

THE 24 HOUR RUN - A PROGRESSION

On 30th September 2021, Lithuanian ultrarunner **Aleksandr Sorokin** shattered the 24 Hour Run world record, covering 309.4 km (192.4 miles) during the Polish 24 Hour Championships in Pabianice, Poland. ¹ To put this in perspective, Sorokin averaged 4:39 per kilometre for 309 kilometres.

The previous record of 303.5km had been set by Yiannis Kouros in 1997. It was widely believed that Kouros' achievement would never be broken, having been described as 'untouchable', but incredibly Sorokin added almost six additional kilometres to the record.

While it's not an ultra walking performance, it is such an astonishing run that it deserves some attention.

First, let's consider the progression of the 24 Hour Run record. ²

John Hague of England was the first runner known to complete 100 miles within 24 hours. He reached that mark in a time of 23:15 in August 1762. This was in the early days of the pedestrians.

The upsurge in the 100 miles/24 hours started in 1879 when **George Hazael** ³ ran 214.144 km (133 miles) in April of that year in London. **Charles Rowell** ⁴ improved the 24 Hour mark to 235.194 km (146 miles) a year later, in 1880, in London. Interestingly, both marks were set in 6 Day events.

In 1882, Rowell improved the mark to 150 miles in 24 Hours, but he actually stopped at 23 hours. In that particular 6 Day race, he set new world records for 100 miles (13:26), 24 Hours (150 miles), 48 Hours (258 miles/415 km) and 300 miles (58:17:06).

Fifty years later, in 1931, **Arthur Newton** ⁵ improved the mark to 152 miles. Twenty years later, in 1953, **Wally Hayward** ⁶ ran 159 miles. Twenty years later in 1973, **Ron Bentley** ⁷ ran 161 miles. So only eleven miles progress in 90 years!

However, one could argue that even less progress had been made in that 90 year period, as Rowell's 150 miles in 23 hours on the first day of a 6 Day race in 1882 indicates that he was probably capable of 160+ miles if he had attempted a flat out 24 Hour run.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, slow growing competitive pressure had gradually pushed the 24 Hour best time upwards and, by 1982, **Bernard Gaudin** of France held the best mark with 274.715km (170.7 miles). But it was slow going as there were no truly international 24 Hour championships and few invitational international races. Lausanne was a notable exception, as were the Milton Keynes races. Eventually, regular annual 24 Hour races started to pop up on the calendar, the longest running of which is the Self-Transcendence 24 Hour Race which has been held in Ottawa, Canada, since 1981. The Sri Chinmoy Australian 24 Hour Track Championship started in Adelaide in 1982 and the Victorian 24 Hour Track Championship (now incorporated into the Coburg 24 Hour Carnival) kicked off in 1984. The first international championship was held in February 1990 in Milton Keynes, England and the IAU 24 Hour European Championship started in 1992.

It was only a matter of time before Australian/Greek runner **Yiannos Kouros** turned his attention to the 24 Hour Run and, in 1984, he raised the ante to 177 miles (284km) in New York. He returned to New York a year later, increasing his 24 Hour world best to 178 miles in torrential rain. In 1996 he bettered this with 294.504km (183 miles) in Melbourne, despite running in strong wind and rain, and in 1997, he improved the record to 303.5km (188.5 miles) in Adelaide. When he finished that race, he declared, "I will run no more 24-hour races. This record will stand for centuries." His performance was 17 miles further than anyone else had ever gone in 24 hours.

1 See <https://runningmagazine.ca/the-scene/aleksandr-sorokin-of-lithuania-runs-309-kilometres-in-24-hours-to-break-world-record/>

2 Thanks to English statistician and running historian Andy Milroy for much of the info on the record progression

3 See http://www.kingofthepeds.com/George_Hazael.pdf

4 See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Rowell

5 See <https://ultrarunninghistory.com/100-miler-6/>

6 See <https://ultrarunninghistory.com/100-miler-8/>

7 See <http://www.scottishdistancerunninghistory.scot/ron-bentley-obituary/>



Yiannos Kouros flies on the track

Fast forward 24 years to 2021. Someone was finally ready to challenge Kouros's unbeatable record, and that man was **Aleksandr Sorokin**. Sorokin, who turns 40 this year, came to his 2021 24 Hour attempt with great credentials. He was the IAU 24 Hour Run title holder, having won in Albi, France, in 2019 with 278.972km. He was also the world record holder for 150km (10:27:48), 100 miles (11:14.56), and 12 hours (170.3km). His overall pace for the 12-hour record comes out at 4:14 per kilometre.⁸

Sorokin had taken a chance that paid off at his 100-mile record run early in 2021. "A friend of mine gave me pair of Nike Alphafly's to try before the race. I liked the softness of the shoe. I took the risk of wearing the Nike Alphafly during the race," he says. "I find that cushioning is important when running long distances." It certainly worked!

He used the same brand of revolutionary shoes in his 24 Hour run last month in Poland.



Aleksandr Sorokin runs 309km in 24 hours in Poland last month

Where to from here? Is 200 miles/320 km in 24 hours possible (back to back sub 12 hour 100 miles)? And what of the 100 mile run? Sorokin holds that record with 11:14. Is a sub-11 100 mile coming soon?

