2 Marathon Marvel Hangs up Her Running Shoes



In April 2003, Paula Radcliffe set the world record of 2 hours, 15 minutes and 25 seconds for the London Marathon. Twelve years later, she ran her last London Marathon. At 41 years of age, it was time to hang up her running shoes as far as competitive racing was concerned. She completed the 26.2-mile race in 2 hours, 36 minutes and 55 seconds and received the race's Lifetime Achievement Award.

Born in 1973, in Cheshire, England, Paula suffered from asthma and anaemia as a child. Despite this, she took up running at the age of seven and joined the Frodsham Athletic Club. When she was 12, her family moved to Bedfordshire and she joined the Bedford Athletic Club. At the World Cross Country Championships in 1992, she came first.

Over her illustrious career Paula has won the London Marathon three times, in 2002, 2003 and 2005; the New York Marathon in 2004, 2007 and 2008; and the Chicago Marathon in 2002. She has also been victorious over 5,000 and 10,000 metre distances and Cross Country races.

Due to her many achievements, the British public took Paula to their hearts and voted her the BBC Sports Personality of the Year in 2003. Radcliffe has attracted a legion of fans. Kim Thomas, who has seen every London Marathon and travelled all over the world to watch Paula run said, 'She is truly amazing. It takes such strength and determination to compete as she does. I think long-distance running must be the hardest sport there is.'

Early on in her career, Paula outlined her attitude to her sport. 'I'm not looking to make a living out of it. Obviously it's nice that there's a bit of money coming in but that's not my goal. I just want to do my best and still enjoy it. I want to keep on enjoying it, keep on improving, get as much out of it as I can and put as much back as I can.'

The *Daily Express* recognised that 'she deserves her place as one of the world's greats of athletics' and the *Daily Mail* claimed she is 'Britain's greatest ever woman athlete'. Few would say they were wrong.

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