Matthews edges Malek at 50; McGovern in fast 20

Atlanta, Nov. 2--San Francisco's Jonathan Matthews overcame chilly, windy conditions to win a close 50 Km race over Wisconsin's Paul Malek. Trying to ignore the 38 degree temperature with wind gusts of over 30 mph, Matthew turned in an excellent 4:23:35, with Malek on 44 seconds behind. Ray Shapr took Steve Pecinovsky for third.

In an accompanying 20 Km, Dave McGovern turned in another very impressive performance, winning in 1:29:12. Not too far back was Ian Whatley in a personal best 1:30:56. Cheryl Rellinger led a women's 20 in 1:42:30.

OTHER RESULTS

The Ohio Racewalker (USPS 306-050) is published monthly in Columbus, Ohio. Subscription rate is $6.00 per year ($8.00 for First Class Mail, $9.00 for First Class to Canada, $12.00 for Overseas Air Mail.) Address all correspondence regarding both editorial and subscription matters to: Ohio Racewalker, 3184 Summit St., Columbus, Ohio 43202. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to: Ohio Racewalker, 3184 Summit St., Columbus, Ohio 43202.


Women: 5 km, Oct. 20. Results to: Desroisiers, New England Walkers, Box 671, Newburyport, MA 01950.


August

Sun. Aug. 5

5 Km, Parlin, NJ (B)

Sat. Aug. 11

10 Mile, Columbia, Missouri (M)

Sun. Aug. 18

5 Km, Folsom, Cal. (V)

Sat. Aug. 24

Holiday Walks, Los Angeles area (B)

Sun. Aug. 31

5 Km, Miamii (Q)

Sat. Sep. 6

5 and 10 Km, Washington, DC, 8:30 am (BB)

Sun. Sep. 13

5 Km, Coconut Grove, Florida (Q)

Sat. Sep. 20

10 Mile, Ashbury Park, NJ. (A)

Sun. Sep. 27

50 Km, Houston (W)

Sat. Oct. 4

4 Mile, Detroit (P)

Tues. Oct. 14

4 Mile, Denver, 10 pm (F)

Wed. Jan. 1

8 Km, Washington, DC, 12 noon (BB)

Sun. Jan. 5

Half-Marathon, Miami (Q)

Sat. Jan. 11

10 Km, Downtown, Cal, 8 am (B)


Indoor 3 Km, Princeton, N.J., 10:30 am (A)

