

Marathon myth

The myth of the century-old Swede who can perform physical feats that would astound, amaze, and exhaust the average beer-swilling, television-addicted Canadian has finally been laid to rest.

Or more appropriately, it has been thoroughly thrashed in the very back yard of those superfit Swedes.

And it was done not by a 25-year-old athlete at the peak of his career, but by a 49-year-old Mississaugan named Mike Hassaan.

Spending 5 hours, 46 minutes and 55 seconds in the chilling, turbulent waters linking the Baltic and the North Seas, Hassaan set two records: the oldest person to make the crossing; and the longest amount of time spent in the water.

Hassaan made that same swim, in what is still record time, a quarter of a century ago. But since then the Egyptian-born swimmer has been sub-

jected to our decadent, junk-food lifestyle.

His swim from Helsingborg, Sweden, to Elsinore Castle in Denmark and back has renewed interest in marathon swimming among the Swedes. The Helsingborg natives are now planning a marathon competition for their town's 900th birthday celebration two years hence.

However, Hassaan's incredible accomplishment has done more than just revive interest in marathon swimming. It has shown Canadians that there is indeed life after 30, or 40, that you don't have to go to seed. And it has shown the rest of the world that not all of us do.

Hassaan is to be congratulated for his accomplishment, and thanked for shattering a myth that never had any foundation in fact. That's one commercial the Participaction people won't be able to use again.