Slavonic takes 40 km for first National title

Ft. Monmouth, N.J., Sept. 28 (From Elliott Denman) — When the going got tough in the Athletics Congress 40 Kilometer National Race Walking Championship event today, John J. Slavonic really got going. The 31-year-old resident of Nevada City, Cal., was challenged stride-for-stride for over 23 miles of the 24.8-mile test by U.S. Air Force Capt. Steve Peclenovsky, of Arlington, Va. But Pecinovsky's energy reserve couldn't match Slavonic's. As Slavonic found a new homestretch gear to cruise to a clean triumph in 3 hours, 29 minutes, and one second, Pecinovsky dropped off the pace and wound up settling for second in 3:30:47.

This was the 48th annual National 40-Kilometer Championship race and it was sponsored by Blue Cross and Blue Shield of New Jersey, the Nasola Co., and Point Pleasant Distributors. Sixty walkers from 15 states started the race around the ground of the Army post, and 41 of them finished the tough grind.

Stella Cashman of New York led all women's finishers in 4:42:05, while Ray McKinney of Raleigh, N.C. topped the men's Masters division (40 and up) in 3:58:45. Slavonic led the Reebok/East Side Track Club to the men's team championship, while 1960 Olympian Carl Schueler paced Shore AC, the host team, to the men's Masters crown.

For Slavonic, a freelance carpenter and painter, this was the highlight of a four-year walking career that started on the sidewalks of New York. It seems he was a natural for the sport. He was a New Yorker back in 1983 and his original inspiration was Gary Null, the WABC "Natural Living" radio host and race walker. "That program really got me going," he said after cooling down. "Right then I decided I'd race walk to icy home in Brooklyn."

Well, the experience went so well that he soon wound up at the races. In his first race, he covered 10 kilometers in a brisk 56 minutes, showing immense potential. Ever since, it's been one good thing after another in race walking. He's been a member of the TAC National Walking Team the past two years and will be a leading candidate for 50-kilometer spots on U.S. teams bound for the World Race Walking Cup races in New York next May and the IAAF World Championships in Rome next September.

Slavonic started relatively slowly yesterday as Reebok teammate Tony Morales blitzed to a big early lead. But Morales dropped out at 25 km and it was then Slavonic at the front of a seven-walker lead pack. By 38 kilometers, that lead pack was just two, and then Slavonic made his race-breaking move.

"The trip East was well worthwhile," said the new Champion. "And winning my first National title was a great accomplishment. Unlike last year, when Olympian Carl Schueler won in a walkaway and Slavonic was fourth, (to page 3)
Above: 1985 World Cup 20 Km on Isle of Man. Number 58, Jose Marin, Spain, won in 1:21:42. Italy's Maurizio Damilano, between 69 and 8 was second. Australia's Dave Smith (no. 8) was dq'd.


From the Golden Gate Walker

BIL BANNEY (July 6, 1935—October 20, 1986)

Bill Banney, one of the best known racewalkers in Northern California sports history for many years, died of a heart attack at age 51 on Monday, October 20. He was working out on a rowing machine early that evening at the World Gym in Kentfield when he was stricken. Paramedics were unable to revive him and he was pronounced dead at Marin General Hospital at 7 pm.

After switching from competitive running, in which he excelled as a young man, he made his mark over many years in race walking both regionally and nationally. While never attaining an Olympic berth, he nevertheless was long affiliated with the West Valley Track Club. When he moved into the masters ranks at age 40, he won a number of national titles and was always in that division's top echelon.

Bill was also diligent in supporting racewalking as an official. For several years, he was racewalk chair for the Pacific Association, during its transition period from affiliation with the AAU to the Athletics Congress. He was the race director of the National 50 Km Championships at Cupertino in 1979 and of the 1980 50 Km at Belvedere.

At the time of his death, Bill was an English teacher at San Rafael High School, employed there since 1969. For the past 12 years, he had been coach of the school's swimming and water polo teams. Most recently, Bill had become seriously involved in competitive bicycling, and was reported to have been training to ride the bike relay leg of an upcoming triathlon when the shock of his death came. The last couple of years, he had been accompanying the lead runners of the SF Marathon as a race bicyclist.

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Bill was also a personal coach for competitive runners and race walkers who have sought his services, including our current Pacific Association star, John Ratto. For the last year or so, he had conducted a racewalking class for beginners and for those more advanced who wanted to hone their competitive skills.