RACE OPPORTUNITIES
The next two World Cups of Racewalking will be held in Monterrey, Mexico (1993) and Beijing, China (1995). The following from Brian Savilonis, who is both a racewalker and women's track and cross country coach at Worcester Polytechnic Institute in Worcester, Massachusetts: "At a recent meeting of New England Division III college coaches, racewalking was accepted as an exhibition event in women's indoor and outdoor track. It is anticipated that the 1500 meter racewalk will be included in most meets, including the New England III championships, as a non-scoring event. After one year, the progress of the event will be evaluated to determine its future status. While my original proposal was for a 3 Km outdoors, it was clear that coaches feared the event would take too long and compromise was in order to at least get the event into the program. As the indoor track season approaches, I urge all New England area walkers who would be willing to judge or otherwise help out to please contact a local college to see what volunteer assistance they need. With the push for a steeplechase, this may be the last time for a while that racewalking gets a fair chance at acceptance regionally. A similar proposal to get an exhibition racewalk into the All-New England indoor meet lost by one vote last year. Dan Pierce becomes the first racewalker to be suspended in TAC's drug testing program. Dan was handed a two-year suspension for failing to appear for an out-of-competition drug test in June. He appealed the suspension to a three-member panel of the Doping Hearing Board, which upheld the suspension. We have no further details at this time. . . . A note from Robert Carver in Florida: "I am the person who wrote that article for a newsletter of the local runners club I belong to (See comments by Rex Cleveland in September ORW). I do admit that there were some errors in that article but the errors were made by myself and the editors of the newsletter. On the bent knee rule, the word "non" was omitted by the editors, not me. It should have read 'the knee must must be in a non-bent or straight position.' I should also have written for lifting: 'The front foot must make contact with the ground before the rear foot leaves the ground, therefore, both feet have contact with the ground during every stride.' As for the comment on the 50 Km world record being about 4 hours, I should have checked my records, but then again, I was just making references so the local runners can see what racewalkers are capable of. As you can see, I am not the best writer in the world, but I am a good racewalker. I have been in several judged events ranging from 1500 meters to 20 Km, the judges including Henry Laskau, Martin Rudow, and Howard Jacobson, and I have had my form corrected by these same people. At these races, I never received a DQ warning. I also attended a judges clinic by Henry Laskau and passed my judges test." Two booklets on racewalking are available through the North American Racewalking Association, both by Elaine Ward. Introduction to the Technique of Racewalking seeks to answer such typical beginners questions as: How can I learn to racewalk? How do I know if I have taught myself to racewalk correctly? How can I walk faster? Technique fundamentals are presented clearly with accompanying pictures and suggested learning drills and fitness walking exercises. Mobility Exercises for Racewalking goes into the types of stretches and strengthening exercises that are best for racewalking and discusses various aspects of warming up and mobility training. Frank Alongi was a consultant on this publication. Both booklets cost $7.00 plus $2.00 for postage handling (only $2.00 total P&H if you order both) from North American Racewalking Association, P.O. Box 50313, Pasadena, CA 91115. . . . Dave McGovern's November racewalking camp in Texas was so successful that he is planning another one for the spring. The April 2-5 camp will be held at the Healing Springs Ranch in Tioga, Texas and will again cover all aspects of racewalking from style analysis and training program design to sports psychology and racing strategy. Mark Fenton, the National Team Sports Science Coordinator, will be on the camp staff addressing problems of periodization of training and putting sound training programs together. For more information, contact Dave at 29 Garden Drive, Alexandria, VA 22304, Phone 703-379-9841 . . . Elliott Denman tells me that the Shore Athletic Club now has a supply of the famed "I Do Not Choose to Run—I Am A Race Walker" t-shirts in size in sizes M, L, and XL. The price is $12, including postage and handling. Write Shore AC, 28 N. Locust Avenue, West Long Branch, NJ 07764.
Looking Back
(We neglected this feature last month, so you get a double dose this month)

25 Years Ago (From the Oct. and Nov. 1966 ORWs)--Larry Young won his first of many National 50 Km titles, beating Canada's Alex Oakley in 4:38:25. Shaul Ladany was third. In the National 15 Km, Ron Laird beat Ron Daniel and Bob Kitchen with a time of 1:11:28. The National 1 H Hour went to Don DeNoon, who covered 8 miles 138 yards. Rudy Haluza also passed 8 miles and Ron Laird was third. Jack Blackburn was the hero of the Ohio TC Distance Carnival winning the 2 Mile (14:16) on Saturday and the 15 mile (2:04:31) on Sunday. Jack Mortland was second both times (14:56 and 2:07:28), but also won Saturday's 7 miler (before the 2) in 55:57. Jeanne Bocci won the women's 5 mile in 43:54.

20 Years Ago (From the Oct. and Nov. 1971 ORWs)--Mexicans took 1,3,4 in our 15 Km championship, won by Jose Oliveros in 1:06:24. Ron Laird (1:06:44) was second and Larry Young (1:07:53) was fifth. Laird won the 20 Km in a dual meet with Canada in 1:38:25 and Larry Young completed the U.S. sweep in the 50 with 4:28:58. In the ORW Race Walking Orgy there were different winners in all three races: Phil McDonald at 10 miles in 1:20:12, Jack Blackburn and Jack Mortland in a dead heat at 2 Miles (14:58.4) and Gerry Bocci at 20 miles (2:59:26).

15 Years Ago (From the Oct. and Nov. 1976 ORWs)--John Knifton left the field well behind in the National 35 Km in Pittsburgh, winning in 2:59:52. Detroit's Bill Walker and Marty Kraft took the next two spots in 3:00:20 and 3:09:09. The rapidly aging Jacks had another go at 2 miles and this time Mortland prevailed by half a second in 15:57.5, 5 years having sliced a full minute off their time. They weren't far ahead of Laurie Tucholski in 16:31. Bob Rosenweig walked a track 50 half a second in 15:57.5, 5 years having sliced a full minute off their time.

