The amazing Damilano rolls on

Tokyo, August 24—In a finish marked by confusion, Italy's 34-year-old Maurizio Damilano pulled away from Mikhail Schennikov to successfully defend his world championship at 20 Km. Even more impressively, he improved his personal record by 32 seconds with a 1:19:37. The Italian has never walked exceptionally fast, just faster than others at the finish of major races.

When the pair entered the stadium locked in a tight duel, they had to dodge runners and starting blocks, which had been set up for a heat of the 100 meters and were directly in their path. Obviously, there was some lack of communication among officials. Damilano, who led as they left the chute and had to make a few leaps and staggers, appeared to be thrown off more than Schennikov, who moved quickly into the lead and held it to what he apparently thought was the finish, 100 meters down the track. However, there was still a full circuit of the track to complete and Damilano pulled easily away from the confused Soviet, who had won the World Cup 20 Km at San Jose in May.

Damilano had managed only eighth in that race (but only 48 seconds behind Schennikov) and it appeared he might be giving way to his younger competitors. However, the story was much the same 4 years ago when he finished only seventh at the World Cup in New York but came back to take the World Championship race. Apparently, he has decided this is the more important race of the two and points at it as his peak event for the year. At least, that's the way it has worked out. Besides his Olympic gold and two world titles, Damilano was third in both the 1984 and 1988 Olympics and had World Cup finishes of 4th (1979), 6th (1981), 4th (1983), 2nd (1985), and 6th (1989). He was seventh in the first World Championships in 1983.

In the day's second race, Soviet Alina Ivanova was an impressive winner in a race that completely upset finish order in May's World Cup race. Ivanova had been disqualified after five of the eight laps in that race while in third place. Second today was Sweden's Madeleine Svensson, only 13th in San Jose, and taking the bronze was Finland's Sari Essayah, 16th in San Jose.

Ivanova, who was ranked sixth in the world in 1989, had done little last year, but won a 5 Km in Spain early this year from a very classy field in a quick 20:37. Svensson has never been world ranked and had a best time of 45:50 before this year, so she came as a complete surprise in this race. Essayah, ranked eighth in the world last year and 10th in 1988, was less of a surprise in third, but certainly improved from her May race in San Jose, when she was just behind Debbi Lawrence.
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The two races got minimal space on NBC's 2-hour coverage of the meet, despite the fact they were the only track finals of the first day. And, Bob Costas, who received several scorching letters from the racewalk community after remarks about the sport during his commentary from Seoul in 1988, apparently did not learn a whole lot about sensitivity. Bob had apologized in personal notes to those who wrote him in 1988, yet, after the minute or so clip showing the finish of the two Tokyo races, he said something about the sport that few understand, but that may be thought of as akin to seeing who can whisper the loudest. I will wait to see if he has the same remark the next time he covers a swimming meet and sees them doing the breastroke.


Taking advantage of unseasonably cool evening weather and a good track in UCLA's Drake Stadium, Deb Lawrence shattered her own American 10 Km track record in the U.S. Olympic Festival on July 19. Victoria Herazo had the early lead, but Deb soon took command and pushed to a 45:28:4 clocking and her third straight Festival gold. Her Herazo walked strongly the whole way and missed her


Briggs 8:45


9:14

AND, FROM OTHER LANDS, WE HAVE THESE:

