

Clarence vs. the Champion



By Lori Fuller

Church Magazines
(Based on a true story)

Clarence stared out the car window as the harbor came into view. Boats floated in the water in front of colorful houses and shops. Copenhagen, Denmark, was a beautiful city filled with palaces, mansions, and parks. It was not at all like Clarence's hometown in Utah, USA. Clarence could picture the dusty streets where he ran races as a boy. Now he was a member of the United States track team, and tomorrow he would be facing a famous Danish runner in an important race.

The car stopped at a small chapel where a Church meeting had already started.

As Clarence slipped into the back of the meeting, one of the missionaries sitting on the stand recognized him from a news article about tomorrow's race. The branch president asked Clarence to come up and speak.

After Clarence told why he was visiting, a boy stood up and raised his hand. "Do you think you can beat the Danish champion?" he asked.

Clarence wasn't sure what to say. The Danish runner *did* have a better time in the mile that season.

"Of course he can," said one of the missionaries before Clarence could answer. "Because he lives the Word of Wisdom." He opened his scriptures to [Doctrine and Covenants 89](#). He read the promise that those who keep the Word of Wisdom "shall run and not be weary, and shall walk and not faint" ([verse 20](#)).

Clarence saw a long row of boys looking up at him. What could he say? As a child he had promised to always keep the Word of Wisdom. But that alone didn't mean he could win this race. Winning also required practice and skill. As Clarence left the meeting, he thought, *Well, no one from church will be at the race tomorrow anyway.*



CLARENCE'S CHOICE

Clarence F. Robison raced in the 1948 Summer Olympics and became a great college track coach. When he was young, he promised his mother he would always keep the Word of Wisdom. He knew this wouldn't make him win all his races. But he knew that Heavenly Father could help him do his best when he was clean and worthy and faithful.

The next evening as Clarence was warming up for his race, he looked up and saw the two missionaries with a group of about 17 boys. They *had* come!

As they got closer, one of the missionaries whispered to Clarence, "If you've ever run fast in your life, you'd better run fast tonight." Many of the boys weren't members of the Church but had come with their friends to see if the Word of Wisdom was really true.

Clarence was worried. In this race, his best might not be good enough. But he was running for a principle of the gospel of Jesus Christ. He *had* to win. He had never prayed to win before, but he found an empty room to kneel and pray.

He prayed, "Father in Heaven, I know the Word of Wisdom is true, and I have never broken it. Please bless me with victory in this race." As he walked out to the starting line, he knew Heavenly Father had heard his prayer.

He trusted Heavenly Father's will.

The evening was rainy and muddy. As Clarence began the race, it seemed just like many other mile races he had run. The pace was fast, and the Danish champion was ahead. But as Clarence finished the third lap, suddenly he was not tired anymore. He started running faster, and it didn't hurt. Going even a little faster still didn't hurt. He passed the Danish champion and *still* went faster.

As Clarence came around the turn, his coach yelled, "Slow down! You'll never make the finish line!" But Clarence knew he could keep running. And when he finished the race, he was more than 50 yards (46 m) ahead of the Danish runner! He knew he had won because Heavenly Father had answered his prayer and because the Word of Wisdom is true. ♦