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[SLAM! Track](#)

Fending off a challenge

Borrowed shoes help Cox nip Allaire

By [RYAN PYETTE](#) -- Winnipeg Sun

COLUMNS

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START LINE

- [2001 Worlds](#)
- [Canada Games](#)
- [2000 Games](#)
- [World Records](#)
- [Canadian](#)

Rankings

- [CIS Track](#)
- [100M Record](#)

Times

- [Fastest Marathons](#)
- [USATF Notes](#)

LOOKING BACK

- ['99 World Champs](#)
- [Bailey vs. Johnson](#)
- [Kevin Sullivan chat](#)

INTERACTIVE

- [LIVE! Scoreboard](#)
- [Photo Gallery](#)
- [Sports Talk](#)

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Sport Index



He was an island stranger, a first-time visitor wearing borrowed shoes and shivering in a foreign climate.

All that, and still, 32-year-old Curtis Cox, the Trinidadian freight train, was running away with the Manitoba Marathon, his stride a surer thing than Tiger Woods' swing at the U.S. Open.

But marathon runners don't become warriors by blowing away the field and floating to the finish line.

They show their best stuff in a test, when the tank's empty in Mile 26, and they have to reach beyond their limit to win it.

And yesterday, Cox did just that, holding off Ontario's hard-charging Dallas Allaire by a mere three seconds to win the Manitoba Marathon in one of the more heartstopping finishes of the event's 22-year history.

Another 50 metres, and Allaire might have caught Cox.

"That other guy, he's good," said a wide-eyed Cox, who had to borrow a pair of previous champ Dane Samuel's racing flats to compete and ended up posting a two hours, 30 minutes and 53 seconds to Allaire's 2:30.56. "I'm happy to win. I thought I was running all alone, and all of a sudden, it's like, Whoa!

"I don't know where he came from.

"It's like he came out of nowhere."

Well, almost nowhere.

Allaire is a 37-year-old phys-ed teacher at Nipigon-Red Rock High School near Thunder Bay. This was his sixth marathon. He ran in the Manitoba Marathon last year.

"But I came in with a heel injury and finished 10th," he said. "I

hobbled to the finish."

This year, he finished like a lightning bolt.

Running even with Cox and Samuel in the early-going, Allaire suddenly jumped into a large lead.

But he developed a stitch in his side in the 16th mile, slowed slightly, and Cox caught up and zipped past him just as the marathon weaved onto Broadway.

Cox chugged along, building his lead through Norwood Grove and when he hit Bishop Grandin for the home stretch, it seemed Allaire was stuck somewhere back in east Transcona.

But an improbable kick in the final mile almost saw Allaire complete the unthinkable comeback.

"I could always see him (Cox) and I had a lot left in the tank, but he just held me off in the end," said Allaire, whose family was on hand to cheer him into Pan Am Stadium. "Honestly, I don't know where that last burst came from. I'll take second place, though. I'm not disappointed. It's my personal best."

It wasn't Cox' personal best.

The Trinidadian, who saw his first real train earlier this week here, had a lot on the line yesterday. A run in the 2:20-2:23 range, and the insurance office worker could have been considered for his nation's Olympic team.

He missed his goal by seven minutes.

But that said, his friends back in his poor island homeland wanted Curtis to bring home a souvenir.

And by winning his first 26.2 mile championship, Cox leaves with the painting for first place in the Manitoba Marathon.

It's a picture of a train ... rushing over Norwood Grove to its final destination.

How appropriate.

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Are you glad to see Mike Kelly gone as Blue Bombers coach?

- Yes, they need a fresh start
- No, he was good for them