Junior 10 Km (track), Tulokset, Fin., June 15--1. Ilya Markov, USSR 40:13:11


Dave McGovern, a member of the U.S. National Race Walk Team and winner of last month's National 10 K, is hosting a racewalking training camp at the Healing Springs Ranch in Tioga, Texas from Sun. Nov. 10 through Sun. Nov. 17. The program will cover all aspects of racewalking from style analysis and training design to sports psychology and racing strategy. The on-site 400-meter track and scenic cross country trails will be used for speed work and fartlek training, with hill workouts and long training walks conducted over rolling hills on the smooth country roads surrounding the ranch. The ranch is 1 hour north of Dallas. Contact Healing Springs Ranch, Box 277, Tioga, TX 76271 (817/437-2204) for further details. An international organization has been founded for the promotion of all phases of race walking. The group's directors are international walkers Bo Gustafsson, president; and Maurizio Damilano, Hartwig Gauder, Ernesto Canto, and Jorge Llopart, area coordinators. All have won either Olympic gold or silver. For information, contact Gustafsson, World Walkers Foundation, 35-405 32 Goteborg, Sweden. ...Olympic trainer and world class walker, Mike DeWitt, will conduct a comprehensive 6-week racewalk training program for people of all ages beginning September 22. The program will meet twice a week for a total of 12 sessions at the University of Wisconsin-Parkside in Kenosha. Sunday sessions will be timed workouts, including four races. Participants will discuss the event and learn racewalk techniques and strategy designed to improve their times. The group will also meet Wednesday evenings at 6 pm at the Parkside track for a 1-hour workout tailored to the participant's fitness level followed by a classroom session on competitive race walking. Cost is $120 for the 12 sessions, or $12 per session. Contact DeWitt at 4230 27th St., Kenosha, WI 53144, or phone 414/551-0142. ...Alan Wood has replaced Gordon Wallace as keeper of world age "bests" for masters men. With what birthdates Alan has, are these marks set in the recent World Vet Championships. 5Km: 55--Vladimir Golubnichiy, USSR 22:45 (also 55-59 best); 59--Mike DeWitt, will conduct a comprehensive 6-week racewalk training program for people of all ages beginning September 22. The program will meet twice a week for a total of 12 sessions at the University of Wisconsin-Parkside in Kenosha. Sunday sessions will be timed workouts, including four races. Participants will discuss the event and learn racewalk techniques and strategy designed to improve their times. The group will also meet Wednesday evenings at 6 pm at the Parkside track for a 1-hour workout tailored to the participant's fitness level followed by a classroom session on competitive race walking. Cost is $120 for the 12 sessions, or $12 per session. Contact DeWitt at 4230 27th St., Kenosha, WI 53144, or phone 414/551-0142. ...Alan Wood has replaced Gordon Wallace as keeper of world age "bests" for masters men. With what birthdates Alan has, are these marks set in the recent World Vet Championships. 5Km: 55--Vladimir Golubnichiy, USSR 22:45 (also 55-59 best); 59--Max Green, U.S. 24:24; 67--Olaf Petersen, Sweden 27:02; 20 Km: 66--Bob Mimm, U.S. 1:55:52. Another division best is 22:34 in Men 50-54 by Germany's Zschiesche, but his birthdat is needed. Marks and birthdates can be sent to Alan Wood,
Sorry that a few readers received their copies with a plain old black cover last month. I forgot to order a new supply of the color mastheads numbered only 14, so Tim felt sure he was a "shoe in". Since he wanted to wear it at the Malibu Grand Prix track south of Dayton. Competitors were required to walk in a "heel and toe" fashion wearing some form of underwear (it was supposed to be tasteful). The race was 1 mile with a qualifying lap. The field of competitors numbered only 14, so Tim felt sure he was a "shoe in". Since he wanted to wear tasteful, yet interesting, underwear, he borrowed some boxer shorts adorned with martini glasses. He looked very cute, yet tasteful. To make a long story relatively short, he won. His winning time was—well, I don't really know. Kerrigan and Christopher, the morning disc jockeys, goofed around the day the grand prize appeared on I-75 in downtown Dayton. The prize was Tim's face, along with the DJs on a huge billboard. The DJs spent their morning broadcasting from that billboard, drawing as much attention to it as possible.

Now, how does the wife of this famous racewalking celebrity feel about having her husband on a billboard in borrowed underwear? Well, I would have preferred a trip for two to just about anywhere. It is interesting, however. One night, as I'm leaving work, a friend yells across the parking lot, "Saw your husband in his underwear" I said, "But, it wasn't his underwear" So anyway, that's how my husband ended up on a billboard. Next year, he may officiate the race, who knows. But one thing is sure—truckers, families coming north from Florida vacations, and angry motorists stuck in hot summer traffic jams will see Tim and wonder "Who is that good lookin' guy on the billboard?" And those of us who are wise will say, "Why, that's Tim Blackburn, racewalker, mailman, and family man." Ask his wife and she says he's a hotshot.

