do it on my limited talent, then thousands of women could do it too, and they deserved the chance to try. I really wanted to concentrate on making that happen."*

Simply put, Switzer was the right woman, with the right skills (journalism and public relations), in the right place, at the right time, and she threw herself into the promotion of women's running with the same "vengeance" that she trained with. She created a running program for cosmetics giant Avon which included the Avon International Women's Circuit, a series of running events (10K runs and 5K walks) for women in many countries. In 1978, the first Avon International Marathon in Atlanta was added, featuring 20 of the world's top female distance runners. Switzer said she was most proud of this program because it was a major factor in the inclusion of a women's marathon in the 1984 Olympics Games, but quite clearly, the larger impact of her work was on societal and cultural norms worldwide:

*"The Avon program and the work I do with RYKA women's sports shoes allowed me to introduce running to women in 30 countries around the world, giving them the tools, motivation, and the courage to run or walk a race. I've seen 400- pound women show up at a clinic with sullen faces of disbelief, wearing flip flops and eleven weeks later they are sporting smiles and a medal around their necks from their first race."*

Even more broadly, Switzer was Director of Avon Sports Programs from 1977-1986, and as such was responsible not just for the company's support of women's running, but title sponsorship of Women's Championship Tennis, the developmental Avon Futures Tennis circuit, the World Figure Skating Championship, the Women's International Bowling Congress Championship, plus miscellaneous equestrian and track and field events. At the program's height in the 1980s, Switzer oversaw an annual budget over \$9 million.



All good things must come to an end, and most programs were discontinued in 1986, whereupon Switzer left Avon to pursue other business options through her own company, Atlanta Sports Promotions, which she had formed in 1982. She served as a television commentator for ABC, NBC, CBS, and Turner Sports at events including the Olympic and Goodwill Games, as well as 27 Boston, 16 New York City, 19 Pittsburgh, 13 Los Angeles, and four Chicago Marathons, as well as hundreds of local road races; she won an Emmy Award for her coverage of the 1997 Los Angeles Marathon.

Switzer's writing has also motivated and informed countless women worldwide to take up running or walking as a cost-effective and time-efficient means of obtaining health, optimum weight, and self-esteem. Her articles have appeared in the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Parade*, *Women*

Today, *Runner's World*, *Running Times*, plus other magazines. She has been featured in many of these same publications, as well as on numerous radio and TV shows, including *Oprah*, *Today*, *Good Morning America*, and *Nightline*. Her book, [\*Running and Walking for Women Over 40: the Road to Sanity and Vanity\*](#), is a best-seller in both the United States and New Zealand, and has also been published in Australia, Germany, and in Hungary. Switzer has just finished [\*Marathon Woman: Running the Race to Revolutionize Women's Sports\*](#), a concurrent autobiography and history of women's running (see the promotion schedule [here](#)). In the future, she plans additional books on women's health, fitness and longevity, as well as the social and economic impact of women's sports.

In a remarkable turn of events, Avon decided to revive its sponsorship of women's running in 1997. With Switzer at the helm once again, the company rebuilt the program under the banner of the Avon Running Global Women's Circuit, with an aim of giving women around the world access to fitness and health through running and walking programs. Today, Avon's sponsorship of women's running is limited to the global portion of Avon Running, which continues in nine countries. As president of Atlanta Sports Promotions, Switzer continues to advise these various countries in a consulting capacity.

Switzer has received numerous citations and awards for her efforts in advancing sporting opportunities for women, including the New York State Regents Medal of Excellence, the Billie Jean King Award from the Women's Sports Foundation, an Honorary Fellow from the National Association of Girls and Women, and was named *Runner's World* Runner of the Decade. In 1998, she was part of the inaugural class inducted into the National Long Distance Running Hall of Fame.

Kathrine Switzer still runs six miles a day. She is married to Dr. Roger Robinson, a professor, author, and noted age-group runner. The couple divides their time between New York's Hudson Valley and Wellington, New Zealand.

It is without exaggeration that Gail Kislewitz writes, "Every time a female runner enters a marathon, a small offering should be made to Kathrine Switzer."

1972  
June 23

Title IX, a 37-word section of the 1972 U.S. Education Amendments enacted on June 23, states that "No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance."

Although most commonly applied high school and collegiate athletics, where it has had a profound effect, the original statute made no reference to athletics specifically. Rather, it covers all educational activities, and complaints under Title IX alleging discrimination in fields such as science or math education, or other aspects of academic life such as access to health care and dormitory facilities, are not unheard of. It also applies to non-sports activities such as school bands and cheerleaders.

