5 Km Titles to Lawrence, Seaman

Wilkes-Barre, Pa., August 25 (Reported by Colleen Smith)—Tim Seaman and Debbi Lawrence were the big winners in the USATF National 5 Km Racewalk Championships held here today. Taking advantage of favorable weather and a good course, both winners stormed to American and Championship records.

The 24-year-old Seaman, from North Babylon, N.Y., claimed his title in 19:59 with Dave McGovem hot on his heels in 20:07. "With 1500 meters to go, Dave took off on us," Seaman said. "Then, with 600 meters remaining, I caught Dave. I opened it up just a little after that. But a little is all you need for a win, and a win is a win."

Gary Morgan was not far back in third and was well clear of fourth place finisher, Curt Clausen. Seaman broke the American road record and Championship best of 20:12, set by Jonathan Matthews in 1994. Jim Heiring holds the American record on the track, 20:01.9, set in Columbus, Ohio in 1984.

Kenosha's 34-year-old Debbi Lawrence was an easy winner over Michelle Rohl in 21:15. Lawrence said that she wanted to work with Rohl side-by-side on pushing for some fast times. Defending titlist Victoria Herazo finished third. Lawrence was a minute under the American road record she set in 1991. Her American record on the track is 21:32.87. Rohl, who finished in 21:54, held the former Championship record of 22:27, which she did two years ago.

Master's titles went to 53-year-old Jim Carmines, New Cumberland, Pa., in 23:02, and Phyllis Hansen, Forbs, N.Y., in 26:20. Very notable performances came from Josh Ginsburg, 19, Fredericksburg, Va., who captured seventh in 22:25 and 72-year-old William Flick, Corry, Pa., who finished in 28:23. The first ten in each event, which is what results we have, were:

Team: 1. Shore AC (Clausen, Souchcek, Curt Sheller) 67:05 2. LaGrange TC (Seaman, Mike Rohl, Shams Foster) 67:37

Yeager Easy Winner at 40 Km

Fort Monmouth, N.J., Sept. 8 (From Elliott Denman)—U.S. Navy chief petty officer Warrick Warrick yeager covered 40 Km in 3:38:19 to win the 58th annual USATF8 40 Km championship in a breeze. One place, behind, Curt Sheller of Asbury Park, N.J. improved from seventh last year to second in this one to win the first open division medal of his life in national championship competition.

Forty-two walkers from nine states took part in the challenging test and 28 finished the 20 laps around the Army post. At 42, Yeager, stationed in 29 Palms, Cal., has left his Junior Olympic eligibility far behind. But walking his way to the real Olympics remains his dream. "I'll be 46 in 2000, but I'm really going to shooting for the Games in Sydney," he said. "I'll really be ready for it by then."

A former distance running star at Northern Arizona University, Yeager is virtually self-taught as a racewalker. Stationed in Okinawa with plenty of time to train, Yeager studied a book on racewalking and quickly mastered the technique. The rest has been history. As a virtual unknown, he won the World Masters 40-44 gold medal in the 5 Km last summer in Buffal, then walked his way into the '96 Olympic trials at 50 Km.

"I really cramped up badly the last couple of laps," said Yeager commenting on today's race. He has 10 Km splits of 5:38, 1:40:11, and 2:35:29. But he was never in danger after early threat Dave McGovern, the 1994 40 Km king, dropped out at the halfway mark. Sheller, 42, walked an even-paced race and come on strong over the second half as others faded. Al Leibold of Morland, Kan., annexed third in 4:03:19, just 10 seconds ahead of Michigan's World 60s champion, Max Green. Results:


(Ed. Elliott Denman has done a terrific job of putting on this race for many years, but he can't make the athletes come. And again, the question arises about a national championship race for which only one member of the national team appears and nine of the first ten finishers are in the master's category—and few of the top masters competitors were even there. I'm not questioning this race in particular, but just the participation in any of the off-distance championships. Comments welcome.)

