

SPORTS ILLUSTRATED

AH, IT WAS A MAGIC SHOVEL!

Well didn't it break ground for Dublin's first cinder track that's now famous forever?

August 18th, 1958

The most famous running track in all the world this week was the cinder track of Ireland's Santry Stadium, on the road to the Dublin airport. For it was here (as described in an eyewitness account by Alan Montgomery of Dublin's Irish Times on page 28) that Herb Elliott set a new world record of 3:54.5 for the mile and three other milers bettered John Landy's old record of 3:58.

The story of these incredible performances in the same race was so astonishing that it burst out of the sports pages and onto Page One of newspapers here and abroad. For readers of SPORTS ILLUSTRATED, it was a very special story, one which they had been following and sharing in since January 1957, when the cinder track at Santry was but a gleam in the eye of Ireland's foremost promoter of amateur athletics, indefatigable, irrepressible Billy Morton.

The story began when Associate Editor Gerald Holland was sent to Ireland in the company of Olympic Champion Ron Delany to report on the homecoming celebration for Ireland's greatest athletic hero. In that report, a speech by Delany himself was quoted. In it, the 21-year-old hero told a gathering of Dublin's leading citizens: "Gentlemen, while it's all very well for people to be clapping me on the back and shaking my hand...the constructive thing I want to see is the building of a cinder track on the site which Billy Morton has acquired at Santry."

The Delany story aroused the interest of a SPORTS ILLUSTRATED subscriber, Bernard P. McDonough, of Parkersburg, West Virginia, proprietor of the O. Ames Company, which has been making shovels since Revolutionary days and is the largest shovel factory in the world. Mr. McDonough called Associate Editor Holland, proposed that they fly to Ireland for a weekend and see what might be done to help that economically distressed land—either by starting up a shovel factory or doing something that would be symbolic of Irish-American concern for the old country.

It seemed to SPORTS ILLUSTRATED'S man that if McDonough and Morton could be exposed to each other something would come of it. Moreover, the shovel itself seemed to be a symbol that somehow might fit into the picture. So, before takeoff, Holland asked TWA if the airline would fly an American shovel to Ireland on short notice. Mystified but cooperative, TWA said it would be glad to.

On a whirlwind weekend tour of Ireland, the sportswriter-industrialist team of Holland and McDonough inspected factories, conferred with government officials, were reluctantly forced to the conclusion that old Ireland had shovels enough. This cleared the field for Billy Morton and, when it was discovered that he was not in Ireland at all but in London, the Americans flew there. And in the lounge of London's Dorchester Hotel, McDonough was confronted with Morton, and the subject of Ireland's need for a cinder track was squarely faced. McDonough, who had never seen Morton before in his life and had been blissfully unaware of the urgent need for a cinder track, gave Morton a check for \$1,000 and, at the urging of SPORTS ILLUSTRATED'S man, agreed to provide one of the historic Ames shovels for the groundbreaking ceremonies (detailed in the picture sequence below). TWA, as promised, flew it over next day.

Last week, as Mr. McDonough read of the magic his shovel had helped to work, he cabled Billy Morton a pledge of \$5,000 to help finish the stands at Santry Stadium, a donation he offered "in the hope that other Irish-Americans will join me."

Magic of shovel was first revealed in last summer's SPORTS ILLUSTRATED series, which described adventures ranging over West Virginia, the Atlantic, Ireland and England, and ending in a London rendezvous with fate and Dublin's Billy Morton.

Dublin children marveled at gleaming U.S. shovel after ground-breaking ceremonies on the site of the cinder track.

Finished track, completed last spring, was inspected by track and magic shovel historian, Associate Editor Holland. Bernard McDonough spurred the drive for funds with cash gift and shovel.

Billy Morton received shovel, held it aloft in triumph for the crowd to see.

Ron Delany co-starred with the Lord Mayor in the gala ground-breaking show.

The dream track is pictured here from the air as it awaited the arrival of the superlative runners who were to bring it worldwide fame. In foreground are residences in Santry, Dublin suburb. The highway leads from Dublin City to its airport.