

For the third annual Festival City Marathon tomorrow more than 1000 scantily clad, pneumatically soled and mostly scrawny specimens of humanity will weave an ant-like trail as they run from Gawler to Adelaide.

For the spectator ensconced with hot-water bag and a thermos of coffee it could provide the best Sunday morning's entertainment for years.

A vantage point in Elizabeth, Para Hills, on Hampstead Road or even on Le Fevre Terrace — where in the 1880s our city forefathers gathered in the thousands to watch athletic events — should provide good viewing.

Wherever one chooses to watch, somewhere between the start at 8 a.m. in Gawler and the 2 p.m. trophy presentation on Mackinnon Parade, a trail of moving musculature, bedecked in every conceivable color, will pass in an endless if somewhat spasmodic and intermittent line.

Those passing first, the lean and finely tuned, will do so quickly and sparsely, sometimes at speeds that appear incomprehensible given that such pace has to be maintained for a full 26 miles (42.2 kilometres).

Don't be fooled, however, for those grimacing faces racked with pain will show nothing but ecstasy and euphoria if they make it to the finish. More than one tear will be shed as some of these valiant souls fall across the line.

While some would claim that such roadside lunatics should finish in the Adelaide Zoo rather than in the northerly parklands nearby, the fact is that for many this test of physical endurance and pain is the culmination of months of serious training and hundreds, indeed thousands, of kilometres of roadwork.

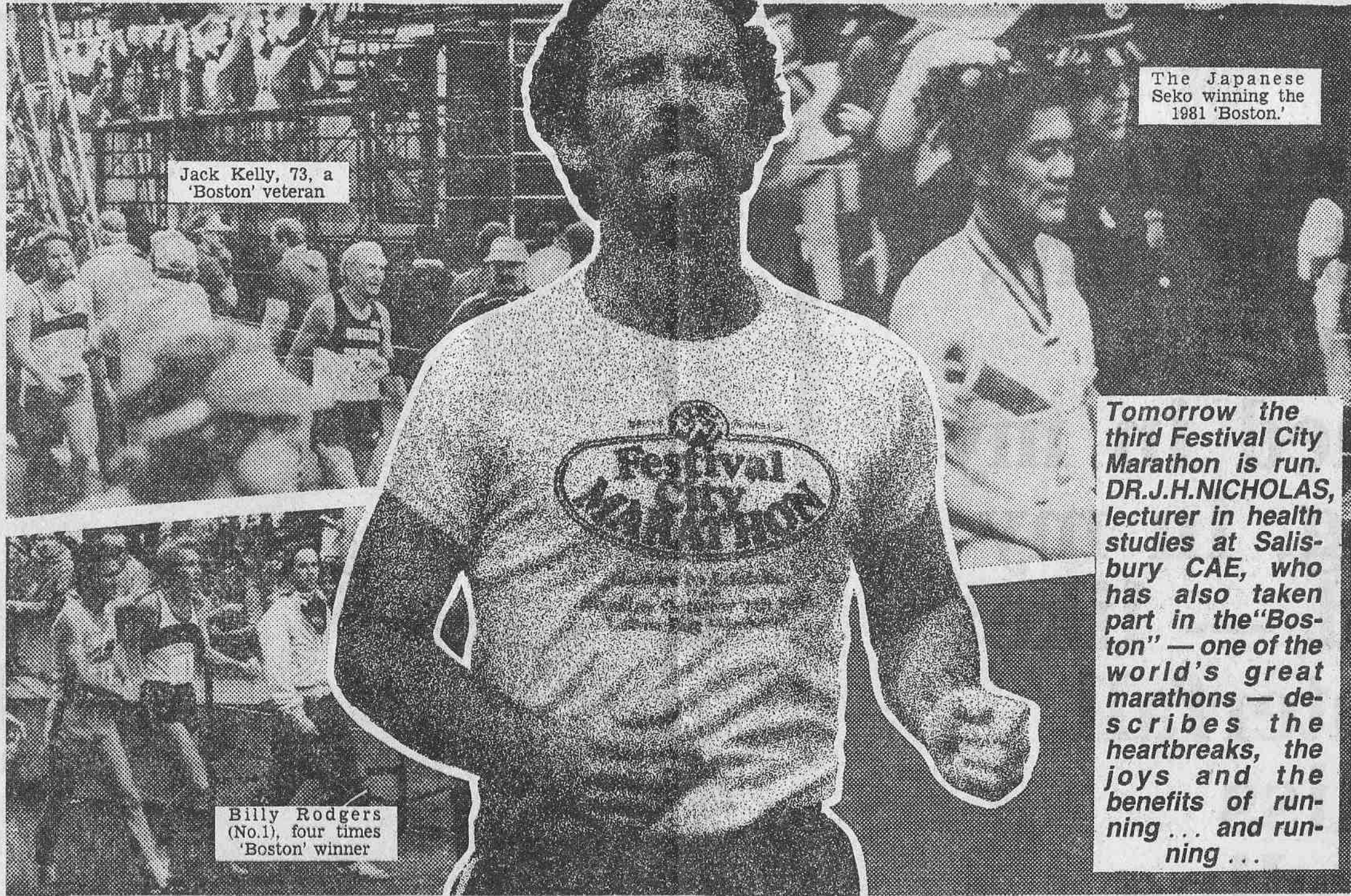
Most who have entered it seriously probably averaged between 65 and 160 kilometres of training a week in the three months leading up to the event.

