Lawrence Shatters American 10 Km Record; Lewis Takes 20 At National T&F Meet

Cerritos, California, June 16—Debbi Lawrence broke up a close race with Teresa Vaill and Sara Standley at the 5 Km mark and walked uncontested the rest of the way to win her third national title at 10 Km last night. In the process, the shattered Lynn Weik’s American record with a time of 46:14.4. Weik had done 46:44.1 in the last year’s nationals at Houston, a race in which Debbi was a disappointed fourth. Lynn was not back to defend her title this year, but she would certainly have had trouble with Lawrence on this night as Debbi added to the titles she had won in 1984 and 1986.

In a good battle for second, Vaill managed to pull gradually ahead of Standley over the last 1600 meters and was rewarded with an excellent 46:42.2, just 10 seconds off the old American record. Wendy Sharp took over fourth from Victoria Herazo on the sixth lap (it was a track race) and walked by herself the rest of the way to finish in 47:39.6, a time that would have won all but one of the previous national 10s. Debora Van Orden walked a beautiful, even-paced race to finish a surprising fifth, outpacing Herazo at about 7 Km. Herazo, fighting a flu bug and a temperature over 100, walked a gallant race and hung on for sixth ahead of Viisha Sedlak, who shattered her own world best for women over 40 with a 49:14.9. Her previous mark was 50:47. Zofia Wolan just missed making it eight finishers under 50 minutes with her 50:06.6 and another five bettered 51 minutes. Among the first, only Lawrence and Wolan failed to better their personal best, and it was a track best for both of them.

In the men’s 20 Km title race this morning, Tim Lewis took his sixth straight title at the distance in 1:27:28. Lewis dropped Allen James after the first 5 Km (21:49) and was on his own the rest of the way. His second 5 in 21:35 left the field struggling and he put in another 21:49 on his third 5 to put the race away. Doug Fournier, who had a disappointing race in last year’s national when he finished only 10th after doing a 1:29:06 earlier in the year, walked a very strong second half this time to finish alone in second. A conservative ninth at the 10 Km mark (44:36), he accelerated over the next five (21:34) gaining ground even on Lewis and finished strongly in 1:28:27. Steve Pecinovsky, always a contender when he keeps his form together, walked a very steady race to take third in 1:29:02, but just held off the challenge of the race’s biggest surprise, Don Lawrence. Perhaps inspired by wife Debbi’s performance, Don went nearly 3 minutes under his personal record with a 1:29:08.

Paul Wick and Carl Schueler made it six under 1:30 with solid races. Wick passing a faltering Schueler in the final 2 1/2 Km. Schueler had it going with even 5 km splits of 22:10, 44:20, and 1:06:30, but his usual 50 km strength deserted him on the final 5. (Of course, he hasn’t been training for 50 the past
Debbi Lawrence, national 10 Km titlist, on her way to 45:55 10 Km in Chicago on April 29 (result in May ORW).
OTHER RESULTS


Women’s 5 Km, Milan, May 1–2. Kerry Saxby, Australia 44:57 4. Ileana Salvador 45:04 5. Anna Disoti 45:20

Our report on the National 5 Km race last month credited John Knifton with being the first Masters finisher when in reality he was only third. Andrew Smitl (24:25) was first and Jim McFadden (24:35) second. Our mistake. The results we
received had no mention of masters and the old editor relied on his vast
knowledge of the walking world, which obviously was lacking. Apologies to the
two slighted walkers ... Correction on the results of the Southeast Mast e r s 20 Km
appeared in the June 1990 Issue of Athletics, Canada's national track and
field/running magazine.)

Have you ever wondered how to watch the racewalk? And because you
haven't understood it thought it boring? Watched by a knowledgeable spectator,
the racewalk is one of the most interesting events in track and field because it's
not just a "first across the line" or who can go highest or farthest event. The
winner of the racewalk must not only have beaten her opponents, but must also
have passed the scrutiny of the judges along the course.

There are two rules in the racewalk. Put simply, the supporting leg must
be straight (usually for a split second as it comes under the athlete's body (this is
the rule against "creeping"), and one foot must be on the ground at all times
(which means that before the athlete takes her back toe off the ground her front
heel must have struck the ground--this is the "lifting" rule). As an athlete's
turnover or strides per minute become increasingly faster, it becomes difficult to
determine whether these rules are being broken. Here the controversy.

