

'87 Wharf To Wharf Race

Marden edges Bishop

Winning margin
the closest ever

By ED VYEDA

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CAPITOLA — Shirtless and sipping on a cold drink, Jay Marden strolled along the Capitola Village esplanade, alone and anonymous, amid the hords of Wharf To Wharf Race finishers who were still pouring into the party area.

Nobody knew who he was.

"Just the way I like it," Marden said.

Marden's performance was just the way he liked it, too. The world-class track star from Fremont won on the new, six-mile Wharf To Wharf course in a thrilling fight to the finish line — beating Steve Bishop of West Covina by a step.

Marden's time was officially listed as 28 minutes, 14.3 seconds, with Bishop listed at 28:14.7.

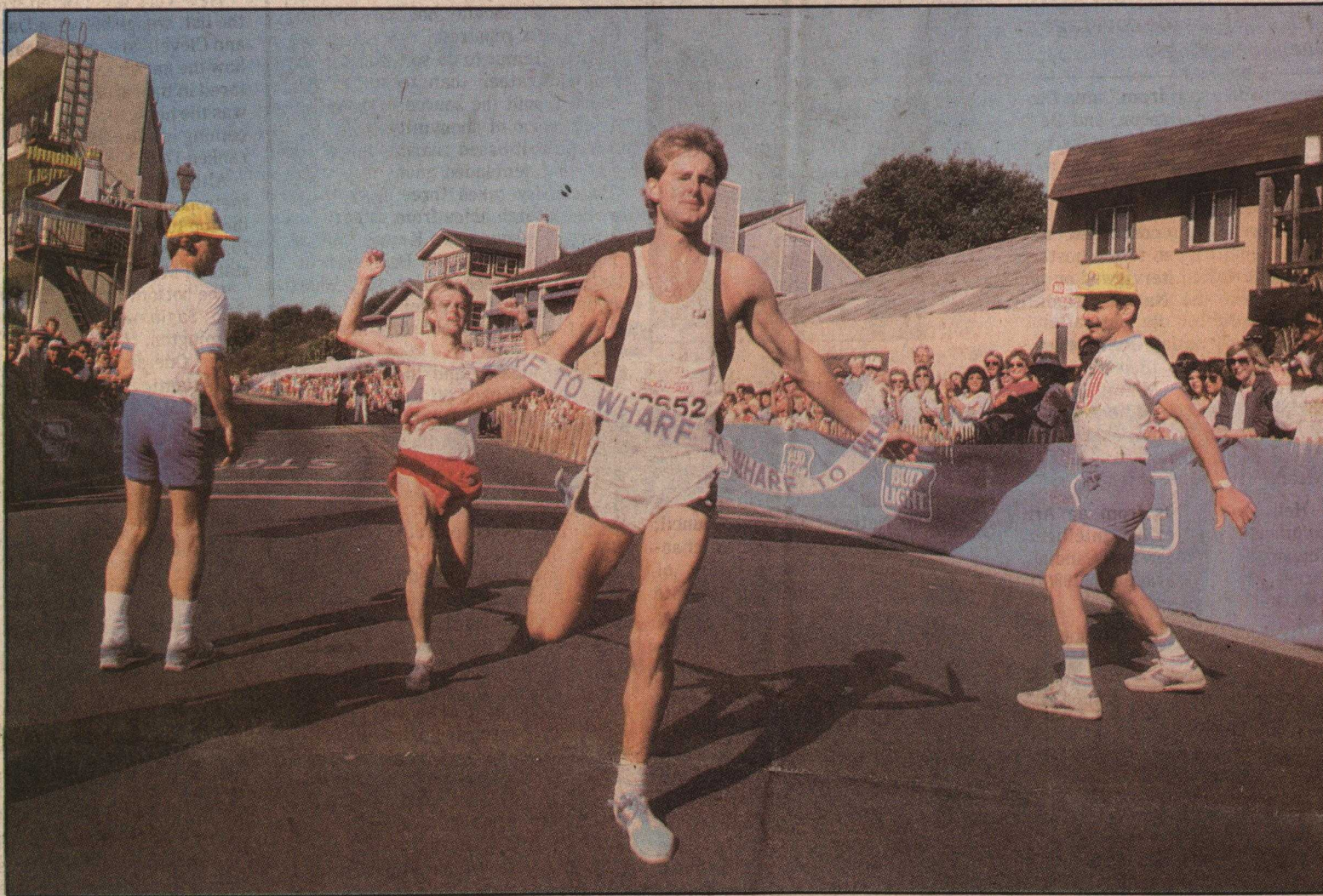
"It was that fine line of running," Marden, 23, explained of his push down the Cliff Drive hill to the tightest victory in the 15-year history of the event. "You have to see if there is a little something in your heart."