Why do they do it?

The rewards are many. Lower blood pressure, slower pulse rates, firmer muscle tone, loss of excess weight, better sleeping habits and a healthy appetite are some.

Less tangibly the sense of personal accomplishment, the attainment of personal goals, the euphoria of past marathon experiences, the psychic mystique of the event or relief from mid-life doldrums spur them on.

One thing is certain: with so many entrants it can't be the likelihood of winning, at least not for more than a



Jack Kelly, 73, a 'Boston' veteran

Billy Rodgers (No.1), four times 'Boston' winner

The Japanese Seko winning the 1981 'Boston.'

Tomorrow the third Festival City Marathon is run. DR.J.H.NICHOLAS, lecturer in health studies at Salisbury CAE, who has also taken part in the "Boston" — one of the world's great marathons — describes the heartbreaks, the joys and the benefits of running ... and running ...

The long run ...

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Males 50-59 yrs 3 hrs 20 mins

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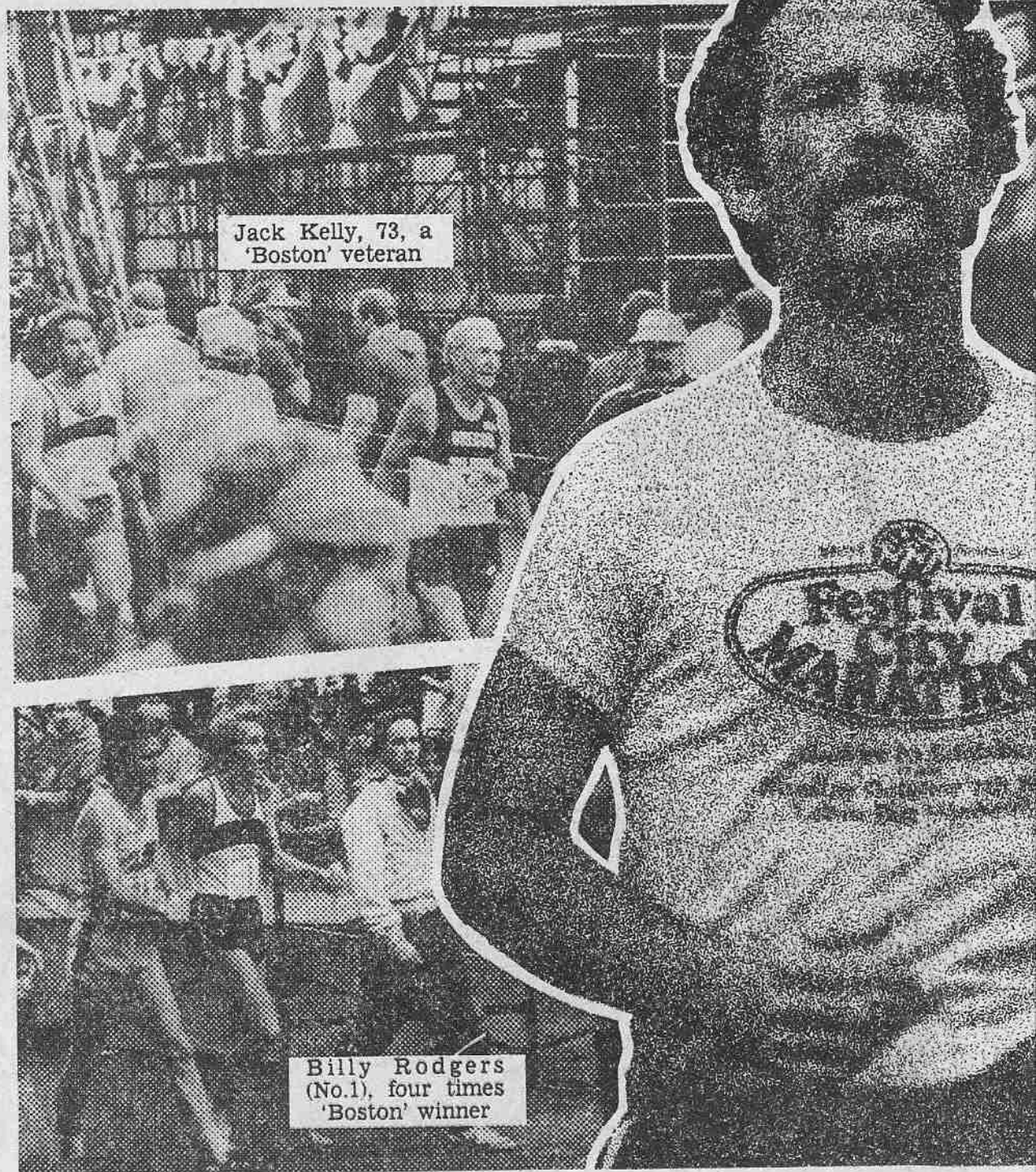
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One of the most interesting features of marathoning, and this applies the world over, is that it is not an activity confined to the young. This year the average age of those participating is 35 and 30 p.c. of the entrants are over 40. Had marathon running been a popular event for the past 20 years this might be understandable, but the fact is that many of those in their forties and fifties competing in tomorrow's event had never considered themselves to be at all athletic until the 1980s.