Nancy

She also sent a picture of the billboard, which I plan to run next month so all the world can see Tim Blackburn in his underwear.

# # # #

A couple of months ago, we mentioned coverage of the World Cup in the San Jose Mercury-News not being entirely favorable and promised more on this in the future. Finally, we have space. Since I left San Jose on Sunday night, I didn't see the Monday morning papers, which contained the questionable articles. Degerman of Saturday's events in Sunday's paper had seemed fair enough. However, on Monday, The Chronicle's Sports Editor, Mark Purdy, ran a column entitled "Goony walk has fitting end." Among other things, he said, "Apparently, Perlov was bending a knee and/or not looking goony enough, a disqualifying offense, if three different judges around the course detect it." In questioning the judging procedures, he said, "Come on, walking honchos. This is 1991. Basketball scoreboards measure tenths of seconds. Tennis uses lasers to call lines. And walkers still must rely on bicycle go-fers and bulletin boards." And then, in her story on the race, writer Annette John-Hall, commenting on the poor turnout for the race, said, "Michael gliding and Magic passing still hold more appeal in the United States than a bunch of people waddling like Donald Duck."

In reply to all of this, Giulio de Petra sent the following letter.

Mr. Robert D. Ingle
Senior Vice-President and Executive Editor
San Jose Mercury-News
750 Ridder Park Drive
San Jose, CA 95190

Dear Mr. Ingle:

Comments by sports editor Mark Purdy and staff writer Annette John-Hall regarding the recent Race Walking World Cup (June 3, 1C, 8C) display a surprising lack of basic knowledge about race walking and an appalling disrespect for its practitioners. It is the writers' attitudes, not the sport of race walking, that is—using Mr. Purdy's word—"bizarre."
Looking back

25 years ago (From the Aug. 1966 ORW)—In the National 40 Km in Long Branch, N.J., Ron Laird prevailed in 3:31:14, some 7 minutes ahead of Ron Kulik. Jim Clinton was third, and then came hounds—gsters Bob Kitchen and Steve Rebman. Chris McCarthy came briefly out of retirement in Chicago to take second in a 15 Km race to Bob Gray in 1:23:01, nearly matching the pace he had carried for 50 Km in Tokyo 2 years earlier.

20 years ago (From the Aug. 1971 ORW)—Larry Young and Coetz Klopfer captured gold medals at the Pan American Games in Cali, Columbia. Coetz upset teammate Tom Dooey at 20, 1:37:30 to 1:38:16 (high altitude). At 50, Young watched a huge lead dissolve to 10 yards with 1 1/2 miles to go and then rallied to edge Mexico's Gabriel Hernandez, 4:38:31 to 4:38:46. Larry needed 61 minutes over the last 10 Km as the heat and altitude took their toll. John Knifton was third in 4:41:215. Soviet Nikolai captured the European 20 Km title in 1:27:20, covering the final 5 in 21:30. Gerhard Sperling, Paul Nihill, and Peter Frenkel were also under 1:28. A Soviet also won the 50, Veniamin Solzhenitsyn edging Christoph Hohne 4:02:22 to 4:04:45. Peter Selzer and Otto Bartsch followed. The Strasbourg-to-Paris 525 Km race went to Luxembourg's Jose Simon in 73:10.

15 years ago (From the Aug. 1976 ORW)—Steve DiBernardo battled torrential rains to win the National 40 Km in Long Branch in 3:35:26. John Knifton was 2 minutes behind, followed by Ray Fiorani, Vincent O'Sullivan, and Alan Price. Larry

References to the appearance of race walkers as "goony" and "waddling like Donald Duck" are gratuitous insults at worst. At best, they betray the writers' inability to accurately describe the rotation of the hips that gives expert race walkers their long stride, power, speed, and grace. Ridiculing the characteristic gait of race walking is absurd and as absurd as ridiculing the spin of a shot putter or the arched back of a pole vaulter.

Race walking has been an Olympic event since 1908 and enjoys prestige throughout the world, as attested to by the 31 nations represented in the World Cup competition. Even in the United States, where its significance as a competitive sport is underrated, recognition of its value as a fitness activity has grown rapidly. Its aerobic benefits equal or surpass those of jogging and running, with far less long-term damage to the musculoskeletal system.