OTHER RESULTS

National Masters 5 Km and open, Kingsport, Tenn., Sept. 14—Jonathan Matthews, who just turned 40 in July, took advantage of his new senior status to walk off with the National Masters title in a record 20:45. The old Championship mark was 22:21, set by Ray Funkhouser in 1993. Perhaps this made up some for a disappointing 1996 in which injury kept him from a legitimate shot at the US Olympic team. Jonathan has apparently moved from Stanford to the U. of Indiana, as he is listed as competing out of Bloomington, Indiana. (He hasn't sent me an address change,
Racewalking adventures await you at these sites

Sat. Oct. 5  3 Mile, Atlanta (D)
WAVA North and Central American and USATF South Region 8 Km Championship, Columbia, S.C. (D)
5 Km, New Orleans, 8 am (X)
5 Km, Kalamazoo, Mich., 9 am (N)
5 Mile, Indianapolis (V)

Sun. Oct. 6  5 Km, Coconut Grove, Fla., 8 am (Q)
1 Hour, Alexandria, Vir., 10 am (J)
13.1 Miles, Long Beach, N. (A)

Sat. Oct. 12  5 Km, Atlanta (D)
5 Km, Seattle, 9 am (C)
5 Km, Indianapolis (V)

Sun. Oct. 13  5 Km, New Orleans, 8:30 am (X)
5 Mile, Deal, N.J., 9 am (A)
5 and 10 Km, Dearborn, Mich. (Z)

USATF National 1 and 2 hour, Cambridge, Mass. (G)
3 Km, St. Louis (S)
1 Hour, Denver (H)
1 Hour, Kentfield, Cal., 8 am (P)
5 Km, Pasadena, Cal. (B)

Wed. Oct. 16  5 Km, Chicago (AA)

Sat. Oct. 19  5 Km, Atlanta (D)

Sun. Oct. 20  Western Regional 8 Km, Las Vegas, Nev., 7:30 am (T)
5 Km, St. Louis (S)
1 Hour, Alexandria, Vir. (J)
Eastern Regional 30 Km, New York City (F)
Marathon, Half-marathon, 5 Km, Denver, 8 am (H)

Sat. Oct. 26  Henry Luskau 5 Km and Florida State 10 Km, Ft. Lauderdale (Q)
10 Km, Monterey Bay, Cal., 9 am (BB)
13.1 Miles, Long Beach, N. (A)

Sun. Oct. 27  5 Mile, Freedom Twp, N.J., 9 am (A)
5 and 10 Km, Dearborn, Mich. (Z)
1 Hour, St. Louis (V)
5 Km, Pasadena, Cal. (B)

Sat. Nov. 2  1 Hr., 10,30, and 50 Km, Washington, D.C. (J)
5 Km, Deebor, Mississipii, 8:40 am (B)
10 Km, Longmont, Colorado (H)

Sun. Nov. 3  4 1/2 miles, San Francisco (P)
1 Hour, Alexandria, Vir., 10 am (J)
Eastern Regional 50 Km, Washington, D.C. (J)
5 Km, Miami, 8 am (Q)
5 Km, Monterey Park, Cal. (B)
5 and 10 Km, Miami, 7:30 am (Q)
5 Km, Seattle, 9 am (C)

Sat. Nov. 9  10 Km and Florida State 20 Km (Q)
10 Mile Handicap, New York City (F)
1 Hour, Kentfield, Cal., 9 am (P)
Regarding the photo captions in the August issue of the ORW, the mystery photographer was Jim Bentley. I also created some confusion with the captions on page 15, but you probably figured it out. The above and below designations are correct, but it would certainly have been more logical to have placed the “above” caption above the “below” caption. Tom Dooley is looking for video of the Atlanta Olympic walks and would like to buy copies of anything that is available. Did anyone tape from Canadian or Mexican TV? Contact Tom at P.O. Box 1009, Cupertino, CA 95105 if you have any offers.

We also hear from Dudley Harris that New Zealand had much better coverage of the walks than we got here.

Dudley’s comments are interesting: “It seems that what we saw on TV here was a little better coverage than we got in New Zealand. We had much better coverage of the walks than we got in New Zealand.”

Dudley continues: “As for uninformed criticism of walking, feel free to copy what John Davies—a sports commentator from TVNZ about racewalkers: ‘they are like football players—they push the rules to the limit.’ He said that because rugby-union football is the national religion in New Zealand, and the man-in-the-street would understand that.”

