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American Distance Runners: Getting Lapped in the Fast Lane

My goal in life is to become an elite distance runner. I want to indulge in victory and be able to tell myself that I am the best at what I do. With this goal embedded in my thoughts, dreams, attitude, and character I am forced to look back upon United States distance runners and learn from the past. In studying the recent history of distance running, I have noticed that American distance runners have not progressed compared to foreign athletes. Each year world records are being set in distance events. None are being set by Americans. This lead me to analyze distance running in the U.S., and come to a conclusion on why American runners are "getting lapped in the fast lane," and whether or not, as an American, I stand a chance to compete at the world-class level.

There was a time when America male distance runners actually won big races. This was a time when distance runners were not in the awe of the Kenyans or other African runners. A time when a little known runner from the Army won the 10,000 meters (m) run at the 1964 Olympics. This little known runner was Billy Mills. He shocked the world in this event, beating the world record holder Ron Clark of Australia. Then, four days later, American