1972  
September 9

The Soviet Union's Lyudmila Bragina gives a commanding performance in the inaugural women's 1,500 meter run at the Munich Olympic Games. Bragina breaks her own 48-day-old world record with a 4:06.5 in her first heat, runs another record (4:05.1) in the semifinal, then produces a stunning 4:01.4 en route to the gold medal. In this memorable race, the top 7 finishers were all under 4:06.5.

Bragina was Soviet 1,500 meter champion in 1968 and '70, and placed 4th and 6th at the 1969 and '71 European Championships, respectively. She was Soviet champion again in 1973-74, but by 1975 had begun to be eclipsed by her countrywoman, Tatyana Kazankina, and could manage "only" 5th at the 1976 Montreal Olympics. Bragina wasn't entirely spent, however, as just a week later, she shattered the world 3,000 meter world record by an incredible 18.2 seconds, or 3.46%, a margin of improvement unprecedented for both men and women across all distances under 10,000 meters.

1972

Six women competing in the New York City Marathon stage a sit-down protest of an AAU ruling that they must start 10 minutes ahead of the men. When the time elapses, they get up and run with the men. 10 minutes are added to their finishing times, the women sue, and simultaneous start times soon become the rule.

**PROFILE**  
Miki Gorman

*“I can’t remember what I was doing before running. I guess shopping, sewing, watching TV – gaining nothing.” –Miki Gorman*

On December 2, 1973, Michiko “Miki” Gorman, a 38-year-old housewife standing just 5’½” and weighing 86 lb., ran 2:46:36 on the same Culver City Marathon course where Cheryl Bridges had set a world best two years previously.

Born in China, Gorman grew up in postwar Japan, emigrated to the U.S. as an adult, and only began running when she was 33, just as light jogging. She went on to win both the Boston (in ’74 and ’77) and New York (’76 and ’77) Marathons twice, the only woman to accomplish this, and is the only woman to win both events in the same year. Her PR of 2:39:11 came in winning New York in 1976 at the age of 41, after taking time off for the birth of a child which arrived in January 1975. Her last race was the 1982 Tokyo International Marathon, at age 47. Unfortunately, a knee injury and the demands of motherhood forced her to give up running, but she began once again after a long layoff, this time to lose weight. Gorman was inducted into the RRCA Hall of Fame in 2001.

1974-77

Not surprisingly, with wider opportunities being made available to female marathon runners in this period, there was a spate of new world-best performances, as the record was traded back-and-forth among several individuals:

TIME	ATHLETE	LOCATION	DATE
2:46:24	Chantal Langlace (France)	Nivelles, Belgium	27 October 1974
2:43:55	Jacqueline Hansen (USA)	Culver City CA, USA	1 December 1974
2:42:24	Liane Winter (W. Germany)	Boston MA, USA	21 April 1975
2:40:16	Christa Vahlensieck (W. Germany)	Dulmen, W. Germany	3 May 1975
2:38:19	Hansen	Eugene OR, USA	12 October 1975
2:35:16	Langlace	Oyarzun, Spain	1 May 1977
2:34:48	Vahlensieck	Berlin, W. Germany	10 October 1977

Langlace ran her first marathon in a time of 3:10 in 1972, at age 17. She came second at the 1974 Waldniel (W. Germany) Marathon, then ran her first world-best just five weeks later in Belgium at the Etienne Gally Memorial race. Three years later she set a second record, but a ruptured Achilles tendon in 1978 prevented her from making any further improvements. She did recover to set the world 100 km record twice, in 1980 and 1984. A physical education teacher, Langlace ran the 1995 Paris Marathon in 2:42:06, at the age of 40.

By comparison, Hansen took up distance running at age 23, in 1971, but wasted no time as she won the first marathon she ever entered, at Culver City the next year. Hansen explains: “Cheryl Bridges and I were teammates in the L.A. Track Club (though with different coaches), and I went out watch and lend support to her at the 1972 Culver City Marathon, where she became the first woman to break 2:50. That provided the inspiration which sent me to the starting line the next year. It was my first road race, and unfortunately, I didn’t train for it! Cheryl wasn’t there, I got the slow win and was hooked, and from that point forward, I trained longer and harder.”



Jacqueline Hansen, 1975  
*"There were days when I felt  
 like I could run forever."*

Hansen then embarked on a 10-year rampage, interrupted by a year off in 1979 to have a child, in which she won 12 of the next 15 marathons she entered, including Boston in 1973, and her first world best at Culver City in 1974. Less than a year after that, she became the first woman to run a marathon under 2:40, appropriately, in the running capitol of Eugene, Oregon.