He was born in Quincy, Mass., had spent some of his formative years in Placerville, and had attended Stanford University. He had a bachelor's degree from Sonoma State and a Masters from SF State. Prior to entering the teaching profession, he had worked in advertising. Survivors include his father, Charles Banney of Ojai, Calif.

Donations in Bill's memory may be made to UC Research Institute, c/o Dean Ornish, 202 Dividadero St., San Francisco, CA 94115.

FROM HEEL TO Toe

The IAAF World Indoor Championships will be held in Indianapolis on March 6–8, 1987, including 5 km walk for men and 3 km for women. The qualifying standards are 20:45 and 14:05 respectively. A new 200-meter track is being laid in the Hootier Dome by Mondr Rubber of Italy for the event. As of October 29, 48 nations had registered to compete in the event. If you are interested in attending you can write the Hootier Dome Ticket Office, 20 South Capitol Ave. Suite 150, Indianapolis, IN 46225 for further information.

There was official scoring for the Pan-Am Cup. Overall team scores were: Mexico 194, U.S.A. 123, Canada 114, Columbia 69, Venezuela 60, Puerto Rico 36, Guatemala 28, Honduras 16, Argentina 11.

My unofficial scores for each of the three events were inaccurate because I was recording only nations with three entrants, but all those with at least two in an event were scored. Plans are proceeding for the IAAF World Race Walking Cup in New York next May. The 50 km race on May 2 will start at 8 am. On May 3, the women's 10 km will start at 9:30 am and the men's 20 km at 11 am. There will also be a People's Race at 5 km starting at 9 am. The opening ceremony will be held at 5 pm on Thursday, April 30. The races will be held on a 2500 meter loop in Central Park.

An International Race Walking Clinic from 9:30 am to 3 pm on Friday, May 1, geared to the international level coach, will be open to all those who are interested. For the first time, the race is open to all IAAF member nations (there have been qualifying regions in the past), with a maximum of five entrants per event. A minimum of three from each entering nation. Men may walk both races. Ron Daniel, who has done so much to rebuild our sport in the IA through the Walkers Club of Los Angeles, will be leaving that area, having taken a job in Northern California...
In order to determine the effect of loads worn or carried on walking mechanics, 11 men and 11 women were filmed using high speed cinematography as they performed overground walking at 1.78 m/s under five load conditions. The loads included a baseline condition in which subjects carried no additional load, and additional loads of approximately 9, 17, 29, and 36 kg consisting of standard military items. The latter two loads were added in the form of a framed rucksack system. Values for several variables frequently used to describe temporal and kinematic characteristics of walking were quantified from the film. These included stride length, stride rate, single leg support time, double-support time, swing time, and the forward inclination of the trunk. The results of the study demonstrated that the males and females displayed significantly different gait patterns under all load conditions. Not unexpectedly, the females required a higher rate of stepping than the males because of their shorter stride lengths. The results also demonstrated that the walking patterns of both the male and female subjects were affected by the increases in carried load. In general, stride length and swing time decreased while stride rate and double-support time increased with increases in load. There was also an increased forward inclination of the trunk but only for the two heaviest loads which were carried in a rucksack. While the changes in gait characteristics were relatively small for the male subjects, the females were affected to a greater extent thereby demonstrating a greater sensitivity to load magnitude. It was concluded that careful consideration must be given to the absolute loads carried by males and females. Not only is it important for load requirements to be lower for females because of the physiological implications but also because of biomechanical implications and the associated mechanical stresses which must be endured during locomotion. While this study was directed primarily towards military applications, the results should also have implications for load carrying in a variety of situations and environments, including industrial and recreational applications.
Szekely's a special American


When Zinn made his second Olympic team, at Pittsburgh in 1964, Szekely again just missed, placing a good-try but stay-home sixth.

Well, the Vietnam war was now on and "duty, honor, country"-bound West Pointers were rushed into Southeast Asia and the leadership roles they had been trained for. Ronald Zinn was killed in action in 1965 and Akos Szekely two years later.

Teammates on The Long Gray Line just a few years earlier, these "trained and worthy leaders" were teammates to the eternal finish line.

Their names, of course, are engraved on all their slain comrades, on the Vietnam veterans' memorial in Washington. Inevitably, there's not a dry eye to be noted on any member of the vast throng of daily visitors.

When Sue Liers accompanied Jerry Kelly to a Stan Musial League game earlier this fall, the last thing she expected to do was put on a uniform and participate. With only eight players and forfeit time approaching, Stony Brook Cardinal manager George Altemose turned to Liers and asked her to play. She eagerly obliged and thus became the first woman to play baseball at the Stan Musial level.