For some this is their first marathon, and before their resolve to participate and the onset of serious training, most would never have entertained the idea.

Perhaps the influence of distance-running's international guru, cardiologist Dr. George Sheehan, who ran his



Jack Kelly, 73, a 'Boston' veteran

Billy Rodgers (No.1), four times 'Boston' winner

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first marathon at the age of 45, and who just last year, aged 61, ran a sub-three hours 10-minutes, has now reached from New Jersey to Adelaide.

For most of the entrants tomorrow the goal will be to "finish" or perhaps to run a personal best! However, for some, sights are set further afield for this year the organisers have provided additional incentive in that any competitor finishing under a specified time will be issued with a Boston Qualifying Certificate.

To qualify to run in the Boston Marathon, probably the most prestigious distance event in the world, prospective entrants must run elsewhere with official times better than the following:

Males under 40 yrs.....	2 hrs 50 mins
Females under 40 yrs.....	3 hrs 20 mins
Males 40-49 yrs.....	3 hrs 10 mins

Females 40 over.....	3 hrs 30 mins
Males 50-59 yrs.....	3 hrs 20 mins
Males 60 over.....	3 hrs 30 mins

To distance runners the world over the "Boston" is considered the ultimate. Running magazines in Australia and particularly in the US feature some comment on it in almost every issue. Each year during the third week in April all eyes of the running world turn to the small Massachusetts town of Hopkinton where the world's premier athletes gather to begin running at four minutes and 50 seconds for each of the 26 miles from there to "downtown" Boston.

