

Kathrine Switzer Biography

Iconic athlete, sports and social advocate, author, and Emmy award-winning television commentator, Kathrine Switzer was the first woman to officially register and run the Boston Marathon. She has been honored widely for her achievements, including being inducted into the U.S.A National Women's Hall of Fame for creating positive social change. The ramifications of her work are both joyful and profound, changing forever the face of sports, health, and opportunities for women around the world.

Kathrine Switzer is relentless in her efforts to empower millions of women beyond the finish line, now through the recently-created non-profit "261 Fearless, Inc." and in her example: 50 years after she first challenged the previously 'all-male' rules of the Boston Marathon, she trained hard and ran the prestigious event again, and only 24 minutes slower than she did at age 20.

Sports history changed in 1967 when Switzer officially registered and finished that famous race. She was not the first woman to run a marathon, but she was the first to register. It was still a men's only event in those days and Switzer's entry created a worldwide uproar when the race director attacked her mid-stride and tried to tear off her bib numbers to remove her from the event because she was a woman. The photo of this incident flashed around the globe and became one of Time-Life's *100 Photos that Changed the World*.

Radicalized by the incident, Switzer campaigned for sports equality for women, and created opportunities for them. Official status came in the Boston Marathon in 1972; later that year she was one of the creators of the first-ever women's road race and the women's running boom was on. Switzer went on to run 42 marathons, and won the New York City Marathon in 1974. (Which she also ran again in 2017, 43 years later). She ran her personal best in 1975, finishing second in Boston (2:51:37). She then put her substantial energies into creating the Avon International Running Circuit of women's only races in 27 countries with over a million women participating from 1978 to the present time. It was this series of events, which showed global participation and performances that largely convinced the International Olympic Committee (IOC) to include a women's marathon for the first time in the 1984 Olympic Games.

While Switzer regards this accomplishment as a game-changer for women, she has yet larger ambitions of taking the transformational power of running to more women all over the world, especially those who don't have easy access to opportunities. Through "[261 Fearless](#)", her 501c3 foundation, she aims to empower women through a network of communication, clubs, training, events and merchandising. 261 was the bib number the angry official tried to tear off of her in the Boston Marathon in 1967; over the years, the number has come to mean 'fearless in the face of adversity' as women relate to its powerful story.

Switzer is a personal example of fearlessness as well, having disproved years of myth and supposed female limitation. Now she takes on the challenge of ageing

by celebrating her experiences in the Boston, New York City and London Marathons, all run in her 70s. She is now the first woman in history to have run a marathon 50 years after her first one. More significantly, she is joined by an enthusiastic team of women who run with her in celebratory fundraising efforts to globally support 261 Fearless.

Growing up in an era where sport was a man's domain and also largely amateur, Kathrine parlayed her writing skills in her corporate careers and her running passion together into self-created careers in sports marketing with corporate sponsorship. Her corporate careers included jobs with Bristol-Myers (68-72), AMF incorporated (73-77; at the time the world's largest sports equipment company), and Avon Products, Inc. (77-85 and again 97-05; at the time the world's largest cosmetics company.) It was with Avon's sizable public relations budget and global reach that Kathrine created the women's running program in 27 countries; one of the company's most dynamic PR programs.

Switzer is an Emmy award-winning TV commentator and has covered the Olympic Games, World and National Championships as well as hundreds of other events including the New York City, Chicago, Los Angeles and every televised edition of the Boston Marathon (41 consecutive years!). She is a journalist that has published hundreds of articles and is an author of three books, including her memoir, *Marathon Woman*. Other books include, *26.2 Marathon Stories*, co-authored with her husband, Roger Robinson, and *Running and Walking for Women Over 40*.

Switzer is a dynamic public speaker who inspires her audience because she is an authentic and accessible example herself. She is a visionary who has changed the world, continues to do so to this day and shows her audience how they, too, can make a positive and lasting impact on the world, or simply in their own lives.

She is also a lively, entertaining and highly significant interview and consequently enjoys extensive and continuous national and global publicity. This has included Oprah, Tonight, Today, Good Morning America, Nightline, and features on CBS, NBC, ABC, PBS, MSNBC, ESPN, CBC, BBC, France3, France National, NHK Japan, ZDF Germany, TV Hamburg, etc., and all the major daily newspapers and magazines in the countries she visits. A media standout, however, was being the program-opening interview in "MAKERS: Women Who Make America", the 3-hour PBS-AOL documentary on the women's movement that first aired in 2012 and continues today as a precedent-setting global series.

Her world is global, and she speaks, commentates, endorses and runs from Athens to Argentina to Atlanta, from Boston to Beijing to Brussels. She lives in both the Hudson Valley of New York and in Wellington, New Zealand.

Switzer received both her B.A. ('68) and M.A. ('72) from the Syracuse University Newhouse School of Communications, and serves on the Board of Advisors at Syracuse University's Falk College of Sport and Human Dynamics. In 2006 Switzer was awarded the Arents Award, Syracuse University's highest award

given to honor an alum. In 2018, Switzer served as Syracuse University's commencement speaker and was awarded an Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters.

While all her awards and accolades are too lengthy to name, there is one particular highlight: In 2011 she was inducted into the U.S.A. National Women's Hall of Fame; not just for breaking barriers, but also for creating positive global social change. Because of her, millions of women are now empowered by the simple act of running. Or as Kathrine says, "It's not about running. It's about changing people's lives."

For more information about Kathrine Switzer, please visit:

www.marathonwoman.com

www.261fearless.org

www.makers.com

Switzer's Career Highlights include:

- Inducted into the National Women's Hall of Fame in October 2011 for creating positive global social change.
- Creating "261Fearless", a non-profit that is empowering women around the world.
- Being instrumental in getting the women's marathon into the Olympic Games.
- Winner of several Emmy Awards for marathon TV broadcasting .
- Author, *Marathon Woman* (DaCapo Press), *Running and Walking for Women Over 40*, (St. Martins Press and also Diversion Publishing (e-book)), co-author *26.2 Marathon Stories* (Rodale).
- Founder and former director of the Avon International Running Circuit; 400 races, 27 countries, 1 million women.
- Inducted Hall of Fame ('14) and winner of Abebe Bikila Award ('07) for Global Contribution to Sport of Running from New York Road Runners
- First class of inductees ('98) National Distance Running Hall of Fame
- Named one of the Visionaries of the Century (2000); a Hero of Running (2012), and Runner of the Decade (1966-76) by Runners World Magazine.
- Winner, 1974 NYC Marathon.
- Broke Gender Barrier at 1967 Boston Marathon.
- Achieving a world-ranked 2:51 marathon time in 1975.
- Running the 2017 Boston Marathon, 50 years after the first; the 2017 New York City Marathon, 43 years after winning it, and the 2018 London Marathon, a race she helped create.

Speech Titles Include:

- Become a Hero In Your Own Life
- Putting One Foot in Front of the Other: (Change Your Life & Change the World)
- Breaking Barriers: Yours, Theirs, Ours

- Reverse the Process: Make Positives from Negatives
- Take Charge of Your Body, Take Charge of Your Life
- Marathon Woman: My Story, Your Story (Not For Women Only!)
- Talent is Everywhere; It Only Needs an Opportunity
- You Can't Run and Stay Mad
- Life is for Participating, Not Spectating
- Whatever title you want, Switzer can make it work!

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