According to Dave Gwyn, John Knifton recently retired (early) from Huntsman Chemical in Austin. He’s been consulting for Shell Chemical in Houston. Among the 30 employees in his new work group is Dave, perhaps best known as director of the end-of-year John Evans 50 Mile Walk. John Evans retired (early) from Huntsman Chemical in Austin.

P-A Elliott Denman, 28 N. Locust, West Long Branch, NY 07764
B-Ellis Ward, 1000 S. Pasqual #35, Austin, TX 78725
C-Bev LaVeck, 6633 N.E. Windemere Road, Seattle, WA 98115
D-Walking Club of Georgia, P.O. Box 645, Stone Mountain, GA 30086
E-David Guizerix, Rotary Club, P.O. Box 1152, Piney, MI 39466
F-Park Racewalkers, 320 East 83rd St., Box 18, New York, NY 10028
G-Justin Kue, 39 Oakland Road, Brookline, MA 02146
H-Hob Carlton, 2261 Glencoe St., Denver, CO 80207
I-W.R. Bauer, 823 Calhoun Street, Columbia, SC 29201
J-Potomac Valley Walkers, 2305 S. Buchanan St., Arlington, VA 22206
K-Vince Peters, 607 Ohio Circle, Yellow Springs, OH 45387
L-Kalamazoo Valley Walkers, P.O. Box 19414, Kalamazoo, MI 49009
M-Frank Soby, 3907 Bishop, Detroit, MI 48224
N-Park Racewalkers, P.O. Box 27, Kentfield, CA 94904
O-Florida Athletic Club, 325 Lakeview Blvd., Decatur, FL 33445
P-Morgan Brag, Marin Racewalkers, P.O. Box 21, Kentfield, CA 94904
Q-Florida Athletic Club, 325 Lakeview Blvd., Decatur, FL 33445
R-Morgan S. Santen, 11 Gay Road, Brookfield, MA 01506
S-Virginia Mulineux, 11975 Gist Road, Bridgeton, MO 63044
T-Elizabeth Main, 130 Springmont Circle, Guthrie, KY 42234
V-Pat Walker, 3537 S. State Rd. 135, Greenwood, IN 46143
W-New Mexico Racewalkers, P.O. Box 6301, Albuquerque, NM 87197
X-New Orleans TC, P.O. Box 52003, New Orleans, LA 70132
Y-Jim Bean, 4658 Fulfer Street, Salem, OR 97305
Z-Ross Barranco, 3235 Musson Road, Howell, MI 48843
AA-Diane Graham-Henry, 442 W. Belden, Chicago, IL 60614
BB-S. Sorensen, 870 Park Avenue #311, Capitola, CA 95010
CC-Diane Graham-Henry, 442 W. Belden, Chicago, IL 60614
DD-Jack Bray, Marin Racewalkers, P.O. Box 21, Kentfield, CA 94904
EE-Elizabeth Main, 130 Springmont Circle, Guthrie, KY 42234
FF-Vince Peters, 607 Ohio Circle, Yellow Springs, OH 45387
GG-Elliott Denman, 28 N. Locust, West Long Branch, NY 07764
HH-Jim Bean, 4658 Fulfer Street, Salem, OR 97305
II-Ross Barranco, 3235 Musson Road, Howell, MI 48843
JJ-Diane Graham-Henry, 442 W. Belden, Chicago, IL 60614
KK-Diane Graham-Henry, 442 W. Belden, Chicago, IL 60614
LL-Jack Bray, Marin Racewalkers, P.O. Box 21, Kentfield, CA 94904
MM-Elizabeth Main, 130 Springmont Circle, Guthrie, KY 42234
NN-Vince Peters, 607 Ohio Circle, Yellow Springs, OH 45387
OO-Elliott Denman, 28 N. Locust, West Long Branch, NY 07764
PP-Jack Bray, Marin Racewalkers, P.O. Box 21, Kentfield, CA 94904
QQ-Florida Athletic Club, 325 Lakeview Blvd., Decatur, FL 33445
RR-Morgan S. Santen, 11 Gay Road, Brookfield, MA 01506
SS-Virginia Mulineux, 11975 Gist Road, Bridgeton, MO 63044
TT-Elizabeth Main, 130 Springmont Circle, Guthrie, KY 42234
VV-Pat Walker, 3537 S. State Rd. 135, Greenwood, IN 46143
WW-New Mexico Racewalkers, P.O. Box 6301, Albuquerque, NM 87197
XX-New Orleans TC, P.O. Box 52003, New Orleans, LA 70132
YY-Jim Bean, 4658 Fulfer Street, Salem, OR 97305
ZZ-Ross Barranco, 3235 Musson Road, Howell, MI 48843
AAA-Diane Graham-Henry, 442 W. Belden, Chicago, IL 60614
BBB-S. Sorensen, 870 Park Avenue #311, Capitola, CA 95010
CCC-Diane Graham-Henry, 442 W. Belden, Chicago, IL 60614
DDD-Jack Bray, Marin Racewalkers, P.O. Box 21, Kentfield, CA 94904
EEE-Elizabeth Main, 130 Springmont Circle, Guthrie, KY 42234
FFF-Vince Peters, 607 Ohio Circle, Yellow Springs, OH 45387
GGG-Elliott Denman, 28 N. Locust, West Long Branch, NY 07764