With an undergraduate degree in English, it was natural that Hansen would write many articles promoting the sport, and she also worked tirelessly as an administrator/coordinator of numerous races throughout the western U.S. In 1984, despite having been supplanted by a new generation of runners, she qualified for and finished the inaugural U.S. Olympic Marathon Trials for women. It was fitting she do so, since her lobbying as president of the International Runners Committee was instrumental in the IOC's decision to finally include the event in the women's Olympic program. Hansen was honored by the American Civil Liberties Union for her efforts to have longer distance events included in the Olympic Games.

Winter may be best remembered, not for her short-lived record set at Boston in 1975 at the age of 32, but for winning Dr. Ernst van Aaken's first-ever international marathon race for women in Waldniel, West Germany the previous year. In a field of runners from seven

nations, she was better able to overcome stiff winds than the others, and ran a European record of 2:50:31. Winter had been a member of West Germany's national cross-country team in her 20s, retired, but started back up again in order to try the marathon. Four years after winning Boston, she won the West German national championship at age 37.

Vahlensiek, another West German, came third in the '74 Waldniel Marathon, then ran her first world best eight months later. She won that event outright in 1976 and set another record the following year in winning the national championship in Berlin, the first of five times she would claim that title, and she was still able to finish third in 1985, aged 36. Vahlensiek ran a marathon in 2:34 at the age of 40, but due to various injuries, she now only runs for fun.

1978-84 In Part II of this of this chronology, women's marathon running gains its first superstar, then the 3,000 meter run and marathon are added to the women's Olympic program, with stunningly disparate results. To be continued . . .

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<b>U.S Women's Marathon Champions</b> (source: USA Track & Field)				
<b>YEAR</b>	<b>WINNER</b>	<b>TIME</b>	<b>EVENT/LOCATION</b>	<b>DATE</b>
1974	Judy Ikenberry	2:55:18	West Valley/San Mateo, CA	2/10/1974
1975	Kim Merritt	2:46:15	New York City, NY	9/28/1975
1976	Julie Brown	2:45:33	Western Hemisphere/Culver City, CA	12/5/1976
1977	Leal-Ann Reinhart	2:46:34	Minneapolis, MN	10/23/1977
1978	Marty Cooksey	2:41:49	New York City, NY	10/22/1978
1979	Susan Petersen	2:46:17#	Houston, TX	1/20/1979
1980	Susan Munday	2:43:17#	Paul Masson/Cupertino, CA	1/27/1980
1981	Nancy Conz	2:36:46	Avon International/Ottawa, CAN	8/23/1981
1982	Laurie Binder	2:39:46	Avon International/San Francisco, CA	6/6/1982
1983	Julie Brown	2:26:26+	Avon International/Los Angeles, CA	6/5/1983
1984	Katy Schilly	2:32:40	California International/Sacramento, CA	12/2/1984
1985	Nancy Ditz	2:31:36	California International/Sacramento, CA	12/8/1985
1986	Kim Rosenquist	2:32:31	Twin Cities/Minneapolis-St. Paul, MN	10/12/1986
1987	Janis Klecker	2:36:12	Grandma's/Duluth, MN	6/20/1987
1988	Margaret Groos	2:29:50	U.S. Olympic Trials/Pittsburgh, PA	5/1/1988
1989	Nan Doak-Davis	2:33:11	California International/Sacramento, CA	12/3/1989
1990	Jane Welzel	2:33:25	Grandma's/Duluth, MN	6/23/1990
1991	Maria Trujillo	2:35:39	Long Beach, CA	5/5/1991
1992	Janis Klecker	2:30:12	U.S. Olympic Trials/Houston, TX	1/26/1992
1993	Linda Somers	2:34:11	California International/Sacramento, CA	12/5/1993
1994	Linda Somers	2:33:42	Grandma's/Duluth, MN	6/18/1994
1995	Debbi Kilpatrick-Morris	2:34:42	USA Championship/Columbia, SC	2/11/1995
1996	Jenny Spangler	2:29:54	U.S. Olympic Trials/Columbia, SC	2/10/1996
1997	Julia Kirtland	2:37:46	Carolina Marathon/Columbia, SC	2/8/1997
1998	Gwyn Coogan	2:33:37	Methodist Health Care/Houston, TX	1/18/1998
1999	Kim Pawelek	2:37:56	Twin Cities/Minneapolis-St. Paul, MN	10/3/1999
2000	Chris Clark	2:33:31	U.S. Olympic Trials/Columbia, SC	2/26/2000
2001	Deena Drossin	2:26:58	New York City, NY	11/4/2001
2002	Jill Gaitenby	2:36:10	Twin Cities/Minneapolis-St. Paul, MN	9/29/2002
2003	Sara Wells	2:35:37	Michelob Ultra USA Championship/St. Louis, MO	4/5/2003
2004	Colleen De Reuck	2:28:25	U.S. Olympic Trials/St. Louis, MO	4/3/2004
2005	Nicole Aish	2:40:21	Twin Cities/Minneapolis-St. Paul, MN	10/2/2005
2006	Marla Runyan	2:32:17	Twin Cities/Minneapolis-St. Paul, MN	10/1/2006

