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For more information on GRTC Hall of Fame see: <http://www.grtconline.org/>

Induction took place on January 26, 2008 at GRTC Annual Banquet

**Richard (Dick) Buerkle Inducted Into 2008 Greater Rochester Track Club Hall of Fame:
Held World Record for Indoor Mile and was a Two Time Olympian (1976, '80)**

Authored by Michael Reif

If you get into a conversation with Dick Buerkle you might be surprised to find that he'd really rather downplay the success of his accomplishments of 30 years ago, when he broke the World Indoor Mile record and had his Millrose Wanamaker Mile win memorialized on the cover of Sports Illustrated. You find out quickly that he's an extremely humble individual and that he has a unique gift and talent to share his strengths and passions with those around him now. He's a guy who doesn't look back at all he's accomplished and bask in the glory. Rather, he looks forward to what needs to be done and what he wants to influence in the future. Instead of focusing on his personal goals (as he once had to) his focus is on how he can make a difference in the lives of others, the kids he teaches now, and those who are yet to have the good fortune to meet him.

He focuses on his family, his wife Jean, and his three children Gabe, Lily and Tera. He focuses on the joy of living now and making life good for the future. It is appropriately humbling to talk with him, perhaps learning more about life than you thought you knew.

And now the facts: Richard (Dick) Buerkle (pronounced berkeley) is a two time Olympic athlete and also held the world record for the indoor one mile run. He was born in Rochester, New York, on September 3, 1947. He graduated from Aquinas Institute in 1965 and went on to Villanova University to graduate in 1970 with a degree in Spanish studies. Dick now resides in Atlanta Georgia with his family and teaches Spanish at Montgomery Elementary School.

At Villanova University he trained under the tutelage of head coach, Jumbo Elliott, and assistant coach, Jim Tuppeny. He started on the Villanova team as a walk-on with no athletic scholarship. He did not receive a track scholarship until early April of his junior year when he ran 8:57 for two miles. Two weeks later he broke Villanova's school record with an 8:46.2 two-mile at the Penn Relays.

Buerkle qualified for the 1976 and the 1980 Olympic games. The 1976 Montreal Games turned out to be a disappointment for Buerkle who finished 9th in the fastest 5 K Olympic heat on record at that time.

Although he qualified for the 1980 Olympics, he did not get the opportunity to run due to our country's boycott of the games under President Jimmy Carter. As you may remember, the 1980 Olympics took place in Moscow and tension existed between the United States and the Soviet Union governments. (The Soviet Union had moved its army into neighboring Afghanistan to fight a group of guerillas, one of who was a young Saudi Arabian named Osama Bin Laden. But we digress.)

Buerkle ran the mile in under 4 minutes an astonishing 6 times in his career with a personal best on Friday, January 13, 1978 at College Park, Maryland when he broke the world indoor mile record with a time of

3:54.93. Two weeks later his win in the Wanamaker Mile at the Millrose Games in New York City in 3 minutes 58.4 seconds put him on the cover of Sports Illustrated and Track and Field News magazine. Instant fame came for his accomplishments and he was easily recognizable as “the fast bald guy”.

He had his greatest races against Steve Prefontaine, Frank Shorter, Paul Geis and Marty Liquori in the 1970's. He ranked 3rd in world at 5K in 1974 with 13:23.4, and was the National AAU Champion at 5,000 meters in 1974 and 1976.

Kenny Moore wrote in his book **Bowerman . . . and the Men of Oregon** “Dick Buerkle pressed Prefontaine at the 1973 AAU Nationals all the way in the three mile. Pre responded with a new American record winning in 12:53.4 to Buerkle’s 13:00.2.” (That’s a mere 4:20 per mile for each mile . . . or 65 seconds per lap for 12 consecutive laps)

In 1974 Dick was an easy winner over the legendary Steve Prefontaine in a 2-mile race at a CYO meet in College Park. Dick ran 8:26.2 to Pre’s 8:33.2. It was Pre’s first loss to an American in a race longer than a mile since 1970.