HHH-Jim Bean, 4658 Fulfer Street, Salem, OR 97305
III-Ross Barranco, 3235 Musson Road, Howell, MI 48843
JJJ-Diane Graham-Henry, 442 W. Belden, Chicago, IL 60614
KKK-Diane Graham-Henry, 442 W. Belden, Chicago, IL 60614
LLL-Jack Bray, Marin Racewalkers, P.O. Box 21, Kentfield, CA 94904
MMM-Elizabeth Main, 130 Springmont Circle, Guthrie, KY 42234
NNN-Vince Peters, 607 Ohio Circle, Yellow Springs, OH 45387
OOO-Elliott Denman, 28 N. Locust, West Long Branch, NY 07764
PPP-Jack Bray, Marin Racewalkers, P.O. Box 21, Kentfield, CA 94904
QQQ-Florida Athletic Club, 325 Lakeview Blvd., Decatur, FL 33445
RRR-Morgan S. Santen, 11 Gay Road, Brookfield, MA 01506
SSS-Virginia Mulineux, 11975 Gist Road, Bridgeton, MO 63044
TTT-Elizabeth Main, 130 Springmont Circle, Guthrie, KY 42234
VVV-Pat Walker, 3537 S. State Rd. 135, Greenwood, IN 46143
WWW-New Mexico Racewalkers, P.O. Box 6301, Albuquerque, NM 87197
XXX-New Orleans TC, P.O. Box 52003, New Orleans, LA 70132
YYY-Jim Bean, 4658 Fulfer Street, Salem, OR 97305
ZZZ-Ross Barranco, 3235 Musson Road, Howell, MI 48843
AAA-Diane Graham-Henry, 442 W. Belden, Chicago, IL 60614
BBB-S. Sorensen, 870 Park Avenue #311, Capitola, CA 95010
CCC-Diane Graham-Henry, 442 W. Belden, Chicago, IL 60614
DDD-Jack Bray, Marin Racewalkers, P.O. Box 21, Kentfield, CA 94904
EEE-Elizabeth Main, 130 Springmont Circle, Guthrie, KY 42234
FFF-Vince Peters, 607 Ohio Circle, Yellow Springs, OH 45387
GGG-Elliott Denman, 28 N. Locust, West Long Branch, NY 07764
HHH-Jim Bean, 4658 Fulfer Street, Salem, OR 97305
III-Ross Barranco, 3235 Musson Road, Howell, MI 48843
JJJ-Diane Graham-Henry, 442 W. Belden, Chicago, IL 60614
clipping from the weekly TV Guide that comes with the Melbourne "Age". For Friday, July 26th, the Guide notes: "7:30 am to 2 pm: Finally, the athletics. Cathy Freeman's first heat of the 400m takes place at 2 pm, while the sickest event of all, the 20 Km walk, will be also be decided. Bob penned the following letter to the editor (which they never published): "The unknown author of your 'What to Watch' column, dropping opinions all over the place, described the 20 Km walk as the 'sickest event of all.' I doubt that he could run as fast as the competitors walk, but, if he is striving for superlatives, he could correctly describe the three walks as the hottest events of all. In the search for all around success, they need not look into track and field. Despite some problems with judging, walkers are an intelligent bunch. Their success does not depend on expensive apparatus or on flogging horses; they do not face backwards when they compete, and they do not try to inflict brain damage on their opponents. Once again, the 20 Km walk got Australia's athletics team off to a good start, despite Channel Seven's missing the first four finishers. In track and field, we compete against the world, not just the handful of countries rich enough to contest many Olympic sports. Your anonymous critic could sit back and enjoy the Russians, Mexicans, Kenyans, and, if he knew how to spell them, the Ukrainians, who have excelled in walking." Bob also chose to "touch up" the photos of your editor and the Olympic torch that appeared in the July issue of the ORW. Couldn't resist the urge, he said. On the photo of me emerging from the van with torch in hand, he appended the word bubble: "Are there any instructions to go with this?" On the next photo of me kissing wife Marty, he added a bubble with me saying: "They said something about Atlanta. Iphone you as soon as I arrive." And on the front photo of me and my escort moving out with the torch, he has me saying: "Ever since I got lost in that 5 Km race, I've brought my navigator along..."

