

Do you want to hold an 'Ultra Distance event? Try this one.

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Townsend v Mountjoy to pick up 300 stones at one yard apart at Lord's Cricket Ground. Townsend to use his mouth (as he did in his first match with Drinkwater) Mountjoy with hands - each stone to be conveyed separately to the basket. Townsend wore a light flannel jacket, nankeen drawers, cotton socks and light shoes and a linen cap with yellow handkerchief around his loins. Mountjoy is 35 years old, 5`6" and about 10st 5lb, Townsend in 5`5", 11 st and 45 years old

Started at 26 minutes to 10. Mountjoy was quick, Townsend cool and regular. 1:30 pm Mountjoy dead beat - in 3 hours 56 minutes had covered 27 miles and picked up 136 stones. Townsend went on until 7 o'clock in the evening - covering 51 miles 440 yards. 9 hours plus in time

If the stones were one yard apart - then the distance covered would be
 $2 + 4 + 6 + 8 + 10 + 12 + 14 + 16 + 18 + 20$ etc etc

The stones need to be placed in such a way that the runner stays as close as possible to them without stepping on or over them so that he takes the shortest possible line to reach the next stone and the same in returning to the basket. A contest needs to be carried out in lanes so runners don't obstruct each other and in straight lines so that each runner runs exactly the same distance to each stone. If bends are used then a 'stagger' system needs to be in place similar to a normal track running race to ensure accurate distance by all participants.

The stone picking up is actually just a way of keeping track of the distance covered - a form of lap counting but with the lap getting two yards longer each time.

There is no record of this event at Lords Cricket ground as I have already checked it out. However the event undoubtedly took place.

The idea is simple but needing practice to test the individuals choice. Start with the first stone(s) and the distance increases every trip eg first ten stones 110 yds covered: first 20 stones 420 yds covered. Start with the furthest stone first, the distance reduces. Using this option the significant drop in distance takes a long time to really register. A basket is placed behind the start line. Each runner picks up every stone and brings it back to put in the basket. If he throws it, it is acceptable but if he misses he has to stop and retrieve it and put it in the basket before resuming the contest. No assistance of any sort allowed. Any stop for any reason is included in the overall time. To pick up all 300 stones complying with this procedure accrues a distance of 51 miles plus so 'time' with the stooping to pick up is 8 hours plus. It would require a period of sustained practice with varying numbers of stones to train for 'the running then bending down to pick up' technique for the individual runner. What training if any they did back in the early nineteenth century is not known but they were effectively full time 'professional' runners so when making the pre event 'wagers/bets' they would have needed to know they were ready and properly trained to 'take on' the challenge, whatever it was.

It would make a very interesting event to watch but finding participants would need to be done with very strict care. They would need to be fully aware and fully and properly prepared for what they were taking on. A disclaimer would also be required for any resulting injuries or problems created by their participation. It would also in this day and age need I think, fairly substantial prize 'MONEY'

If you are thinking of staging such an event in the future I would be willing to help and advise on all aspects. *If held please send us a full report.*

Ian Champion (President)