The comments by Mr. Purdy and Ms. John-Hall cannot be construed as other than blatant attempts to discredit the image of race walking and its athletes, judges, spectators, and organizers. To publish their contemptible remarks was a considerable lapse of judgement on the part of the editors and an insult to the many Bay Area and Central Coast walkers who were involved in hosting the World Cup.

Sincerely,

Giulio de Petra
Chairman
MONTEREY PENINSULA
WALK WALK WALK CLUB, INC.

Cc: Susan Hammer, Mayor of San Jose, California
Dr. Nebiolo, President, International Amateur Athletic Federation
Bruce Douglas, Race Walking Chair, The Athletics Congress/USA

5 years ago (From the Aug. 1981 ORW)—Todd Scully captured the 20 Km race at the National Sports Festival in 1:39:13 and Vincent O'Sullivan took the 50 in 4:28:08. Marco Evoniuk had a 1:25:50 in the 20, but was DQ'd. Dan O'Connor (1:30:12 and Jim Heiring (1:31:28 followed Scully. Wayne Glusker, Steve Pecinovsky, Bob Rosenrantz, and Steve Vaitonies were all under 4:45 in the 50. Tim Lewis had three good races in England while travelling with the U.S. junior team—21:47 for 5 Km and 44:12 and 45:33 for 10. Maurizio Damilano won the Alkongi Memorial in Dearborn in 1:25:41 with Marco Evoniuk a close second in 1:26:40. Alan Price won the second annual Doc Blackburn 75 Km in Springfield, Ohio in 7:39:51. Jack Blackburn was second in 8:22:11.

10 years ago (From the Aug. 1981 ORW)—Todd Scully captured the 20 Km race at the National 50 in Columbia, Missouri in 4:11:08. Augie Hirt caught Dan O'Connor in the late stages for second in 4:19:44, with O'Connor hanging on for third (4:23:13, 2:20 ahead of Floyd Godwin. Sweden's Margareta Simo won the women's International 5 Km in Copenhagen in 24:48:2. England's Marian Fawkes was second and Norway's Thorild Gylder third. The Ohio TTC's Laurie Tucholski was the first finisher in 11th with 25:59.6. Sweden's Stav Gustavsson won the 10 Km in 50:50, with Susan Liers fourth. Todd Scully set the pace for nearly 15 Km, but Soviet aces Vladimir Golumbichy and Otto Bartsch chased the leaders. The US-USSR dual meet. The Soviet pair had 1:30:41 and Scully finished in 1:31:22, just 2 seconds ahead of Ron Laird. The Capitol Racewalkers, led by Steve DiBernardo (7:30.2 average) and Carl Schauler (7:35) average) covered 155 miles in 24-hour relay at Ft. Meade. Team members alternate miles. Schueler was eventually able to better that pace for 31 miles without any rests between miles. In Ohio, Steve Pecinovsky beat your editor 3 weeks in a row—50:09 to 50:18 for 10 Km, 50:45 to 51:50 for 6 miles (obviously, one course or the other, or perhaps both, not measured to well), and 1:19:10 to 1:19:34 for 15. (Laurie Tucholski had a fine 51:36 for the 10.)

5 years ago (From the Aug. 1986 ORW)—In Potsdam, Ronald Weigel bettered his own world best for 50 Km with a 3:38:17. Hartwig Gauder was nearly 9 minutes back in second. Maurizio Damilano, making a rare 50 Km appearance, was fifth. An accompanying women's 10 Km went to Sweden's Monica Gunnarsson in 46:05. East Germany's Ralf Kowalsky won the 20 Km in 1:20:31 and East Germany easily bested Italy, Sweden, Spain, France, and Great Britain in the International match. Kerry Saxby won the Goodwill Games 10 Km in Moscow with a 45:05. The 20 went to the Soviet, Pershin, in 1:28:29, with Canada's Guillaume Leblanc just 28 seconds back in fourth. Australia's Simon Baker won the Commonwealth Games 30 Km in 2:07:47 with Leblanc second in 2:08:38.