The important thing to remember is that there are no absolutes in
racewalking. That is, racewalking, by definition, is a human sport judged by the
sets of human eyes belonging to the judges on the course. Whether one later
sees a still picture or a slow motion video of an athlete "lifting" is irrelevant-
human eyes do not work at the speed of cameras and what may be caught by a
camera will be missed by the judges. This doesn't mean that the athlete
"cheated" and got away with it. What it means is that the judges at the time of
the race, judging with the limitations in their equipment (the human eye) did not
judge that athlete to be be walking illegally. Second guessing the judges later on
may be an interesting exercise, but it is not part of the sport. (Ed. Well put, and
especially the ORW's stance through the years, but there are those who will
vigorously argue the point.)

This seems to be however, the main reason behind the sport's
unpopularity in the track and field community. (Not among the public, however,
who appreciate and enjoy the sport more than the track and field community is
willing to admit.) Everyone in track and field thinks he or she is a racewalk
judge. This probably occurs because there are times when the judges are lenient
for motivations such as encouraging the younger athletes (a misguided approach
in my opinion for those athletes simply have more trouble later on). Again, this
is because the sport is human that we live with its failings. Line judges can be
seemingly unfair in tennis, the starter's pistol can be held too long in the sprints,
and the long jump judge may misread the markings on the takeoff board, but
these are not sufficient reasons to condemn or dislike a sport.

Next time you're watching a racewalk, watch how the more experienced
athletes will work with the presence of the judges. They will hide themselves in
the pack, not so that they can "cheat" because it would be too difficult to
continuously change rhythms from lifting to not lifting and back again, but so
they can reduce their exposure to the judges and reduce the chances of being
disqualified. When only three disqualifications, one from each of three
different judges, are necessary to disqualify an athlete, the athlete will want to
reduce his or her exposure simply to play the odds. An experienced athlete may
also force another athlete's hand by forcing that athlete to accelerate in front of
the judges. And you will note that racewalkers do not have the luxury of
leaving the race to the last few hundred meters. You must have made your move long before then since the judges usually group around the finish to increase the scrutiny on finishing athletes.

Watch also how the top athletes will walk at almost 300 strides per minute because the faster the strides are the faster the athlete can move without leaving the ground. Slow, long strides increase an athlete's air time and increase the chances of lifting. Once a racewalker takes his or her foot off the ground, he or she wants it back on the ground again as quickly as possible. You'll also note that the shoulders and arms are low and relaxed to reduce the chances of the arms and shoulders rising high and causing the athlete to pull up and lift. In fact, on many of the top athletes, you will notice that the driving shoulder is very low, almost driving down, as it swings through. Arm movement is also very fast to assist in keeping the strides per minute high. The arm will almost punch the air as it comes through, with a very short, quick backswing, to increase the strength and forward movement. Indeed, the arms and shoulders play a very important role in the racewalk and are the key to moving quickly and efficiently.

So a racewalker not only has to try to be the fastest and the strongest—the racewalker has to try to be the fastest and the strongest while obeying two restrictive rules. This adds an interesting and challenging element to the sport. Next time, instead of turning away because you think the racewalkers are going too slowly and look strange, remember that the speed is relative and the race is what matters. Watch the racewalkers to see how they adjust their technique to the warnings of the judges, watch how their body position helps them and ENJOY!

Looking Back

25 Years Ago (From the June 1965 ORW)—Art Mark covered 34 1/2 laps up an down a shopping center mallway to win the McKeese sport (Pa.) International 20 Km in 1:38:06 with your editor 35 seconds behind. Jack Blackburn finished in just over 1:40 and Don DeNoon was a distant fourth. Dean Rasmussen, fifth in the McKeese sport race, won the National 50 Km in extreme heat, struggling through in 5:03:33. Bruce MacDonald, Elliott Denman, Paul Schei, and Goetz Klopfer followed. The National 30 Km in Los Angeles went to Ron Laird in 2:41:17 and Jack Mortland (yes, your editor) captured the National 10 Km on the Stagg Field track in Chicago on another hot day with a 48:19. Mark DeNoon, Rasmussen, Ron Daniel, and a sluggish Laird followed.

20 Years Ago (From the June 1970 ORW)—Dapper Dave Romansky dominated the news with wins in the National 10 and 20, and the Zinn Memorial 10, along with American records at 3 Km and 2 Miles. In the 20 at McKeese sport, Dave pulled clear of Tom Dooley in the final 5 Km on the hot blacktop to win in 1:35:35. Dooley had 1:35:04. No one else was close as Ron Kulik, Steve Hayden, Goetz Klopfer, and John Knifton rounded out the top six. In the 10, Dave left Klopfer after a mile on the Stagg Field tartan and went on to record a quick 44:23.

