

Summer School Commandos

The prettiest girl in summer school was painting her nails cherry to match her lipstick in French III class while browsing some dated stories in *Paris Match* magazine, when she came across a track article about Frenchman Michel Jazy setting the world record for the mile run.

Rennes, France –Frenchman Michel Jazy broke the world record in the mile run tonight with a time of 3:53.3. The old world record belonged to Olympic Champion Peter Snell of New Zealand. Jazy, France’s premier distance runner, was denied an Olympic medal, finishing 4th. In tonight’s race, Jazy, who at times trains barefoot, used a combination of fast pace and endurance to set the new record, which most people believe will be difficult for anyone to break.

Never missing a chance to bust balls, Honey flipped her hair back, pursed her lips and said to classmate Mike Carroll, “Monsieur Michael, how fast do you run the mile?”

“Fast enough to win,” he said.

“No, mon ami,” she protested, “Répondez en français.” (Answer me in French.) “How fast do you run the mile?”

Carroll, an acne-faced string bean who looked like a piccolo player in the band but ran like a gazelle answered, “Four minutes, ten seconds.”

“Monsieur Jazy runs the mile in three minutes, fifty-three seconds,” she said. “Vous n’êtes pas très rapide.” (You are not very fast.)

Carroll began frantically thumbing through his book, looking for the response in French. Summer school had been a blessing for Mike since his older brother’s death in Vietnam. He cried for a week straight, and then one night broke out all the windows at Mary’s Grill. That’s where the despised Galer clan hung out. They

were the local tough guys who beat him and his brother to a pulp after the Carrolls got caught sneaking into the Verplanck movie theater.

The cops caught up with Mike a mile down the road. The town police had been at the train station when his brother's body came home and knew the terrible times the family was going through. They gave him a pass on the broken windows.

Mike had lived in the shadow of his older brother since the boys were tots. Jackie played baseball, Mike played baseball; Jackie played hockey, Mike played hockey. When Jackie began long training runs to prepare for the hockey season, Mike followed. And after a while, they were zooming all around town and setting running records in every race they entered. In cross-country, their performance was off the charts as they finished first and second in most championship events.

Brother Jackie was the faster, tougher and older of the two. He was a grinder who set a fast pace and dared anyone to stay with him in a race. Mike was fluid, simply a beautiful runner whose feet barely touched the ground. It was as if he ran on a cloud. At the end of each season, his running shoes hardly had any wear on them, while Jackie's shoes looked like they had been through the Bataan death march.

Honey Sanders, cheerleading captain and the prettiest girl in the city, had it in for the track team and all the skinny troublemakers on it, including Mike Carroll. She didn't care anything about his winning races.