10 Years Ago (From the Oct. and Nov. 1981 ORWs)--Italy captured the Lugano Cup by having the first finished in the 50 after the USSR on points. The Soviets led by three points after the 20 Km and the Italians beat them by the same margin at 50. Mexico was only six points back in third. The U.S. finished seventh of the 15 teams. Mexicans won the individual titles, Ernesto Canto (1:23:52) at 20 and Raul Gonzales (3:48:30) at 50. The National 40 Km in Long Branch, N.J. proved an easy win for Dan O'Connor, who completed the course in 3:21:51. Ray Sharp was 8 minutes back in second. Guillaume Leblanc covered 20 Km in 1:26:31 as Canada swept the U.S. in the Canada Cup race held at Niagara Falls. Marcel Jobin and Francois Lapointe were only about a minute back of Leblanc. Jim Heiring took fourth in 1:28:04. Canada's Ann Peel won the women's 10 Km in 50:54 with Jeanne Bocci nearly 2 minutes back.

5 Years Ago (from the Oct. and Nov. 1986 ORWs)--Mexico won the Pan Cup in Quebec, but Tim Lewis and Teresa Vaill both posted U.S. best ever performances. Vaill was fourth in the women's 10 (46:47) behind Mexico's Graciella Mendoza (45:23) Canada's Ann Peel, and Mexico's Luzmari Colm. Lewis had a brilliant 1:24:48 in third, behind Guillaume Leblanc (1:21:13) and Carlos Mercenari (1:21:33). Ray Sharp was eighth in 1:24:58 and Carl Schueler just 6 seconds back of him. Marco Evonik captured second in the 50 (4:05:56) behind Mexico's Martin Bermdez (3:56:2). Leblanc also won the Alongi Memorial, beating Bermdez 1:25:45 to 1:26:31. The National 40 Km went to John Slavonic in 3:29:01, just ahead of Steve Pecinovsk, with Curt Clausen third. Mercenari won an international 20 Km in Los Angeles in 1:24:25 with Bermdez second and Schueler third. Leblanc was only fifth in this race.

Our periodic guest reminiscer, Ron Laird, returns this month with a story purportedly about the first National 1 Hour Championship in 1964. For those who don't know the name, Ron is a four-time Olympian (1960, 1964, 1968, and 1976) and walking's only member of the T&F Hall of Fame. As usual, Ron takes on many little side trips as he remembers the race, gives us some of his pungent philosophy, and imparts some gems the physical and mental aspects of our sport. Read on and be entertained and informed.

A Memorable Race

by Ron Laird

In the spring of 1964, I flew to Chicago to compete in the first-ever National 1 Hour Racewalk Championship. I had moved from that large city some 5 months earlier and settled in Pomona, California. The 1 Hour had been added to the ten other championship distances during the annual AAU T&F Convention the previous fall. It seemed to me that the Green and Gold Athletic Club of Chicago had pushed it through to give Ron Zinn, their star sprint walker, a chance to win another American title. Ron had dominated the short, fast events for nearly 4 years and held the world record for the mile with a time of 6:18.3. I'd ended his streak of three straight indoor 1 Mile titles less than 2 months earlier in Madison Square Garden, and felt I could beat him again at this new, semi-sprint race of somewhere around 8 miles.

Since the Olympic year was upon us, I realized that the most serious walkers had worked harder over the winter months. The Olympics always motivate those who feel they have a chance at making the team to bigger and better training efforts. Because the 20 Km tour was only 2 months away, all the contenders were in town to see who could do what. Those who performed well that day would most likely be the ones to make the team to Tokyo. I had lots of confidence when I came to race walking hard for 1 Hour because the majority of my fastest workouts had been 7 to 8 mile sessions over the years.