Klopfer won the 30 with Laird, Mortland, Greg Diebold, and Jerry Bocci following. In the Zinn race the next day on a cinder track, the order was the same, except that Diebold went home and Bob Henderson moved up from seventh to sixth. Dave slowed to a 44:34 and Goetz was closer with 46:27. Laird had 48:53 and the aging Mortland 49:22. The Canadian 20 Km went to Marcel Jobin in 1:35:42 and Wilf Wesch won the British title in 1:31:47.

15 Years Ago (From the June 1975 ORW)—Tom Dooley, in a comeback year, won the National 20 Km in San Francisco in 1:35:52 with Bob Henderson 25 seconds back. John Knifton, Dave Romansky, and Bill Ranney also finished under 1:38. The Mexicans were really starting to be seen in race walking and won an international match from West Germany and Great Britain in London. Domingo Collin and Bernd Kanningen in the 20 with 1:26:37 to 1:26:55. Gerhard Weidner won the 50 in 4:03:52 with Pedro Aracne now in 4:08:42. East Germans also showed good speed with Hans-Georg Reimann winning the annual Naumburg 20 Km in 1:26:31. Karl-Heinz Studtmuller was second and in 1:27:34. Weidner also won the 50 there in 4:06:42. The U.S. 5 Km title went to Laid in a rather slow 22:08:42, with John Knifton, Tom Dooley, Bill Ranney, and Larry Walker all under 22:45. Steve Cassarella won the National Junior 10 Km in 53:55. The Zinn Memorial 10 Km went to Larry Young, starting a comeback with an eye to 1976, in 47:49, just ahead of Dooley.

10 Years Ago (From the June 1980 ORW)—The U.S. Olympic team, which was destined not to compete, was completed with the 20 Km trial. Jim Heiring and Marco Evoniuk tied for first in 1:27:12, with Dan O'Connor an Untroubled third in 1:29:05. Todd Scully (1:30:28), Larry Walker (1:31:06) and Carl Schueler (1:31:17) took the next three spots. With Evoniuk and O'Connor already on the team at 50 (along with Schueler), Scully and Walker joined Heiring on the 20 Km squad. In the National T&F Meet, Sue Brodock won titles at both 5 and 10 Km. In the 5, her swift 23:19.1 left Susan Liers nearly 80 seconds behind. Bonnie Dillon and Esther Lopez took the next two spots. The margin was even greater at 10 as Brodock won in 51:01 to Liers 52:33.6. Lopez was again third, with Vicki Jones fourth. Tim Lewis emerged as a name for the future, winning the National Junior 10 Km in 46:50.6 ahead of Ed O'Rourke (48:30.4) and Tom Edwards (48:35.6). Mexico's Ernesto Canto covered 20 Km in 1:26:30, Bulgaria in 1:19:02, beating Genadiy Terechov by just 9 seconds. His compatriot, Saul Gonzalez did 50 Km on the track in Bergen, Norway in 3:43:42, leaving Soviet walker Vladimir Rayzev more than 6 minutes behind. At the same site, Mexico's Daniel Bautista did 20 Km on the track in 1:21:06, beating Czech Josef Pribilene (1:21:39) and Canto (1:22:41). Ray Sharp won the U.S. National 5 Km in 20:27.8, with Todd Scully second in 20:33.5 and Jim Heiring third in 20:47.6.

5 Years Ago (From the June 1985 ORW)—Tim Lewis pulled away from Marco Evoniuk over the second half of the race to win the National 20 Km in Indianapolis. His 1:28:27 left Marco 51 seconds back. Todd Scully edged Paul Wick for third 1:30:12 to 1:30:24. Andy Kaestner and Gary Morgan followed. In the women's National 10 Km at the same site, Maryanne Torrellas ruled in 48:38. Teresa Vaill (49:24), Debbi Lawrence (50:26), and Ester Lopez (50:55) were next. The National 5 Km was held in Denver with Torrellas (23:52.8) and Jim Heiring (24:04) winning the titles. Lopez, Vaill, and Lawrence trailed Torrellas. Dave Edwards (48:35.6) Mexico's Daniel Bautista did 20 Km on the track in 1:21:06, beating Czech Josef Pribilene (1:21:39) and Canto (1:22:41). Ray Sharp won the U.S. National 5 Km in 20:27.8, with Todd Scully second in 20:33.5 and Jim Heiring third in 20:47.6.