The race was the biggest and brightest ever, with an officially estimated 13,500 runners basking in sunshine from start to finish.

But the day also included one of the darkest moments in race history, when 39-year-old Joseph Wonder, of Elk Grove, collapsed and was pronounced dead of an apparent heart attack. It was the first fatality in the relatively easy, six-mile run.

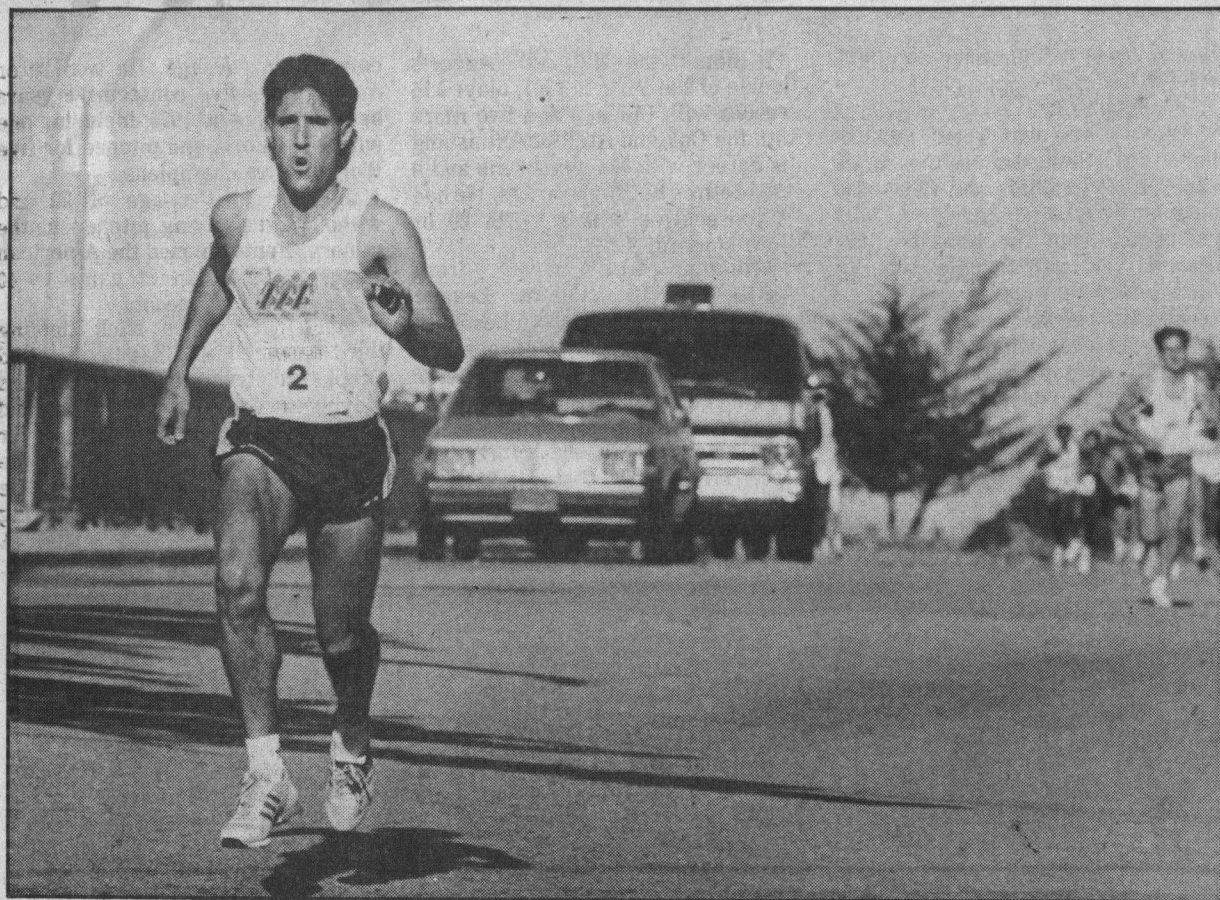
Until Marden actually lined up in front of the Coconut Grove for Sunday's 8:30 a.m. start, nobody