Her effect on the game may not have been as significant as teammate Bob Marto's 15 strikeouts, but without her there would have been no game. "If I wasn't there they wouldn't have been able to play," said Liers. "They were happy I played. But the opposing players felt uncomfortable."

To Altemose, it was the only alternative. Now Liers regularly attends Cardinal games, not as a spectator but as a roster player. "She can run real well and "does a good job in the outfield," said Altemose. "She gives 100 percent and is working on her hitting."

A 27-year-old computer science graduate of Stony Brook University, she took the field that misty September evening at Sawyer Park in West Bab-
bone-chilling drizzle was falling two weeks ago as the last of 241 runners finished a soggy five-mile race around Eisenhower Park. While rain-soaked runners headed for drier footing and cars began filing out of the parking lot, about 60 people who had been waiting patiently assembled in front of the field house for another race.

This group was a bit different. Most were students or senior citizens. Many were present or former Olympians, national champs and record-holders. None was out there to run. They were racewalkers, competing in the Henry Laskau 10K Olympic Racewalk.

Laskau was a member of three U.S. Olympic racewalking teams and held 42 national racewalking titles from 1947 to 1957. Having barely escaped Hitler’s concentration camps in his native Germany, he went on to become one of the greatest Americans in the history of his sport. Evidence of just how close-knit a community that is was apparent when Laskau himself appeared to start the race.

"On your mark ... get set... go," shouted the diminutive 70-year-old, who still looks like he could outwalk men 20 years his junior. Off the competitors shuffled in their distinctive wobbling gaits, moving at speeds that would stop most recreational runners in their tracks. But there was hardly anyone around to impress, since most of the spectators and participants had left after the road race. That’s nothing new. Racewalkers are used to playing second fiddle to runners.

Then again, there’s nothing new about racewalking, either. It’s been around, in one form or another, since the Middle Ages. The sport enjoyed a heyday in the mid-1800s, when "pedestrians," as they were called, competed in such endurance feats as walking the 500 miles from Boston to Washington. It’s been an Olympic sport since 1906 and, in fact, the 50K (31.1 miles) racewalk is still the longest endurance event in the Games.

These days, racewalking’s brain-trust is trying to give the old sport a new image. How? By taking out the "race" and calling it health or fitness-walking, instead. "We’re saying that you can emulate the style of the racewalker and get all the benefits, but you need never compete," explained Howard Jacobson, president of the New York Walkers Club and executive director of the Walkers Club of America.

The idea is to make walkers out of all those Americans who would like to get in shape, but don’t like the idea of pounding the pavement in jogging shoes. That could be a sizable constituency. The President’s Council on Physical Fitness estimates that 55 million Americans walk for recreation. As of now, only about 25-30,000 racewalk. Jacobson is hoping that will change in the year ahead, primarily as a result of increased corporate sponsorship dollars, enabling the club to hold more clinics and exhibitions around the country.

So far, the numbers are encouraging. According to Jacobson, the New York club, which counted all of 12 members in 1979, has grown to 1,600, most of them recent recruits, and he expects memberships in the Walkers Club of America to skyrocket from 12,000 to 100,000 by next June.

The message is that walking is a safer route to fitness than running — and that racewalking technique makes it an even better exercise.

Gary Westerfield of Smithtown, a TAC (Track Athletics Congress) national racewalking team coordinator and national women’s team coach, cites biomechanical studies showing that the amount of "g-force" — or pounding the pavement that is half that of running. That means half the stress and less potential for injury.

"The average walker can improve to 10-12 minutes a mile using racewalking techniques," he says. "That’s slow for competition, but it’s a nice goal for a person looking to get in shape."

The top competitive racewalkers are anything but slow. According to Westerfield, the really good ones can handle sub-seven-minute miles for 20K (12.4 miles) and sub-eight-minute miles for 50K (31.1 miles) — those being the two official competitive distances for men. (Women racewalkers compete at 10K and 5K.)

Over the years, some of the country’s best racewalkers have come from New York (although that’s probably news to most New York sports fans). The cream of the current crop includes Sue Liers of Smithtown, who has been competing internationally for nine years, and Lynn Weik of Sayville, a sophomore at SUNY Stony Brook, who has shown promise in national competitions and finished second at the Laskau race in 1985, 49 minutes, 48 seconds. Among local men, Dan O’Connor of Bellmore was a 20K and 50K competitor in the 1984 Olympics, and Curtis Fisher of Huntington, now a junior at Stony Brook, was Junior National Champ in 1985 and finished sixth at the national trials at 20K in Eugene, Ore., this year.

