Written by Mike Kelly
Monday, 09 July 2012 08:06

Bill Rodgers, a four-time winner of the Boston Marathon, will be speaking at Zap Fitness Foundation tonight beginning at 8 p.m. Zap Fitness is located at 9560 Blackberry Road in Lenior. It is free of charge and open to the public. For more information, please call Pete Rea at 828-295-6198. Rodgers won both the Boston Marathon and the New York Marathon four times each between 1975 and

1980, twice breaking the American record at Boston with a time of 2:09:55 in 1975 and a 2:09:27 in 1979. In 1977 he won the Fukuoka Marathon, making him the only runner ever to hold the championship of all three major marathons at the same time. He made the 1976 U.S. Olympic team and raced the marathon at the Montreal Olympics in 1976, finishing 40th. He did not participate in the Olympics in 1980 due to the U.S. boycott over the invasion of Afghanistan by the USSR. Rodgers is also the last U.S.-born winner in the men's or women's open divisions of the New York City Marathon to date; the two subsequent American winners were born in Cuba (Alberto Salazar) and Eritrea (Meb Keflezighi).
In 1975 Rodgers won the bronze medal at the IAAF World Cross Country Championships, equaling Tracy Smith's 1966 bronze in the International Cross Country Championships as the highest an American had ever finished in international cross country competition. Rodgers' most remarkable year on the road racing circuit came in 1978 when he won 27 of the 30 races he entered, including the Pepsi 10,000 meter nationals (with a new world road 10K best time of 28:36.3), the Falmouth Road Race, and the Boston & New York marathons. Rodgers is also the former world record holder for 25 kilometers as he broke Pekka Päivärinta's world record with a time of 1:14.11.8 on a track at West Valley College in Saratoga, California in 1979.
Track & Field News ranked Rodgers #1 in the world in the marathon in 1975, 1977 and 1979. Of the 59 marathons Rodgers ran, 28 were run under 2:15. In all he won 22 marathons in his career. He came to be referred to by sportswriters and others as "Boston Billy".

Photo Courtesy: Bill Rodgers, PHOTO SUBMITTED