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Bill Lovejoy/Sentinel

In the closest finish in Wharf To Wharf history, Jay Marden nipped Steve Bishop by four-tenths of a second.



Bill Lovejoy/Sentinel

Steve Ortiz ran the first three miles in 13:53 for a big lead, but then burned out.

Marden wins in closest finish ever

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was absolutely certain if he would compete. After all, it was only Tuesday that Marden had returned home from Yugoslavia, where he was fifth in the 5,000 meters at the recent World University Games. And he's heading back to Europe again this week. "It took a lot of convincing to get me to run this," said Marden, whose family and friends twisted his arm enough to head down to the beach for the day.

But, what the other top runners were convinced of, was that if Marden showed, he'd be tough to beat.

"Jay was sort of a 19th-hour entry," said Tim Gruber, who grew up in Aptos and was the local favorite; he gave a great effort, for a solid third-place finish, in 28:32.3. "When I first heard who was in the race (last week), I thought I had a good shot at it, unless another guy came in to muddy the picture.

"Jay muddied everybody's picture," said Gruber.

Saturday, when Gruber found out Marden had entered, Gruber told The Sentinel that Marden would be the guy to beat. "I'm sorry I was so accurate," Gruber said with a smile.

Marden, a Cal standout from 1982-85, was accurate, too, with setting up his victory pace. He patiently stayed within reach of early leader

Steve Ortiz, the 1985 Wharf To Wharf champion who blitzed out to the lead for the first three miles — before stomach pains and breathing problems kept him from doing any better than fourth.

Marden and Bishop, the 5-foot-5 road racer, caught Ortiz by 25th Avenue and took the lead, just before hitting the four-mile mark in 18:47.

"Ortiz went out like Superman," Marden said of Ortiz living up to his "Kamikaze Kid" reputation of going as fast as he can for as long as he can. "It was way too quick," Marden said. "When he's at the top of his game, maybe he can keep it going. And if he did, more power to him."

Besides, Bishop said, if Ortiz was having a good day, "We weren't going to catch him anyway."

But, Ortiz, who ran the first three miles in 13:53, burned out.

"I felt I was running easy at three miles," a disappointed Ortiz explained, "then boom." For the next 500 yards, he said, "I couldn't breathe." He eventually fell back to fifth, but fought back for fourth.

"I was ready to stop at four miles," he said later, "but I couldn't come up here and pull out like that."

The last two miles, it was a two-man race: Marden and Bishop each trying whatever tactics might work to get an edge. Bishop, a former Montana State distance runner, tried to surge to get ahead, knowing that if

it came down to a sprint to the finish, he would be at a disadvantage.

"He hung in there and I couldn't break him," said Bishop, 27, who like Marden was running the Wharf To Wharf for the first time. "At this point, he is coming off a great deal of good races. He has the track speed. My last track meet was months ago, and I had tapered off my speed work. So I didn't want it to come down to a kick."

When the two neared the end of Opal Cliff Drive, the last portion of flat road, the pace quickened sharply. "When we started to kick, I knew there was no way I was going to lose," Marden said.

