



# George Hazael

## The First Man to Run 600 Miles in 6 Days!

By P. S. Marshall

### Author of “King of the Peds”

**George Hazael** (seen on the left leading the field at Madison Square Garden in the 5<sup>th</sup> international Astley Belt contest in 1879), was born in 1844 on Commercial Road, Stepney, London. Weighing 8st.10lb and at a height of 5ft.6½in, George, with his *“bull dog face, short cropped hair and almost deformed stooped shoulders which gave him the most displeasing appearance”*, travelled all over the UK, including Scotland, in pursuit of prize money by competing against others in running races. In December 1877, in an “International Running Match”, Hazael took on, and beat, the champion

runner of France and Italy, Achille Bargozzi, in a 30-mile event for a prize of £50 at Lillie Bridge, West Brompton.

His first recorded venture into six-day racing was when he beat the useful Sheffielder, Peter Crossland, at Manchester’s Pomona Gardens in March, 1878. After finishing nowhere in the 1<sup>st</sup> international contest for the Astley Belt at the Agricultural Hall, Islington, London, George made a new 100-mile world-record at the same venue, in 17h.4m.6s., going on to win the £100 first prize in that 142-hour race. He then finished in the runner-up position in a 4-man race against Fulham’s “Blower” Brown, Bethnal Green’s William “Corkey” Gentleman and Edward Payson Weston from Providence, Rhode Island, USA, again at the “Aggie” in April of 1879 - scoring 492 miles in the allotted time.

George then made his way over to America on the steamship *Montana* accompanied by his trainer Isaac Sullivan. At Madison Square Garden, New York, in September of 1879, and as the 4/1, 3<sup>rd</sup> favourite, he made 500 miles in the 5<sup>th</sup> international Astley Belt race winning a prize of US\$4,192.50 (\$95,000 in today’s money) for finishing in third place!

After a trip back to London to compete in the 3<sup>rd</sup> “Long Distance Champion of England” race in Islington, where he clinched 2<sup>nd</sup> prize money (beaten by Brown of Fulham), Hazael returned back to the USA when he appeared in the “Ennis International Belt” at

the American Institute Building, New York, in early May of 1881. However, and because of a low attendance, he withdrew early on to have a crack at the “2nd O’Leary International Belt” at Madison Square Garden a week later, where he went on to make another 500 miles.



GEORGE HAZAEL.

Then in early 1882, Hazael did the unthinkable when he became the first man ever to make 600 miles in six consecutive days winning the staggering sum of US\$18,380 – which is worth almost \$400,000 in today’s money! This formidable score was made in New York against the then, best long-distance athletes in the world who had collectively organised a \$1,000 sweepstakes amongst themselves.

After that remarkable world-record, George continued to ply his trade as a “pro” in the USA, where, not only did he become an American citizen, but he purchased a hotel. It is said that he constructed a race track outside the building to practice on!