

He Sings, He Runs and He's Only 101

Meet the Man Ready to Become World's Oldest Marathon Runner

By LAMA HASAN

LONDON, March 5, 2008 —

Buster Martin is an unlikely candidate to set a marathon record. He drinks beer, smokes cigarettes and stays out late. And he's 101.

But Martin expects to shatter, or at least ease past, the record next month when he runs London's marathon. And he is counting on having a beer at the finish line.

"He smokes, drinks, stays out late, which is probably why he is still alive," said Charlie Mullins, the managing director of the plumbing company where Martin cleans vans.

When not working three days a week for Mullins, Martin can be found in a nearby boxing gym working with a pair of trainers in preparation for April's run. He refuses to be impressed by the fact that he is still running.

"I am not doing anything unusual. I am just running a marathon," he told ABC News.

Age is no more an obstacle to Martin's running than that strip of winners tape at the finish line. "You are never too old to do what you enjoy."

And Martin likes running, "but not as much as I like my beer," he added.

He is already a man of many firsts. Martin holds three world title records for the oldest person to run the 5K, 10K and the half marathon.

Martin says that in the last weekend, he's completed a 13-mile half marathon that took him a little more than five hours. It would have been faster, he says, but he says he stopped for a beer and a cigarette.

Martin runs in the name of charity. He is raising money for the Rhys Daniels Trust, which provides a "home from home" for parents of children having treatment for life-threatening illnesses.

Mullins describes him as a "remarkable chap, unbelievable. He's an ordinary fellow but remarkable at the same time especially for someone at his age to get involved in this sort of charity."

Martin is also the father of 17 children, which also doesn't impress him. "Pity I didn't have anymore kids," he said with a sigh.

He "likes to live life to the full. & He is as sharp as a razor," Mullins said. He told ABC that Martin's got "unbelievable hearing."

To his colleagues, at 101 years old, Martin is a "great inspiration, he's got a million stories to tell, he is so knowledgeable," his manager said.

To celebrate Martin's birthday, his work colleagues named a beer after him called Buster's Beer.

So, does his manager think Martin can achieve his goal of being the oldest runner in the world? "Undoubtedly," said Mullins.

Martin was also part of the seniors' rock 'n' roll group called the Zimmers.

The band had a combined age of more than 3,000 years and scored a hit single last year with a cover of The Who's "My Generation."

When asked what Mullins thought of Martin's voice, he replied, "It's actually quite good."

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