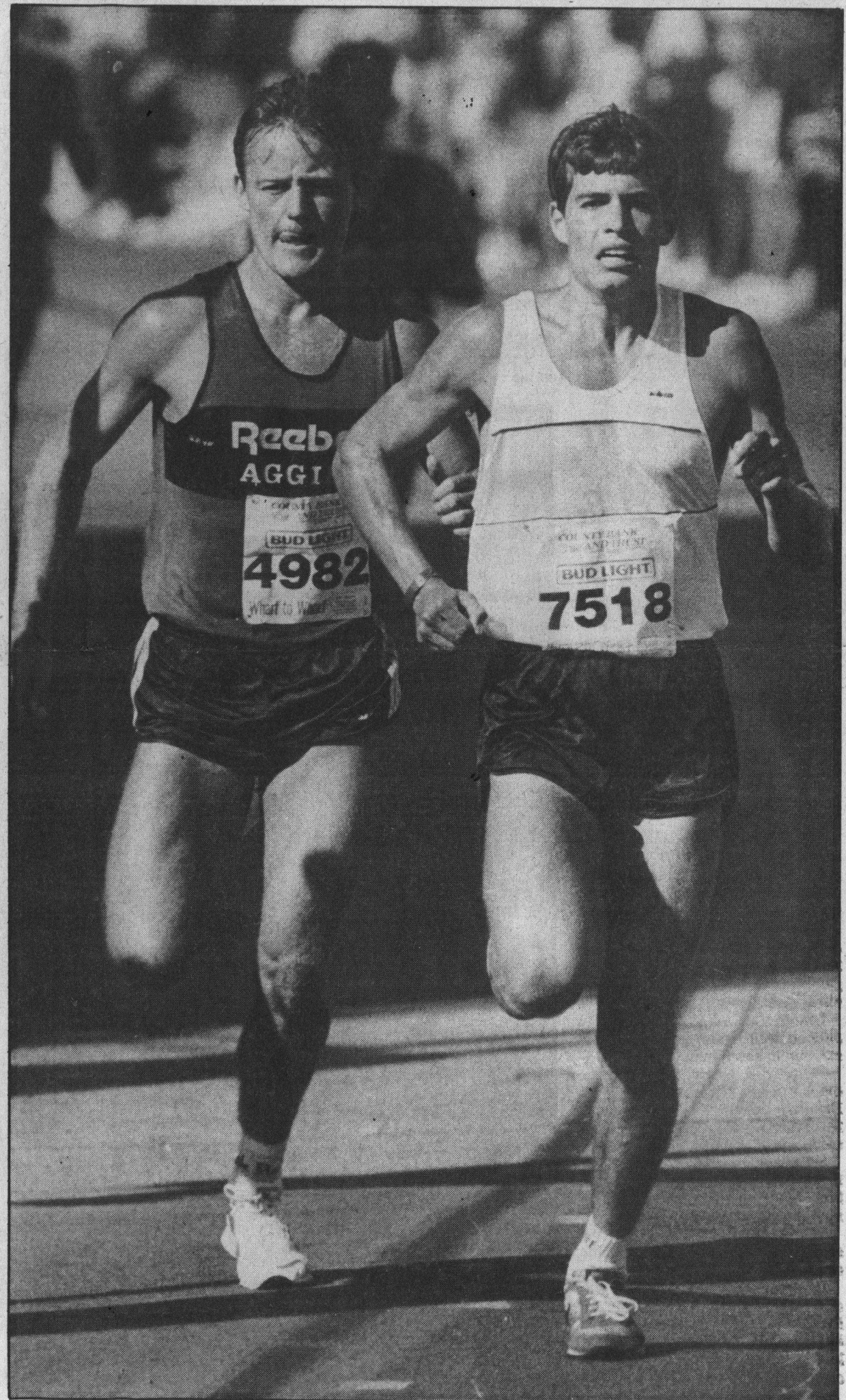
Saturday, Bishop, Gruber and Ortiz had talked about the downhill stretch to the finish, and how if someone had a five-yard lead, passing would be impossible. But if they were neck-and-neck, Gruber said, almost prophetically, it would be interesting ...

"On a flat (surface), the difference in speed and conditioning comes out more," Bishop said. "I didn't feel too bad. We both ran fast."

Indeed, Marden didn't take the lead until they turned down Cliff Drive, having perfectly reeled in his victim.

"That was the whole picture," Marden said of his strategy.

Nothing muddy about it, either.



Bill Lovejoy/Sentinel

Just a couple of guys out for a casual run on a nice Sunday morning? Not even.