# - short course    + - championship record

<b>U.S Women's 50 km Champions</b> (source: USA Track & Field)				
<b>YEAR</b>	<b>WINNER</b>	<b>TIME</b>	<b>EVENT/LOCATION</b>	<b>DATE</b>
1973	Nina Kuscsik	4:11:58	Pownal, VT	9/2/1973
1976	Penny DeMoss	3:48:27	Sacramento, CA	3/21/1976
1977	Marcy Schwam	4:20:23	New York, NY	12/3/1977
1978	Sue Medaglia	4:02:13	Famolare Turning Leaves/Brattleboro, VT	9/17/1978
1979	Andrea Chiappetta	3:46:34	Famolare Turning Leaves/Brattleboro, VT	9/16/1979
1980	Donna Hudson	3:59:49	Famolare Turning Leaves/Brattleboro, VT	9/14/1980
1981	Patti Finke	4:30:45	Roseburg, OR	4/18/1981
1982	Trudy Rapp	3:48:39	TAC/Washington, DC	3/13/1982
1983	Ceila Reed	4:41:16	TAC/East Meadow, NY	9/10/1983
1984	Kay Moore	4:16:00	TAC/Washington, DC	9/23/1984
1989	Mary Brandt Croft	4:23:45	Edmund Fitzgerald/Duluth, MN	10/28/1989
1990	Janice Kreuz	3:47:03	Mid-America Festival of Running/Muncie, IN	10/14/1990
1999	Dana Parrot	3:29:28+	GNC/Pittsburgh, PA	3/27/1999
2001	Anne Riddle	3:44:38	GNC/Pittsburgh, PA	3/23/2001
2004	Anne Riddle	3:39:58	Peachtree City 50K/Peachtree City, GA	11/14/2004
2005	Not held			
2006	Anne Lundblad	3:35:48	Caumsett Park 50K/Lloyd Park, NY	3/5/2006

+ - championship record

<b>U.S Women's 50 mile Champions</b> (source: USA Track & Field)				
<b>YEAR</b>	<b>WINNER</b>	<b>TIME</b>	<b>EVENT/LOCATION</b>	<b>DATE</b>
1970	Natalie Cullimore	7:35:57	Rocklin, CA	10/25/1970
1972	Eileen Waters	8:07:10	Rocklin, CA	10/15/1972
1977	Judy Ikenberry	6:44:43	Santa Monica (track), CA	9/10/1977
1978	Jacqueline Hansen	7:14:58	Santa Monica (track), CA	9/9/1978
1979	Sue Ellen Trapp	6:57:53	Seattle, WA	10/13/1979
1980	Ruth Anderson	7:10:58	Kingwood, TX	2/17/1980
1981	Lennie Tucker	7:41:23	Buffalo, NY	11/15/1981
1983	Viisha Sedlak	7:42:40	New York, NY	5/22/1983
1984	Mary Hanudel	7:40:35	Nickel City/Buffalo, NY	11/18/1984
1985	Diane Hawkins	7:44:20	New York, NY	11/9/1985
1997	Chrissy Duryea	6:41:41	Helen Klein Classic/Sacramento, CA	11/15/1997
1998	Denise Ellestad	6:52:24	Helen Klein Classic/Sacramento, CA	11/14/1998
1999	Deb Bollig	6:37:17+	Helen Klein Classic/Sacramento, CA	11/13/1999
2004	Laura Nelson	7:06:20	Tussey Mountainback 50 Mile/Boalsburg, PA	10/2/2004
2005	Nikki Kimball	6:44:20	Tussey Mountainback 50 Mile/Boalsburg, PA	10/15/2005

+ - championship record