The national record for a 20K racewalk, 1 hour, 21 minutes and 48 seconds, was set by Tim Lewis, who won to high school in the Albany area. The fastest American woman is Teresa Vail from upstate Pine Plains, who did 46 minutes and 19 seconds in the 10K. She was also the winner at the Laskau 10K, at 49:09. Her twin sister, Lisa, finished third.

With times like that, it’s no wonder that veteran runners have nothing but respect for racewalkers, many of whom can be seen strutting their stuff alongside runners in road races. Jack Dowling, president of the LI Road Runners Club, maintains that “you know you’ve arrived as a marathon runner when you can pass the first racewalker in the race. They’re that good.”

Getting good in racewalking, like anything else, takes practice. But learning the basic technique isn’t all...
that hard. "Anybody who wants to learn racewalking technique for purposes of fitness and health can learn it within two or three sessions," claims Laskau, who now teaches the sport to fellow retirees in Florida. The problem is that the movement doesn't look as graceful as running. Thus, many people are self-conscious about trying it.

"It only looks strange because it's not familiar," claims Bruce MacDonald, a teacher and coach at Port Washington High, who was a member of the U.S. Olympic racewalking team in 1986 (the year that four of the six U.S. racewalkers were from the New York metropolitan area), 1960 and 1964, as well as a manager and coach in the 1972 and 1976 games. "We tend to put down things that are unfamiliar," he said. "It's like a person who has never watched ballet. They see these people spinning around on their toes and think it looks unnatural. To me, racewalking looks very natural."

As MacDonald explains it, the key to learning how to racewalk is "being lazy. That is, to move as economically as possible." He describes the technique as a combination of body alignment, relaxation and balance, with all forces pushing forward, not up and down.

"When a racewalker is in proper form," he says, "the head is erect. The shoulders are down and relaxed, and the arms are dropped close to the side."

The hip movement is slightly down and forward, not side to side." The walker's leg must be straight, but not locked, as it passes under the hip. You come down on the heel, and then roll the foot while plantting the other heel.

The heel-toe movement, although easy to learn, is tough to judge in a competition. The "double contact" rule stipulates that one foot must be on the ground at all time. "But when walkers are going really fast," says Westerfield, "cameras will catch them off the ground momentarily. That's one of the most difficult aspects to judge. Are they running... or are they racewalking?"

During the Laskau 10K, everybody was racewalking... or at least trying. The judges and organizers, always on the lookout for new recruits, were glad to offer advice. "Pump your arms like a sprinter," urged Jacobson to one of the novice walkers. "Looking good," shouted Westerfield, patrolling the course on a bicycle. "Straighten up," signaled Henry Laskau a few meters later.

Getting advice from an athlete of Laskau's accomplishments is akin to having Ted Williams step in the batter's box to adjust your stance during a weekend softball game. But that's the nature of racewalking: a sport where champions mingle easily with beginners; a sport that welcomes anyone who's willing to put one foot in front of the other, and be humble about it.

The following selection process will be used for major racewalking events in 1987.

**PROPOSAL 1:**

**From the August, 1987 issue**

**The following selection process will be used for major racewalking events in 1987.**

Lugano/Eszchborn - New York City - May 1987

- Women's 10K - Top 4 finishers at designated qualifying race
- Men's 20K - Top 4 finishers at designated qualifying race
- Men's 50K - Top 4 finishers at National 50K championship

World Championships - Rome Italy - August 1987

- Women's 10K - Top 3 finishers at National 10K race 6/27
- Men's 20K - Top 3 finishers at National 20K race 6/27
- Men's 50K - Top 3 finishers at National 50K championship

Pan American Games - Indianapolis IN - August 1987

- Women's 10K - Finishers 4-5 at National 10K race 6/27
- Men's 20K - Finishers 4-5 at National 20K race 6/27
- Men's 35K - Finishers 4-5 at National 35K championship

U.S. Olympic Festival - Raleigh NC - July 1987

- Women's 10K - Top 3 finishers per region at National 10K race 6/27
- Men's 20K - Top 3 finishers per region at National 20K race 6/27
- Men's 50K - Top 3 finishers per region at National 50K race

The following additional stipulations will apply to USOF athletes:

Any athlete competing at USOF will be required to satisfy the following conditions at any race:

1. Must be a USOF member with a valid USOF membership card.
2. Must have attended at least one racewalk in the past year.
3. Must have completed a minimum of 10 miles of racewalking in the past year.

These stipulations will be enforced at all USOF-sanctioned racewalking events.