Even today, my most frequent workout is a strong 1 hour effort. I start my Casio wristwatch and head out whenever and wherever I desire. All that matters is that I use my time well, don't get hit by a car, and end up back where I started. During my more serious years, I sometimes got in two of these fast, 1 hour workouts per day. Hard efforts were usually done on a measured road course or track so I'd know exactly how fast, or not so fast, I was moving. Other sessions took me out on roads or paths for 30 minutes to an hour and back again by the same route. Many were even done on lap courses as small as a softball diamond. At least on a small loop, there is less chance of anyone bothering you.
A pace of exactly 7 1/2 minutes per mile puts one through the "eight-miles-in-an-hour" barrier. This was quite the challenge back in '64 because an American had yet to accomplish it in an official competition. I hoped to be the first. I'd done it in a track workout during the cool fall weather of the previous year. My time of 59:24 for eight miles was about 2 minutes faster than the U.S. record. I had been all alone with only the challenge of my stopwatch to keep me company during that late afternoon time trial. I'd tied the watch to a hurdle and placed it on top of the curb so I could see exactly how fast I walked each lap. Halfway through that unique experience my speed, balance, and endurance were working so well, I just had to keep going to see what I could clock for 5, 6, 7, and, finally, 8 miles. They were all personal bests, so I stopped at that point, my mind content with what I'd accomplished. I didn't know if I could take the burden of knowing what I was really capable of doing had I tried to continue. I realized I was in excellent condition, but had already ventured far enough into unfamiliar territory, so felt more than enough had been achieved for one afternoon. My mind wanted to save itself and my body for equal and even better performances some time in the near future.

Before that time trial, I remember eating a foot-long pepperoni and four chocolate eclairs for lunch. All that grease and sugar must have given me the extra calories I needed. Such a stunt nowadays would probably leave me with a painful gout attack.

Breaking the 8 mile barrier during a workout did create confidence and lots of hope for my future career as a competitive walker. It had me imagining all sorts of wonderful things about what I might accomplish. I was more than eager to be corrupted by the deceitful desires of my body.

Race day dawns

Our first ever 1 Hour Championship was held on a cool, overcast day, so I knew I'd be strong and able to put in a hard effort from start to finish. One can push the body during hot muggy days, but must be willing to suffer more. A more conservative pace is best on those hot days, unless you are very fit and very aclimated.

One of the things that bothered me that day in Chicago was the softness of the old cinder track we had to race on. This kind of surface always robs the race walker of a little speed and power because it causes one to work slightly harder. Asphalt and concrete surfaces provide better efficiency even though their hardness is a little tougher on the legs. But then, the smoothness of correct race walking technique eliminates much of the impact of hard roads and tracks. Beginners need not fear hard surfaces like so many runners must. If your style is good, you will barely feel your feet hit the ground.

Once the race started, four of us took off and were soon well clear of the field with a 7:12 first mile. This was 18 seconds faster than the pace I wanted, but felt so easy it didn't disturb me. In fact, it inspired me. Once again, my nervousness made me move faster and feel less pain.

Just after the mile, I started sprinting the homestretch and backstretch of each lap. I'd adapted fairly well to doing these accelerations because I'd done so many of them throughout my sunny southern California winter training months.

These short sprints did put me into quite an oxygen debt at the end of each straight. I'd try to recover some on the turns while keeping a quick leg speed going so as not to slow down too much. Even though I never got my breath back, I continually forced an all-out sprint as I came off each turn.

The benefits sprints in training

Training that's full of high-speed repetitions and short recoveries will get anyone into excellent respiratory condition if they don't break down along the way. Mine were usually done on a track after work and for 5 to 8 miles. These kinds of efforts allow you to better tolerate the pain and strain hard breathing creates during actual racing conditions. Over the years, I often used this tactic of long accelerations to break away from or catch my opponents. The additional discomfort of having to endure a severe lack of oxygen has caused some to feel so uncomfortable they simply had to slow down. Their muscular pains were bad enough without the added agony of not getting enough air. Rather than quit, some turned to longer, slower workouts and races. Others learned to tough it out and/or got good at pretending they didn't feel it. The wise are those who realize that the intensity and duration of their training is basically what will determine the quality of their future performances. They then get on with it.

Some serious athletes have even moved to high altitude sites in order to receive the benefits of quality respiratory work while doing slower and thus safer training. Too much speed work has a tendency to rip muscles and tendons from their skeletal systems. Constantly pushing oneself at high speed also has a way of burning out enthusiasm after a while. On three different occasions and for a total of nearly 2 years, I lived down in the high altitude of the Mexico City area in an attempt to safely improve my endurance. One who does the work and can keep form getting sick down there, will certainly improve in that environment.

Back to Chicago

Since my repeat acceleration tactics were being used competitively for the first time in the Chicago race, I was eager to find out how well they'd work. This venture into the unknown even made me a little more nervous than usual. At the same time I was doing them, I had to pay extra attention to the tricks of the trade than made my contact look good enough to get past all the judges. In those days, one judge had the power to disqualify you, so you had to be more cautious when you moved at high speed. Today, it's a lot safer for the walker to sprint because it takes three judges to throw you out.