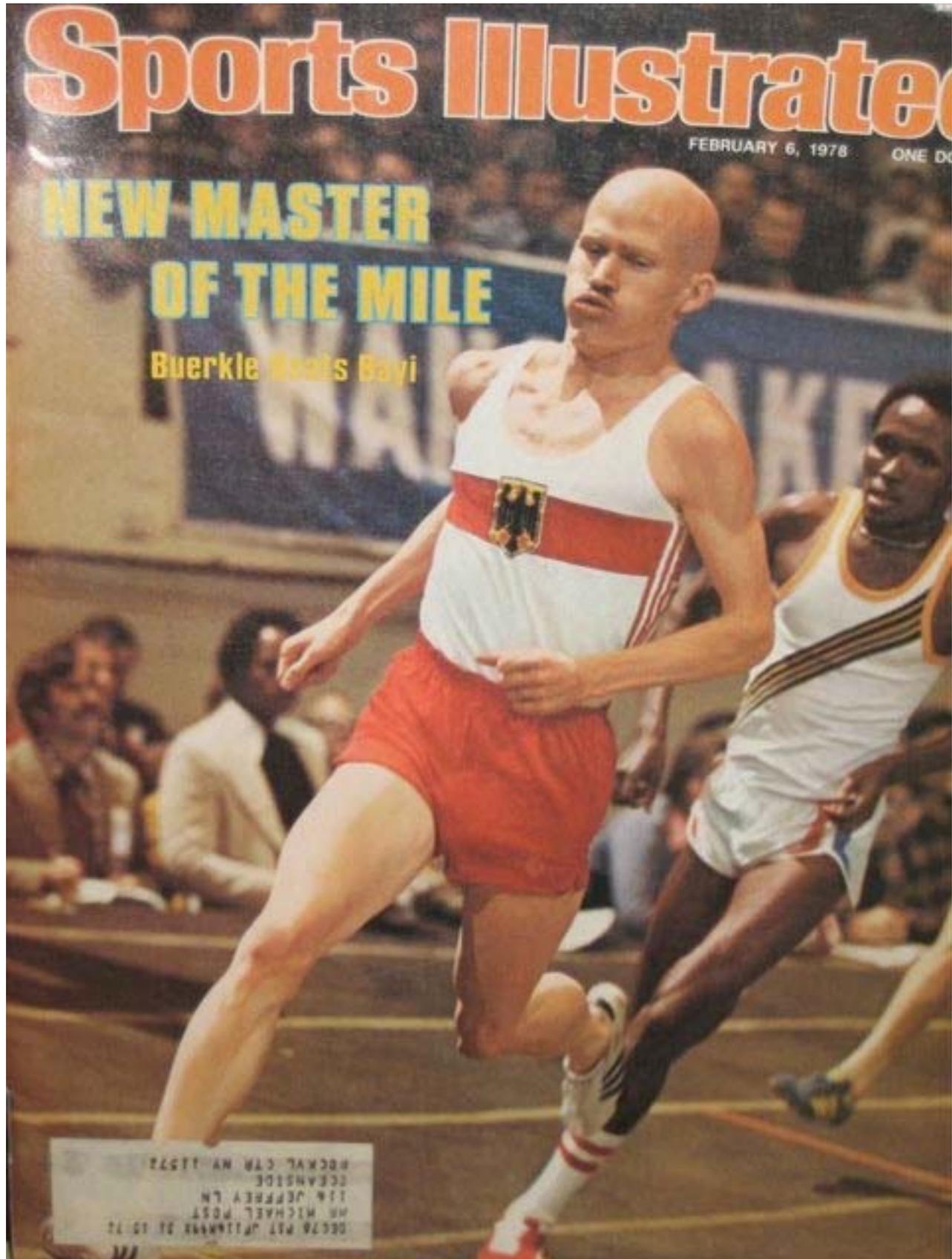
In the film **Fire on The Track** (a documentary about the life of running legend Steve Prefontaine) Dick was one of those interviewed to reminisce about Steve’s great accomplishments. He also recalled the great sadness throughout the entire running community and world after Pre died in 1975 at age 24. One thing Dick said during the film was “ I guess what made me so sad was that he’s “me” even though maybe he’s cocky and I’m not as cocky; and he’s different than me, there’s more of him that’s like me . . . than not like me. The twenty mile runs on Sunday, the hard intervals, I mean that stuff, we’re brothers that way. He always made me feel like a friend but also the competitor who was going to make it tough.”

Indeed, Buerkle, inspired by the likes of a Steve Prefontaine and many other great runners of that era marched to his own drummer.

If you thought he was just a miler and 5 K world-class runner, guess again. In 1981 Dick won the Atlanta marathon in a time of 2:21:36 and still goes for easy runs these days.

Today Dick Buerkle is focused on activities with his family, his students, his former athletes and his community. Indeed they are fortunate to have such a man surrounding them and looking out for them.

Picture #1: Dick Buerkle on Cover of Sports Illustrated, February 1978, shown winning the Wanamaker Mile at the Millrose Games in Madison Square Garden, having set the World Record for the Indoor Mile two weeks earlier in a time of 3:54.93 in College Park Maryland.



Picture #2: Dick Buerkle with wife Jean at GRTC Hall of Fame Banquet January 26, 2008



Picture #3: Dick Buerkle being congratulated by Michael Reif, Presentation and Award Presenter as well as fellow Hall of Fame Member at GRTC HOF Banquet January 26, 2008



Picture #5: Dick Buerkle with GRTC HOF Award

