

MARTIN SHERIDAN, THE WORLD'S CHAMPION ALL-AROUND ATHLETE

BY ROBERT EDGREN

WORLD'S RECORDS HELD BY MARTIN SHERIDAN

Discus throw from eight-foot two-and-a-half-inch circle.....	140 ft. 5½ in.
Discus throw from seven-foot circle.....	138 ft. 10½ in.
Discus throw (Greek style, from pedestal).....	124 ft. 8 in.
Pole vault for distance.....	28 ft.
All-around contest (ten events).....	7,385 points

SHERIDAN'S PERFORMANCES IN THE ALL-AROUND CHAMPIONSHIP

Hundred-yard dash.....	10 3-5 sec.
Shot put.....	43 ft. 1¼ in.
High jump.....	5 ft. 7 in.
Half-mile walk.....	3 min. 43 sec.
Hammer throw.....	125 ft. 10 in.
Pole vault.....	10 ft. 9 in.
Hundred-and-twenty-yard hurdles.....	17 1-5 sec.
Running broad jump.....	20 ft. 7½ in.
Fifty-six-pound weight.....	29 ft. 11½ in.
Mile run.....	6 min. 5 sec.

I NEVER see Martin Sheridan hurling the historic discus of wood, weighted with brass and lead and rimmed with iron, without imagining him a reincarnation of one of the ancient heroes of Greece. He is another Phaylos of Croton. Two thousand years ago Phaylos of Croton outjumped and outthrew all competitors, and made records that astonished even the Greeks, who had been holding great athletic meets constantly for more than a thousand years.

Phaylos leaped fifty-five feet in the triple leap, which is nearly five feet better than any modern athlete can claim. The ancient account, however, fails to tell whether or not Phaylos held in each hand a rounded piece of stone, which he thrust behind him at the finish, to add impetus to the third leap. Phaylos also threw an iron-bound discus weighing, as

scholars tell us, something like twelve pounds, a distance of ninety feet or better. Sheridan's throwing has been with a lighter missile, and it is hard to make comparisons.

But Sheridan is another such man as the old Greek champions—six feet tall, broad and brawny, yet supple and sudden in action. Among our modern athletes he has no near rivals. No other living man can class with him as an all-around athlete, and in six events he holds recognized world's records. There's small doubt that he would give old Phaylos of Croton a hard rub for the honors, could the Greek hero be resurrected for the occasion. One thing is sure, Sheridan would try to the last ounce of his strength and grit and nerve-energy; for that's the kind of a man he is.

"I'm lucky," he said, with a laugh, when congratulated upon having won

both the Greek and the "free-style" discus throws in the Olympic games at London. But was it luck?

Going to England, there was no chance

"I just walked up and down all the time with my hands in my pockets," he told me. "I had pieces of paper crumpled into a ball in each hand, and I



MARTIN SHERIDAN, OF NEW YORK, THROWING THE DISCUS, A SPORT IN WHICH HE HOLDS THE WORLD'S RECORDS

for the American weight-throwers to keep in practise. One must have more room than that available on a steamer-deck for throwing a discus or a hammer. While the other athletes were sitting around, Martin worked out a training-system of his own.

kept gripping them. Every time I tightened my grip I imagined that I was giving the final lift to a discus with my finger-tips. I was training my mind and my muscles to work together, and developing the forearm, which does the best part of the throwing, and nobody

on the ship knew anything about what I was doing."

Landing in London, the Americans went into training-quarters. Day after day Sheridan and "Big Bill" Horr, the Syracuse giant, with Garrels, of Michigan, and M. W. Giffin, of Chicago, threw the discus together. In that preliminary work Garrels and Horr both threw better than Sheridan. They were great men—splendid men, both of them. But when it came to the day of the contest, and the discus was thrown from a wet, slippery clay ring, the thing that has made Sheridan supreme showed again.

Sheridan was behind in the Greek discus-throwing. His team-mates threw beyond his best until the last trial came. Then, drawing on that marvelous reserve energy, he whipped the platter-like weight a foot beyond the best, and won. The same thing happened in the throwing from a circle. Again Sheridan looked hopelessly beaten until his final throw.

THROWING THE DISCUS IN ATHENS

I stood by when Martin made a new world's discus-throwing record at Athens, three years ago. The event was held in a public athletic ground near the Stadium. Sheridan led from the first throw, holding safe Georgantas, the Greek, and Jaervinnen, the huge Finn. Prince George of Greece, himself a gigantic man, standing nearly six and a half feet, and strongly built in proportion, was much interested.