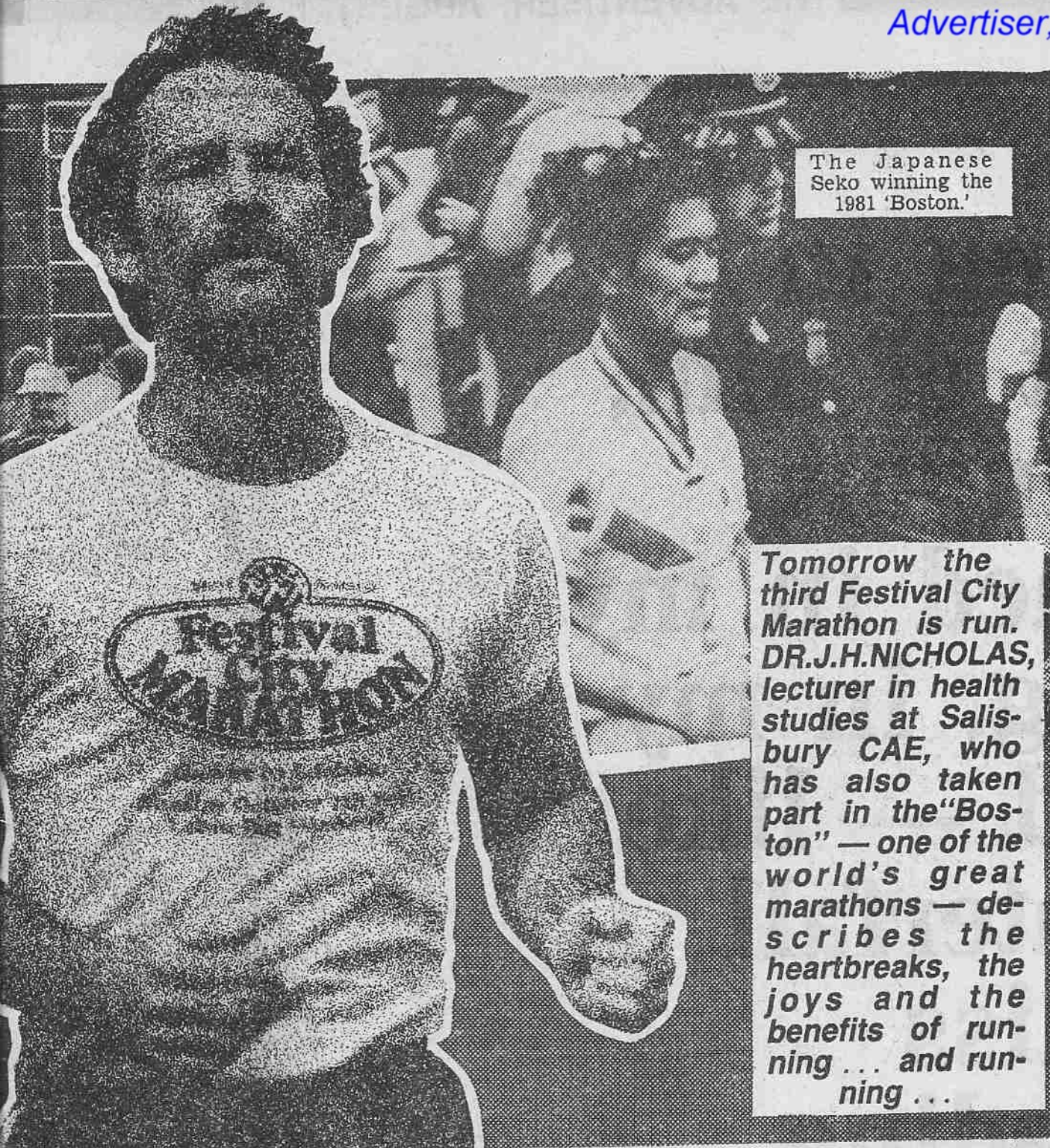
Wasn't it only yesterday that the fastest athletes in the world were trying to break four minutes for one mile? What makes the Boston Marathon so magical?

