



Showdown at Shepherd's Bush: The 1908 Olympic Marathon and the Three Runners Who Launched a Sporting Craze

David Davis

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The epic clash of an Irish-American, Italian, and Onondaga-Canadian that jump-started the first marathon mania and heralded the modern age in sports

The eyes of the world watched as three runners—dirt poor Johnny Hayes, who used to run barefoot through the streets of New York City; candymaker Dorando Pietri; and the famed Tom Longboat—converged for an epic battle at the 1908 London Olympics. The incredible finish was contested the world over when Pietri, who initially ran the wrong way upon entering the stadium at Shepherd's Bush, finished first but was disqualified for receiving aid from officials after collapsing just shy of the finish line, thus giving the title to runner-up Hayes. In the midst of anti-American sentiment, Queen Alexandra awarded a special cup to Pietri, who became an international celebrity and inspired one of Irving Berlin's first songs. In *Showdown at Shepherd's Bush*, David Davis recalls a time when runners braved injurious roads with slips of leather for shoes and when marathon mania became a worldwide obsession. Standing next to Cait Murphy's *Crazy '08* as an invaluable look at a bygone sporting era, *Showdown at Shepherd's Bush* is a dramatic narrative aimed at the recordsetting number of marathon participants in the United States (more than 500,000 in 2010!) and other running enthusiasts, and timed nicely for the return of the Olympics to London in 2012.

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