LOOKING BACK

39 Years Ago (From the September 1966 ORW)--Ron Laird won the National 25 Km title in 2:06:16 on a very hot day in Seattle. Tom Dooley trailed by nearly 12 minutes in second. In the European Championships, East Germany's Dieter Lindner walked 20 Km in 1:29:15 to beat Soviet ace Vladimir Goldhbrn and Nikolai Smagin. Italy's Abdon Ladany won the 50 Km race in 4:18:32 over another Soviet pair--Gennadij Agapov and Tusherbin. Alex Oakley captured the Canadian 50 Km in 4:44:52, 12 minutes ahead of Shaul Ladany... Another Canadian, Felix Cappella, won the annual Mackinac Bridge 4 1/2 mile race in Michigan in 34:35.

25 Years Ago (From the September 1971 ORW)--Larry Young won the National 30 Km in Seattle and bettered the American record for 100 miles in Columbia, Missouri. In the 30, he pulled clear of Ron Laird in the final 10 Km to win in 2:25:40. Laird had 2:28:10, ahead of Bill Ranney, Goetz Klopfen, Bob Bowman, and Steve Tyrer. The 100 miler was held on a 20-meter indoor track because of monsoon-like weather. Larry took it easy for 96 miles and then accelerated to finish his 18:07:12 effort with miles of 9:40, 9:21, 7:5, and 7:50... Laird took the National 25 Km on Long Island in 2:01:49, after a good tussle with John Kneifon (2:03:34), Bob Kibben (2:04:13), and Canadian Marcel Jobin (2:05:28). Shaul Ladany prevailed in the prestigious London-to-Brighton 52 miler in 7:57:17 (37:12 minutes ahead of second) just a few weeks after he had won the Hastings-to-Brighton 38 miler in 5:33:36. What was so attractive to Shaul in Brighton that he had to be constantly walking there... In a 10 miler in Continental, Ohio, Jack Blackburn edged Jack Mortland on a hot day, 1:21:01 to 1:21:09. Phil McDonald was better than a minute back. Phil had his revenge a week later as he wiped out both Jacks while finishing 10th in the National 25 mentioned above.

20 Years Ago (From the September 1976 ORW)--The National 30 Km, held in Des Moines, Iowa, went to Larry Young in 2:27:26. Floyd Godwin stayed close most of the way, but finished better than 3 minutes back. Angie Hirt was a distant third, followed by an aging Ron Laird... Hirt took the National 100 Mile in Columbia, Missouri in 19:55:16, with Chuck Hunter, finishing the race for the fourth straight year, only 10:34 behind. There were seven finishers, with our own Jack Blackburn joining Hirt as a new Centurion, finishing fourth in 21:57:11... The World 50 Km Championship, held because the event was dropped from the Montreal Olympics, went to Soviet Veniamin Soldatenko in 3:54:50. He was followed by Enrique Vera, Mexico, in 3:58:14, and Reima Salonen, Finland, in 3:58:53. Two-time Olympic bronze medalist was the first U.S. finisher in 21:41:47, as he needed over 58 minutes for the final 10, dropping eight places. Angie Hirt had 4:28:35 in 27th (this was before the 100 miler).