8 See <https://runningmagazine.ca/the-scene/meet-aleksandr-sorokin-the-man-behind-the-new-24-hour-world-record/>

It sure could, and perhaps the man to do it might be marathon world record-holder and dual Olympic champion **Eliud Kipchoge**. In a recent interview with Rob Steger in the Training for Ultra Podcast, he revealed his next goal after he finishes his marathon career: to tackle an ultra. ⁹ And he also races in Nike Alphaflys.

We may be entering an exciting new period for ultra distance running.

I finish off with a review of the Men's 24 Hour All-Time Ranking ¹⁰ (I = Indoor, T = Track, S = Split). Amazingly, Kouros still has 11 of the top 14 performances and only 5 men have run further than 280km. They form a very small and elite group at the top of the 24 Hour Run pyramid.

1	309.399 km		Sorokin, Aleksandr	LTU	30.09.81	M35	1	29.08.2021	Pabianice (POL)
2	303.506 km	T	Kouros, Yiannis	AUS	13.02.56	M40	1	05.10.1997	Adelaide (AUS)
3	295.363 km		Tkachuk, Andrii	UKR	16.08.85	M35	2	29.08.2021	Pabianice (POL)
	295.030 km	T	Kouros, Yiannis	AUS	13.02.56	M40	2	03.03.1997	Bruce (AUS)
	294.504 km	T	Kouros, Yiannis	AUS	13.02.56	M40	3	14.04.1996	Coburg (AUS)
	290.221 km		Kouros, Yiannis	AUS	13.02.56	M40	4	03.05.1998	Basel (SUI)
	286.463 km		Kouros, Yiannis	GRE	13.02.56	M23	1	28.09.1985	New York (USA)
4	285.366 km	T	Hara, Yoshikazu	JPN	13.08.72	M40	5	07.12.2014	Taipei (TPE)
	285.362 km	T	Kouros, Yiannis	AUS	13.02.56	M35	3	07.05.1995	Surgeres (FRA)
	285.304 km	T	Kouros, Yiannis	AUS	13.02.56	M40	6	04.05.1996	Surgeres (FRA)
	284.853 km		Kouros, Yiannis	GRE	13.02.56	M23	2	08.11.1984	New York (USA)
	284.070 km	T	Kouros, Yiannis	GRE	13.02.56	M45	1	03.03.2002	Taipei (TPE)
	283.600 km	T	Kouros, Yiannis	GRE	13.02.56	M23	3	16.03.1985	Montauban (FRA)
	282.981 km	T	Kouros, Yiannis	AUS	13.02.56	M35	4	09.04.1995	Coburg (AUS)
5	282.282 km		Zhalybin, Denis	RUS	30.06.80	M23	4	03.09.2006	St. Petersburg (RUS)
	280.860 km	T	Kouros, Yiannis	GRE	13.02.56	M23	5	05.08.1990	Melbourne (AUS)
6	279.427 km	T	Ishikawa, Yoshihiko	JPN	25.04.88	M23	6	15.12.2019	Taipei (TPE)
	278.972 km		Sorokin, Aleksandr	LTU	30.09.81	M35	5	27.10.2019	Albi (FRA)
7	277.543 km		Morton, Michael	USA	20.10.71	M40	7	09.09.2012	Katowice (POL)
8	277.484 km		Csecsei, Zoltan	HUN	25.07.84	M35	6	25.10.2020	Balatonalmádi (HUN)
9	277.476 km		Filipov, Iulian	ROU	18.01.84	M35	7	18.04.2021	Bucuresti (ROU)
	277.416 km		Kouros, Yiannis	GRE	13.02.56	M45	2	15.09.2002	Sylvania, OH (USA)
10	276.221 km		Bodis, Tamas	HUN	29.07.88	M23	7	27.10.2019	Albi (FRA)
11	276.209 km		Schwerk, Wolfgang	GER	28.07.55	M23	8	09.05.1987	Köln (GER)
12	275.982 km	T	Kruglikov, Anatolii	RUS	09.10.57	M35	8	25.06.1995	Podolsk (RUS)
	275.828 km	T	Kouros, Yiannis	GRE	13.02.56	M45	3	23.09.2001	San Giovanni Lupatoto (ITA)
13	275.684 km	T	Sekiya, Ryoichi	JPN	12.02.67	M40	8	25.11.2007	Taipei (TPE)
14	275.576 km	I	Safin, Nikolai	RUS	1959	M23	9	28.02.1993	Podolsk (RUS)
15	275.485 km		Leblond, Olivier	USA	30.04.72	M45	4	27.10.2019	Albi (FRA)
	275.357 km	T	Kouros, Yiannis	AUS	13.02.56	M40	9	03.05.1997	Surgeres (FRA)
16	274.715 km		Gaudin, Bernard	FRA	18.09.49	M23	10	14.11.1982	Niort (FRA)
17	274.480 km	T	Dowdle, David	GBR	07.11.54	M23	11	23.05.1982	Podsmead (GBR)
18	274.332 km	T	Penalba Lopez, Ivan	ESP	06.10.91	M23	12	15.12.2019	Taipei (TPE)
19	274.119 km		Erdmann, Hans-Martin	GER	09.09.44	M40	10	09.05.1987	Köln (GER)
20	273.828 km	T	Nunes, Valmir	BRA	16.01.64	M35	9	09.03.2003	Taipei (TPE)

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19th September 2021

⁹ See <https://runningmagazine.ca/the-scene/eliud-kipchoge-wants-to-try-an-ultramarathon/>

¹⁰ See <https://statistik.d-u-v.org/getintbestlist.php?year=all&dist=24h&gender=M>