Sheridan's fourth throw sailed clear across the field and fell on the edge of the running-track beyond. On the other side of that was a stone wall, separating the grounds from a small stream between precipitous banks.

"That was a magnificent throw," said the prince. "It will be told for many years that Sheridan, of America, threw the discus into the running-track. If you could send it to the stone-wall, now, you'd have a monument there to measure the throw for centuries."

"Sure!" said Martin, laughing. "If I get a good whip of it, I'll not alone throw it to the wall, but over into the creek beyond."

The "creek" was the famed Ilissus, written into the history and song of Greece for a score of centuries.

"In that case," said Prince George, "you'll have a still more memorable mark."

Sheridan threw the discus to the foot of the stone-wall—not over it. Each of his last three throws broke the world's record. His ambition now is to return to Greece some day—perhaps next year—and throw that old Greek discus from the iron circle at the Gymnasium over the low stone-wall and into the "creek."

A FAMILY OF IRISH ATHLETES

Followers of athletic sport often notice that strength and nerve-force "run in families." Perhaps that is one explanation of Martin Sheridan's surprising all-around ability in athletics. He was born in Bohola, near Swinford, County Mayo, Ireland. And I might remark incidentally that Mayo turns out more famous athletes than any other spot of its size on the face of the globe.

The elder Sheridan was a great jumper and weight-thrower, and Martin was brought up on athletic exercises—principally jumping and throwing the "smoothing-iron." The latter sport is common in Ireland. An ordinary flatiron is grasped by the handle and thrown with a full-arm swing closely resembling the discus-throwing motion.

Martin had several brothers—all athletes. Dick, the eldest, was a champion among hammer-throwers. Three uncles—his mother's brothers—were "grand leapers," and could top six feet in a high jump, or forty-eight feet in a triple leap, any day in the week. But Martin's father was really the family champion. There were not many meets in his day, but he trained constantly, and was always ready for a trial of strength or skill. Jumping with a stone in each hand, old Irish fashion, from a stand, he cleared thirty-six feet and six inches, and this in his forty-fifth year. He jumped in heavy brogans instead of light spiked shoes, which makes his performance remarkable even in a country famous for its jumpers ever since Finn McCoul crossed Ireland in three leaps and left the marks of his heels in the solid stone where he took off.

After the Olympic Games in London, Martin Sheridan visited his old home. His father was sixty-four years old, but

still active as ever. They had a family field-day, and Martin had all he could do to defeat the veteran.

"In fact," he says, with a chuckle, "there was one day he beat me well throwing the smoothing-iron. He jumped twenty-seven feet and nine inches in the standing triple jump, without weights, and near thirty-three feet with them."

HOW SHERIDAN CAME TO NEW YORK

Part of Sheridan's success lies in his determination to do everything he attempts just a little better than any one else. It was twelve years ago that he left County Mayo and started out to see the world. First he went across to England. Landing at Southampton without any too much money in his pockets, he looked around for work. A gang of Italians was laying steel rails in the street. Martin watched the men for a moment. Three or four were slowly and deliberately driving spikes with heavy sledges. Stepping up, Martin pushed one of them aside, took his sledge, and began driving spikes himself with heavy blows—a blow to each spike, and no more. Down they went one after another—smash, smash, smash.

The foreman engaged Sheridan on the spot, and set him to driving spikes. He did three men's work. All day long he swung his sledge without stopping for a rest. The others, ashamed, tried to keep up the pace he set. When the day was over, Sheridan, with an untamable Irishman's desire to proclaim himself still fresh as a daisy, cleared both tracks in a standing jump, and then jumped back again, all of which vastly amazed the weary and wondering Italians.

For a few weeks Sheridan swung his sledge, and then, with money in his pockets, he set sail for America.

"And mighty glad they were to see me go—all but the foreman," says Martin naively.

Big brother Dick had already come to New York, and was quite a figure in weight-throwing circles. Dick was a giant. I remember that I listened with some incredulity when Dick boasted that his "kid brother" could beat him at discus-throwing. But in 1901 Martin began competing. He started like a champion, hurling the discus one hundred

and thirteen feet and nine inches, which is a good performance even to-day. In a year he was the best discus-thrower in the world, and since that time he has suffered but one defeat—a matter of a few inches—by any rival placed on scratch with him.

THE ALL-AROUND CHAMPIONSHIP

This summer he turned his attention to the American all-around championship, which he had already won twice. Every year the A. A. U. holds this meet. It is practically a world's championship, as Kiley of Ireland, Europe's best all-around athlete, came here one year and set a record; and no rival for Kiley has yet appeared on the other side.

