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Johnny Miles Wins the Boston Marathon PAGE INDEX TO FEATURES extral
TUESDAY, APRIL 20, 1926* UNKNOWN KID SMASHES RECORD IN CREATEST
01 ALL MARATHONS John C. Miles of Nova Scotia, 20 Years Old, Beats His Fieki of
Famous Rivals and Clips Four Minutes, Lacking One-Fiffti Second, From De Mar's
1924 Mark • Runs Neck and Neck With Mighty Stenroos for Big Part of Route,
Finally Shaking Off Olympic Champion mi Finishing Nearly Four Minutes Ahead
SELECTION FROM Johnny Miles Nova Scotia's Marathon King by Floyd Willjston
As the snow began to melt and the winds blowing off the Atlantic changed to cool
breezes, Johnny Miles and his father decided the time was ripe to attempt a full
marathon. Johnny had never seen a full-length marathon • let alone run one. But at
age 20, the Cape Bretoner held the Canadian five-mile foot? racing title and the
Maritime 10-mile championship. In the fall of 1925, he had set a record in the
Herald and Mail 10-Mile Modified Marathon, a popular event. He carried in his
pocket a crumpled pic? ture of Albin Stenroos, Finnish winner of the marathon at
the 1924 Paris Olympics, and he dreamed of running the Boston Marathon. He had
been running for only a few years. A light snow blanketed Cape Breton on Good
Friday, 1926, as John? ny rode the train to a point approximately 27 miles outside of
Sydney Mines. He got off and began running home through the snow, slush, and
mud. When he greeted his father two hours and 40 minutes lat? er, Mr. Miles was
ecstatic. "Son," he said, "I think you're ready for Boston." Johnny had a feeling that
he could do even better in Boston, particu? larly if there was no snow on the
ground. Leading up to the Patriot's Day race • which traditionally, but not al? ways,
fell on April 19-'ohnny's mother paid special attention to her son's diet, sometimes
depriving herself. She checked that he was sleeping well and kept him well supplied
with clean running gear. Meanwhile, the family worried about its finances for the
trip. Johnny had saved some of the money he made delivering groceries for the
local co-operative store, and his parents • who planned to root John? ny on in
Boston • had limited funds. But supporters in the coal-mining region had begun
collecting money for the runner, who was already something of a celebrity. And
despite the grim economic situation, or? ganizers were able to present Johnny with
a purse containing \$300 • about three months' wages for a grocery-cart driver. In
Boston, expatriate Cape Bretoners were rallying behind the young hopeful. Peter
Campbell, formerly of Johnstown, Cape Breton, had read an article in a Nova Scotia
newspaper describing Johnny's in? tention to tackle the famed race. Unknown to
Johnny, Campbell wrote to the elder Miles with an offer to arrange things on that
end. Mr. Miles accepted immediately and wrote that the family would need
accommodation in a private home or boarding house, as Mrs. Miles Johnny Miles in
Boston, 1926 wanted to cook for her son. The Lynch family, distant relatives of the
Campbells, agreed to put the Mileses up in their Jamaica Plain home. Murdock
Campbell, formerly of Inverness County, offered to drive Johnny and his father along
the marathon route before race day and to chauffeur them to the race, and the
Davidsons, formerly of Sydney Mines, invited the family to dinner in their Boston



home. Interaction among eastern-Canadian and New England athletes was common. It was usually more convenient for someone like Johnny to The Johnny Miles Story Continues on Page 75 Front Cover Photograph: Claire, Julie and Marie Crimp, Wrecl< Cove