A Comment On Shoes
by Alan M. Sangeap
Albany, New York

In response to your request for good racewalking shoes, may I suggest Adidas Torsion 5000. I am not in any way affiliated with the company.
Generally, racewalking shoes should be as firm as you can stand them. I suspect leather-soled dress shoes are the ultimate, but they are too tough for me. When the shoes are firm, the forefoot does not deform when the body weight passes over it, so it doesn’t absorb mechanical energy. This saves time from about half the stride cycle. The mechanical energy was absorbed from the hips, which can have a less complex energy output pattern. The shoes feel like quicksilver. You feel every Russian. It’s like switching from racewalking on a rubber track or soft earth to concrete or stone. Of course this neglects the development of the hip muscles, but that is not a popular occupation anyway. Beginners must do it, but everybody else concentrates on other ways to increase speed.

The rearfoot is also very firm, but it seems to do the job. It doesn’t really deform, it just gives a giant thud and presto you’ve been cushioned. Sort of like a big Mercedes. This makes it more difficult to warm up, because you have little against which to press the muscles. It’s also hard to tell when the midsoles are compressed because you get so little feedback; I have several pairs in different stages of wear. (News flash: springy new socks are effective in the rearfoot of shoes that are too hard, but they absorb momentum in the forefoot. Next I’ll try moleskin on old socks.)

It’s easier to tell how important midsole deformation is when you wear shoes with different midsole densities. The Nike walker uses a firmer material rolling off the midfoot sloping thicker towards the metatarsal arch (where the toes flex) and then thinner abruptly. This speeds you up as you get to the metatarsal arch, and then falls away, catapulting you forward (and into the air). Ply don’t come in thick running/racewalking versions. They would be great boon for every walker, except very advanced ones who lift without any help, thank you.

For people who have trouble with lifting, just reverse advance and compress the rocker, make it get thicker abruptly and then thinner gradually (this absorbs forward momentum), make it smaller and move it towards the tip of the shoes (where they find themselves with an embarrassment of momentum). Another way to maintain contact longer is to make the toes longer, upturned and flexible (like elf shoes, but without buns on the tips); that way the shoe toes stays in contact with the ground after the foot toes have left. Fulfills the letter of the rule.

Another way that my shoes are great is at the heel. It curves up very little, so when making contact with the ground the hips aren’t thrust backwards. I remember reading in this publication a few months ago an article by Mr. Along that lifting the feet high off the ground brings strong backwards reaction on the feet land back. Upturned heels are another way. When you lift them up on a very wide area, and then have to lift onto smaller areas. Sort of like lifting out of a hole. Wide initial contact patch is like a deep hole. When and compressed heels also have a flatter edge. Dress shoes also have a sharp and firm edge.

Another requirement for good racewalking shoes is a close and supporting fit around the ball of the foot. When they don’t, the toes. The ball of the foot seems large and the toes stride is slightly short, but more important is that most it, wear press socks when training (and on soft ground: very closely around the ball of the foot, and that do not show shoes that are too flexible do, including dress shoes, but I thickened sole right at the edge of the arch which probably stops the break). And that do not allow the flat/proeminent sensation to the ball of the foot; here the only ones [you can find his products in most drugstores, appreciate the need for a fit close to the bone structure size, shape and position (say the strip of wood often placed under the doors of older Houses to keep out drafts). A related observation is that racewalking shoes should be longer than dress shoes, and even sneakers for other sports. The pressure and rolling-off onto the toes that good with each step, and thus it advances the toes (and toenails). Wear shoes a size bigger than I would wear for any other purpose. Hop anybody out there who doesn’t would at least try that. Before I discovered it (and it took one year of racewalking), I used to wear black toenails and called raw toes ends continually. Since then I’ve realized that there really is no reason to bring the toenails into racewalking at

Anyway that’s all I can think of when it comes to shoes. In other business I would like to take issue with the plantar dorsiflexion stuff—where you contact the calves and lift end of the stride, to maintain ground contact longer. And dorsiflexion comes on near the end of the stride to maintain ground contact longer. And dorsiflexion is possible to measure more and more force in dorsiflexion; not necessarily come from the calves, but in my opinion transmitted from the arms through midbody downward. By analogy, you can measure great forces exerted by the left arm without any of its muscles contracting: just move it around with the right arm.