From the start, three tough rivals from the sponsoring Green and Gold AC stayed in front of me and wouldn't let me pass. Even though my straightaway sprints were wearing them down, they'd elbow me out into the second and third lanes whenever I tried to go by. To make things crazier, their coach was constantly yelling from the infield or running next to us shouting to his walkers not to let me get by. He'd worked himself into such a frenzy that he was getting on my nerves. They all should have been disqualified for bad sportsmanship, but were putting the event on so what could a guy do. I did not want to bite the hand of those who were feeding me, but I wondered why they'd hardened their hearts against me and
were taking the affair so seriously. As it was, I was too busy concentrating on what I was doing to look for a sympathetic official who might discipline them. I doubt if something like this could happen today.

The plan and some reflections

My plan was to handle it by grinding everyone into that crummy cinder track. Their uncalled-for tactics only angered me and gave me more energy to push myself all the harder. This race really didn't worry me as much as it could of because I knew how fit I was plus I pretty much thought I knew the capabilities of those I'd gone to the starting line with. My confidence told me that it was only a matter of a few miles before they'd all crack. Their unsportsmanlike tactics may have been partly due to their anxiety over having to face me in the upcoming Olympic Team Trials at 20 Km. If they could beat me in the 1 Hour Championship, maybe they could do the same on the hills and in the heat of Pittsburgh some 2 months later. But, they didn't; I won that one in just under 1:35. Zinn was second, but did much better at the Games with a sixth place finish. I got myself disqualified for losing too much contact. We are supposed to cling to the ground like bellies of reptiles.

Perhaps my rivals didn't realize how well I'd been able to train out in the warmth of a southwestern winter where I did not have to deal with the hazards of winter weather for the first time in my 9-year competitive career. No snow-packed roads to try to train over every morning. My biggest fear was always that of falling and sliding under the wheels of an oncoming car or truck. Those three athletes from the Chicago race were all West Point cadets who had the comfort and safety of a huge fieldhouse to develop their walking skills. But then, they weren't getting the time they needed each day to properly build 20 Km, or even 1 Hour endurance. Their crowded schedule only allowed for about an hour of training each day.

During the plane ride back to Los Angeles after the Chicago race, I began to realize just how illegal the sportmanship of those three walkers and their coach had been. Coming from West Point, they should have known better. I understood their reasons, so couldn't blame them too much. The Olympic year does funny things to the behavior of contenders, especially if they feel they must make the team. The compulsion to make an Olympic Team will cause some athletes and even officials to do desperate things.

Driving back to Pomona from the LA airport, I blew the engine out of my semi-junk English car, so was left stranded on the freeway in the middle of the night. But what did I care, I was still much too elated about what I'd done back in Chicago earlier that day. Making the Olympic tour to Tokyo later that year was all that really mattered and I was well on my way. Even though I will never win another open National Championship, there's always the possibility of blowing another engine because I continue to drive old cars.

And, back to the track

After the first half of our 1 Hour event, only Ron Zinn was still with me. A few laps later he fell away and I was on my own. Knowing that I could now win encouraged me to keep pushing all the way to the finish. Even though I was being molested something fierce by the acts of excitation, I kept on putting maximum effort. I often found it easier to hurt myself when I was winning that when I was losing. Everything functioned as it should have and I went on to win by over 200 yards (Ed. Actually 187). The victory also brought me a new American record of 8 miles 159 yards.

The title was my 17th and added another lovely, silver-dollar-sized National T&F championship medal to my collection. Too bad the national medals awarded since 1978 are so crummy. That's when The Athletics Congress was founded and took over from the 90-year-old Amateur Athletic Union, who's medals were quite handsome.

The emotions and psychology of racing

This race had it's share of tension and discomfort both before and during, but I came away very satisfied with how well it had gone. With some experience, one should realize that pre-race fears and loss of confidence should not be taken seriously. Once you get going, they are normally overcome with and dominated by the real feelings of effort, fatigue, despair, courage, and hope. The athlete should be concentrating so much on what he or she is doing, that all negative, pre-race acids of fear and doubt that are eating away at the inards are forgotten. It's what happens throughout the event, not before it, that counts.