10 Years Ago (From the September 1986 ORW)--Tim Lewis had a U.S. best ever as he won the Rockport Series 20 Km in Seattle. Tim finished in 1:23:35, ahead of Carl Schoeder (1:25:38), Ray Sharp (1:26:42) and Paul Wick. Teresa Vail (49:30) beat Debra Lawrence in the women's 10 Km at the same site... Hartwig Gauder won the European 50 Km title in 3:40:55, a minute ahead of Vyacheslav Ivanenko, USSR.

The following two articles offer some very interesting commentary and views on our sport. They appeared in the British publication Track Stats, the quarterly magazine of the National Union of Track Statisticians. The first is by editor Bob Phillips. The second is by Colin Young, long-time competitor and commentator on racewalking. Colin has walked very well at all distances and excelled at the ultra-distances. He once set a world's best for 24 hours. At age 61, he is exactly 3 days older than your editor and still does the 2500 miles a year he has been doing since 1951. He was one of the founding members of statisticians union.

Are Standards being Lifted? Or Is It Just Plain Lifting?

Racewalking gets a bad press, and it's of no help to its defenders that there are such bizarre occurrences as in the World Championships last year when one athlete lost a bronze medal by disqualification after the race was over and another won bronze despite a vehement and seemingly justified protest.

Yet does this highly idiosyncratic branch of athletics deserve its sullied reputation? Is racewalking fair? Is it legal? Is everyone lifting? Is the evidence of TV cameras conclusively damaging or intrusively misleading? Would the views of many of walking's British detractors be different if the likes of Don Thompson, Paul Nihill, Stan Vickers, and Ken Matthews were around? It is beyond doubt that techniques have improved out of all recognition. The mode of progression is very different to what it was on that emotional occasion 36 years ago when a little man in sunglasses with a headkerchief tied to the back of his cap marched purposefully through the tunnel of Rome's Stadio Olimpico and we all stood up and sang "Keep Right On To The End Of The Road". Don Thompson won the Olympic gold that day in 4:25:30, a Games record. Last
year, Valentin Kononen, of Finland, was World champion in 3:43:42. Yet, even though Kononen was more than 15 percent the quicker of the two, his computer-aided training-program was surely not so much superior to Thompson's 10-miles-a-day and homemade bathroom sweat-sessions that he could finish over 40 minutes ahead.

What should be beyond argument to those who take the trouble to go out on the roads and watch the walkers in action is that these are superbly fit athletes with enormous reserves of stamina and powers of concentration, able to maintain an excruciatingly demanding gait for very long periods of time. No other athletics event lasts unbroken as long as the 50 Km walk, and I had no hesitation, nor any qualms, about listing Valery Spitsyn, the European champion of 1994, among my Athletes of the Year. Nor did I have to think long and hard before choosing the 18-year-old World champion in the 10 Km walk, Irina Stanukina, as the leading junior woman athlete for 1995. (Ed. Nor, did I.)

Yet, changes to the rules now brought into effect would seem to acknowledge that racewalking is no longer walking at all in the generally accepted sense of the term, but rather straight-legged running, and I wonder whether this different interpretation will seem to the critics to be no more than cosmetic surgery? I accept, too, that rejection of video-camera evidence will be seen by many observers, however strong their loyalty to walking, as ignoring an obvious technical aid.

My belief is that walking still needs to re-examine its future and maybe take a similar decision to one of some 40 years ago when presented with the same problem of image. The 10 Km walk was contested in the 1952 Olympics, as it had been in four previous Games, and provided the unsavoury spectacle of a Swiss and Russian both flagrantly running in the last 50 meters as they raced for silver and bronze. Because of this travesty, the event was replaced by the 20 Km road walk from the 1956 Games onwards, and this remained to everyone's satisfaction for considerable time.

Now, it may be opportune to again consider increasing the distances—to, say, 30 and 60 Km for men and to 20 or 25 Km for women. Experience of past Championships indicates that there are no less disqualifications at longer distances, but they usually seem to be effected less contentiously.