Having been fortunate enough to run in both the 1980 and 1981 events, albeit

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unofficially (that is without qualifying) I suggest that it is the premier event for the following reasons. First, it draws the best marathon runners in the world: Toshihiko Seko, this year's winner in a time of 2:09:27 which broke the Boston and US record; Boston's own Billy Rodgers, four times winner of the event in 1975, 1978, 1979, 1980; Allison Roe, the new women's queen from New Zealand who this year smashed the record with a time of 2:26:45.

Second, the number and quality of the official entrants is so good that to join the 7000 numbered runners becomes a consuming passion for some. They come from England, Japan, throughout Europe and of course NZ and Australia.

Third, the publicity surrounding the event and the fact that it signals the emergence from a deep winter into the

brightness of spring ensures an unbelievable 2m. spectators each year.

Fourth, it has been run every year since the late 1890s and so has its colorful and charismatic personalities such as Jack Kelly, who this year at the tender age of 73 ran his 50th consecutive Boston.

What is it like to run a Boston? One US paper this year described it as a 26-mile party for both spectators and runners. The route swells with onlookers as the throng of runners streams through the New England countryside and on into Boston via "heartbreak hill."

For the runners each step is colored by the buzz of the supporting crowd. An outreached hand, a cup of fruit juice, half an orange, all offered appealingly by children and adults alike.

For some of the elderly who live along the route the Boston is their big moment of the year. Be it warmer than anticipated they stand by with running hoses ready to spray those feeling the heat. Always with a word of encouragement, for the whole distance the voices are endless: "Nearly half way," "Not far now," "You can do it," "You are through the wall."

Touching, reaching, supporting, one might even be offered a beer. Over "heartbreak hill" and on into the downtown area; here the only thing stopping the seething mass of onlookers from pushing down the barricades is a reverence for those who dare to run.

There are mounted police, the roaring crowd, shouts from on high and the smell of sweat and effort as the runners trudge through the finish and on into the underground car park which has been set up like an army hospital — runners crying, bodies quivering, others prostrate and being intravenously fed and, of course, the joy of personal victory, the ravenous, insatiable appetite and the final quaffing of an ice-cold beer.

That is Boston, and that is what some of tomorrow's runners will be looking to as they strain up our own "heartbreak hill" and on down Hampstead Road towards the city.

South Australians may not realise it but tomorrow's run will see more written about the legendary nature of our own event. Will Richard Bryant, Adelaide's 70-year-old iron man, break the four-hour mark again this year?

Can Gerry Hicks be beaten in his class (45-49 years)? Do we have an Allison Roe or a Patti Catalano who can take it up to Desiree Letherby? Who will be the oldest woman finisher? And what of the nuances and subtleties of the course? As the seething mass jostles for position during the first kilometres through Gawler, the pay-off from "carbohydrate loading" two nights previously will be evident in the animated voices and well-trimmed bodies, nervously trying to adjust to a steady pace. On down the bleak, predictable road through Smithfield to Elizabeth, the would-be boredom offset by the pumping of adrenalin and freshness of the legs.

Past the Old Spot, the halfway house and, for some, dehydration has begun, the legs are beginning to ache. Left into Smith Road, 14 miles now, and past Salisbury CAE (whoever said that this part of the course was flat?) and then the relief, albeit fleeting, as they turn down Bridge Road through Para Hills and towards the legendary "wall" at the 20-mile mark.

Should we call it the "Pooraka Pinnacle" or the "Gaolhouse Rock"? The gait is distorted now, the step shortened, the achilles aching. Plod, tramp, tramp, thank God for Staminade. Hampstead Road, the ABC, Nottage Terrace and under the kilt at Scotties Motel.

The Main North Road, Le Fevre Terrace; didn't A.E. Bird come out from the old country in 1881 to show the "city of churches" how to run 11 miles in one hour? Mind drifting; the blur; the pain; but wait! 41 kilometres and the Children's Hospital.

Quickened pace, a smile, what time is it? Down, down, the parklands, the green, the shoot, the spectators, sprint, sprint, it's done! Target 26!

Did I qualify for Boston? Ah, well, there is always next year.