I don't know why some boxers play those silly stare-down contests just before their fights. What they do to each other after the bell sounds is all that really matters. How fast you walk is basically affected by the amount of effort you exert or don't exert during each stop you take. That is, how hard you push yourself will determine how fast you go and how well you end up finishing.

Be careful not to let yourself worry about any potential problems, especially early on, that could lead to discouragement and poor performance. Force them out of your mind. Successful competitors know when and how to ignore negative developments. They concentrate on getting the most out of themselves from start to finish. Of course, this is all easier said than done, but will improve as more races and training sessions are experienced. It's part of the physical education process we go through as we strive to master the higher levels of any sporting activity.

On matrimony

My ex-wife of a few months had showed up to help count laps and this had added to my usual pre-race emotions. I hadn't been in contact with her since leaving town 5 months earlier. Our divorce proceedings were now in the hands of a racewalking lawyer friend who was also racing that day. Those who take part in our unique sport come from many different professions of which school teachers seem to hold the record. My marriage lasted only 8 months and there were no children. I've yet to remarry, but don't rule out the possibility now that my serious competitive days are behind me. Looking back, I realize how fortunate some of the women I got involved with over the years would have made had I the courage to go through the wedding ceremony again. And then, there are those I'm glad I walked away from.
The ex-wife and I had gotten into a bit of an argument after the race, but it
didn't upset me. The hard effort and joy of achievement had drained away my
ability to get angry about anything. Training and racing always calm me down no
matter what my problems are. I could be nervous or upset over something that had
nothing to with sport, and a strong race walk of at least an hour would simply
draw it out of me. I sincerely hope that you'll experience the same beneficial
therapy from whatever endurance activity you take part in.

The emotional strain of the breakup of my brief marriage had been
compensated for by plenty of hard workouts and races both during and afterwards.
During those months, I came up with the sprint straightaway system of eliminating
negative feelings like hostility and depression. These sessions burned them out of
me and got me into excellent shape at the same time. Luckily, I didn't break down
with any sort of physical injury from all the speed work. In those days, I only
warmed up for races and rarely did any sort of stretching work. As a famous
English race walker used to say, "I just crashed off and hoped I didn't pull
anything." But then, I was only about 25 years old, so had the advantage of youth
on my side.

While my wife and I were in the process of going our separate ways, I
decided to move as far from Chicago as possible. After loading up a car that
needed delivery to the West Coast with my personal things in the fall of 1963, I
drove out to Los Angeles. Putting 2000 miles between us was a big help in dealing
with the situation. The race walk sport was growing out in Southern California, so I
felt that there would be enough local races to keep me happy. The great winter
weather had always appealed to me and I was eager to try it out. Knowing that the
wealthy athletic club I'd joined some years earlier was willing and able to fly me
back East to important competitions also gave me the security and incentive needed
to make the long move. I also hoped that my presence on the West Coast would
help build the sport and increase the quantity and quality of its walkers. West
Coast walkers were quite a bit slower than easterners back in the mid-60s.

The final word

Winning that first 1 Hour National Championship was sort of a historic
experience. These type of competitions are unique events. It's a strange sight
watching everyone quit at the same moment at different spots all over the track.
All race walkers should take some quick 1 to 2 hour workouts on a good track now
and then, and compete in a couple of 1 and 2 hour events each year. The healthful
state that follows each session will more than compensate for any monotony you
may experience. Timing each lap will help keep your interest up.

Editor's note: The headings are mine. One thing that Ron doesn't note is that the
race actually ran a little long. The finish gun misfired and it was estimated that
about 8 seconds elapsed before it was fired again to stop the walkers. This would
add about 30 yards to the distance of the leaders, so Ron was still well over 8 miles.
And here are the results of the historic race Ron describes: 1. Ron Laird, NYAC 8
mi 159 yards 2. Ron Zimm, Green & Gold AC 7 mi 1732 3. Art Mark, USMA and
G&GAC 7 mi 1649 4. Jack Mortland, Ohio TC 7 mi 1640 5. Akos Szekely, USMA
and G&GAC 7 mi 1395 6. Ron Daniel, NYAC 7 mi 1246 7. Olavi Yli Tokola, Reipas

25 km All-time - road - as at the 1.1.1991:

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