



Kings of the Road: How Frank Shorter, Bill Rodgers, and Alberto Salazar Made Running Go Boom

By Cameron Stracher

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Winner of the 2015 Armory Foundation Book Award from the Track & Field Writers of America

For fans of *The Perfect Mile* and *Born to Run*, a riveting, three-pronged narrative about the golden era of running in America—the 1970s—as seen through running greats, Frank Shorter, Bill Rodgers, and Alberto Salazar

It was 1978. Jimmy Carter was President; gas prices were soaring; and Americans were hunkering down to weather the economic crisis. But in bookstores Jim Fixx's *The Complete Book of Running* was a bestseller. Frank Shorter's gold medal in the 1972 Olympic marathon had put distance running in the mind of a public enamored of baseball and football. Suddenly, the odd activity of "jogging" became "running," and America was in love.

That summer, a junior from the University of Oregon named Alberto Salazar went head to head with Olympic champion Frank Shorter and Boston Marathon champion Bill Rodgers at the Falmouth Road Race, losing in the last mile to Rodgers's record-setting 32:21, nearly dying in the process, and setting the stage for a great rivalry. In Shorter, Rodgers, and Salazar, running had its conflict and drama like boxing had Ali and Foreman, like basketball had Russell and Chamberlain. Each man built on what the other achieved, and each pushed the other to succeed. Their successes, in turn, fueled a nation of coach potatoes to put down the remote and lace up their sneakers.

Kings of the Road tells the story of running during that golden period from 1972 to 1981 when Shorter, Rodgers, and Salazar captured the imagination of the American public as they passed their figurative baton from one to the other. These three men *were* American running during those years, while the sport enjoyed a popularity never equaled. As America now experiences a similar running boom, *Kings of the Road* is a stirring, inspiring narrative of three men pushing themselves toward greatness and taking their country along for the ride.

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Editorial Review

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The lengthy subtitle states this book's thesis, though the words "in America" might have been added. The volume captures a bright decade in American road racing, from Shorter's marathon victory at the 1972 Olympics to Rodgers' dominance mid-decade, to Salazar's later ascendancy. It possesses a period charm. The author concentrates not on the major international marathons but on the shorter but highly popular Falmouth Road Race on Cape Cod. It fails, though, to make the larger case, the "how" of the subtitle. Lost in the thunder of running American feet is the looming domination of the sport by the Africans, and Stracher understates the influence of women runners such as Joan Benoit Samuelson and the role of the athletic-shoe companies in fostering running as a mass phenomenon. He argues unconvincingly that race organizer Fred Lebow's insistence upon inclusivity in the New York Marathon ultimately hurt the sport. What remains is an account that will largely interest runners and dedicated fans of the sport. Publication will coincide with this year's Boston Marathon, an event that no American man has won in 30 years. --Mark Levine

Review

"In his lively, informative history, Cameron Stracher traces the boom of running culture in America back to the 1970s when a trio of single-minded athletes -- Frank Shorter, Bill Rodgers, and Alberto Salazar -- captured the national spotlight with their intense passion for pounding the road...Stracher writes with a true fan's contagious enthusiasm." -- Newsweek/The Daily Beast

"A focused survey of three unmatched American long-distance runners... Essential reading for runners both competitive and casual." -- *Kirkus Reviews*

"*Kings of the Road* is about marathon legends. It's about running Fast. It's about Will. It's about the Real. It's about drama of the finest kind." -- Bernd Heinrich, author of *Why We Run and Racing the Antelope*

"In *Kings of the Road*, Cameron Stracher recaptures the wonder, energy, and excitement of American road racing from 1972 to 1982. With amazing detail and action, he follows Frank Shorter, Bill Rodgers, and Alberto Salazar to their greatest victories in an era when they became national sports icons." --Amby Burfoot, 1968 Boston Marathon winner and *Runner's World* Editor-at-Large

"Combining a novelist's eye for character and detail with an historian's insight into patterns and connections, Cameron Stracher's *Kings of the Road* delivers a rollicking, informed account of the rise of the American running movement. Bringing the 1970's alive in all their brokenness, weirdness, and hope, Stracher shows how distance running helped define a generation. *Kings of the Road* rekindles Baby Boomer memories while introducing younger readers to an overlooked piece of sporting and social history." -- John Brant, author of *Duel in the Sun* and co-author (with Alberto Salazar) of *14 Minutes*

From the Inside Flap

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Mary McKay:

What do you in relation to book? It is not important together with you? Or just adding material if you want something to explain what yours problem? How about your time? Or are you busy man or woman? If you don't have spare time to accomplish others business, it is give you a sense of feeling bored faster. And you have time? What did you do? Everybody has many questions above. They must answer that question simply because just their can do which. It said that about reserve. Book is familiar in each person. Yes, it is proper. Because start from on jardín de infancia until university need this particular *Kings of the Road: How Frank Shorter, Bill Rodgers, and Alberto Salazar Made Running Go Boom* to read.

Marilyn Vance:

A lot of people always spent their very own free time to vacation or go to the outside with them family or their friend. Do you know? Many a lot of people spent they will free time just watching TV, or playing video games all day long. In order to try to find a new activity that is look different you can read any book. It is really fun in your case. If you enjoy the book you read you can spent 24 hours a day to reading a e-book. The book *Kings of the Road: How Frank Shorter, Bill Rodgers, and Alberto Salazar Made Running Go Boom* it is extremely good to read. There are a lot of folks that recommended this book. These people were enjoying reading this book. In case you did not have enough space to create this book you can buy the actual e-book. You can m0ore very easily to read this book through your smart phone. The price is not too costly but this book possesses high quality.

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