The "all-arounds" comprise ten events—hundred-yard dash, shot-put, high jump, half-mile walk, hammer-throw, pole-vault, hundred-and-twenty-yard hurdle-race, running broad jump, fifty-six-pound weight-throw, and mile run. These are run off in quick succession, with only a five-minute rest-interval between events. To go through the program takes marvelous endurance. Most contestants cut out three or four events. Sheridan goes into every one. The points are figured on a basis of one thousand for each event, the full thousand being allowed for equaling a world's record, and a proportionate number for performances of lesser merit.

Harry Gill, of Toronto, broke Kiley's record and that of Ellery Clark, of Boston, another former champion. Kiley's score was six thousand two hundred and eighty; Gill beat him by eighty and one-half points. Aiming high, Sheridan determined to better seven thousand points.

All spring he competed in jumps and sprints and hurdle-races, making some splendid marks. At last he was fit for the test. The first race was the hundred yards, which he covered in ten and three-fifths seconds. Of course, it is impossible to score in each part of an all-around contest as if it were the only event to be competed in that day; yet in every event Sheridan did a remarkably good performance.

Last on the program came the mile run. He had only to cover the distance in about six minutes and a half in order to smash the record to smithereens; and

Sheridan had often run a minute faster than that in training. It was necessary, however, to finish the mile, for he was still a few points short of the mark.

Sheridan stepped up for that last race filled with a sense of strength and confidence. He knew he held the record safe—if he finished the mile.

"Seventy-five hundred points!" he told himself triumphantly.

A GRIM TEST OF ENDURANCE

The starter's pistol popped, and Martin swept into the long grind around the cinder-path. It was easy going for a quarter of a mile, and then suddenly a terrible cramp caught him in the side and bent him double. He staggered along in agony. The Princeton coach, running beside the track, called:

"Keep moving, Martin; keep moving! Only finish, and the record's yours!"

Sheridan, staggering and reeling along, could not answer; but his grim determination never flagged.

"I've worked too hard to lose now," he thought, "and I won't!"

One more lap—that was the half mile. Another half to go! Around the course again, and now the three-quarter mile.

"Only a quarter more, Martin!" called the coach. "Steady, boy, you'll make it. Keep going!"

And then, with a quarter-mile more to go, Martin Sheridan went stone blind from heat and pain and exertion.

"My head was clear," he told me afterward, "but I couldn't see a thing. Everything turned black in front of my eyes. I could hear some one running on the turf beside the track, and the boys begging me to stick it out.

"Only a hundred more, Martin!" they said. 'You'll make it yet! Only eighty, Martin! Steady, boy—fifty yards—don't fall. Keep going—keep going—keep going!'

"My legs were like lead, and the pain in my body was such that I thought I'd break in two at every stride. Yet they tell me I spurted at the finish. I didn't know it. It was all black, like running in a tunnel.

"Twenty yards!" called somebody.

"Then I felt myself falling. I nearly went down, but I pulled my legs under

me and lurched on. My knees gave way again, and I barely caught myself for a couple of strides more. I could hear the coach saying:

"Only ten yards more, Martin!"

"It sounded as if he was crying. Then my legs went from under me for fair. I tried to fall forward as far as I could, and reached out in the dark to get my arms over the line. The last thing I knew I was thinking:

"Six yards short—I miss breaking the record by six yards!"

"Then, the next thing, they were carrying me off and throwing cold water on me, and everybody was slapping me on the back. You see, I happened to be right over the finish-line when I fell, and I carried the tape down with me, so I got the record after all—seven thousand three hundred and eighty-five points. But it was lucky I didn't fall a minute sooner. I know now just how Dorando felt in London.

"Next year I'm going to train until I can finish with a mile in five minutes and a half, after bettering my other marks. I've figured a way to raise the record to eight thousand points. If I succeed, some other fellow can have the all-around title after that. I'll be through!"

That's Martin Sheridan. He'll set his mark, and he'll never stop until he makes it. The all-around contest is a terrible strain. I've heard physicians say that it is impossible for a man to do so without dying on the spot, but I know it to be a fact that Martin Sheridan lost a little more than twenty pounds' weight during the three hours that the contest lasted. And it wasn't fat. He was a well-trained, lean athlete when it started. At the date of this writing, a month after the test, he is still ten pounds below his normal weight of one hundred and ninety-four pounds in athletic costume, and it will be another month before he gets back to record-breaking condition again in his favorite events.

Still, I'm satisfied that Sheridan will raise the all-around record to eight thousand points next year, unless he takes it into his head to run across to the Olympic Games of 1910, in Athens, and toss that iron-bound discus over into the "creek."



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