Whatever is done, if anything, it is important to recognize that walking is a far more universal sport than it has ever been before. At the end of 1968, the Soviet Union was totally dominant, with 23 of the top 30 at 20 Km and 21 of the top 30 at 50. East Germany came next with five places in each event. Britain and Poland took the two remaining places at 20 Km, and Britain (2), Italy, and Sweden the other four places at 50. So only six countries were represented. At the end of 1995, Russia led with 10 places at 20 Km and 8 at 50. Also contributing at 20 are Belarus, China, and Mexico (3 each); Czech Republic, Germany, and Italy (2 each); and Australia, Lithuania, Poland, Spain, and Sweden (1 each). The other countries at 50 Km are Germany (4); Belarus, Mexico, and Spain (3 each); and Finland and France (2 each); and Australia, China, Czech Republic, Italy, and Ukraine (1 each). So now, there are 15 nations involved, and even allowing for the fact that athletes from Belarus, Lithuania, and Ukraine would previously have competed for the Soviet Union, this still means that more than twice as many nations have top 30 walkers than was the case in 1968.

It's also interesting to note the appearance in high-ranking positions in 1995 of walkers from Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Tunisia, and Guatemala. Altogether, 17 countries were represented in the provisional World Top 50 for 1995 at 20 Km and 20 countries in the 50 Km list—with neither Britain nor Sweden among them, incidentally—and that makes for a formidable lobby on racewalking's behalf.

For those who feel that racewalking has no place in the Olympic Games or World Championships, I only suggest patience and tolerance. It will not readily go away...either at an easy amble or an undignified trot.

The above are my views of a sport to which I have remained staunchly sympathetic over the years. For the opinion of one of the World's experts on the subject, I turned to Colin Young, who as a competitor and spectator has experienced the metamorphosis at first hand. Or maybe I should say 'feet'.

**Political Correctness: The Route To Destruction**

by Colin Young

As from January 1, 1996, the definition of racewalking includes the following:

"The advancing leg must be straightened (i.e., not bent at the knee) from the moment of first contact with the ground until the vertical upright position."

This is in addition to the contact rule, which is phrased thus:

"Racewalking is a progression of steps so taken that the walker makes contact with the ground so that no visible (to the human eye) loss of contact occurs."

Having been an ardent follower of the sport and a dedicated competitor for nearly 50 years, it is clearly evident to me that during recent years greater emphasis has been put by competitors, judges, and coaches on the straightening of knees rather than on keeping contact with the ground. This has resulted in a concentration on leg movement other than keeping contact with the ground. It is the latter, I submit, which is the essential difference between running and walking, as understood by the general public and, indeed, by those involved in athletics.

The argument over what is fair "heel and toe", has raged for over 200 years, but the sport has maintained a legitimate event due to the officials in charge—and particularly due to walking judges coming down hard on those who infringed the rules. However, during the past 20 years or so, officials responsible for the events have in the cause of 'political correctness' not been strict like their predecessors in applying the contact rule: to the extent now that in any race, whether at international level or club level, the vast majority of the first half of the field are 'lifting'.

In order to keep racewalking events in the athletics program at various levels, the IAAF Racewalk Commission has gradually added to what was a basic and clear definition of walking in order to make it more 'technical' and in an effort to purify those who wish to eliminate walks from major championships. Those with just a passing interest in the sport are baffled.

There are many who will try and convince doubters that participants are fitter and that the leg speed is such that it is impossible to judge the maintenance of contact. Nevertheless, they wish to retain judging by the human eye, and they turn a blind eye when photographs or TV cameras clearly emphasize that the sport is now dominated by 'flying feet'.

There are those of us, however, who believe we have seen a worthy sport deteriorate, and we have plenty of evidence by means of film and photos that pre-1975 even the fastest performers would have safe contact when breaking records and winning Championships. When there were those like Vaclav Balsan and Wemer Hardmo, who were recording times over 50 years ago that, allowing for track conditions and improved clothing, would be equivalent to today's clockings, they were stopped from going even faster by responsible judging. Through the years, there have been competitors who have put in startling performances either unknowingly or deviously, but have always been prevented from judging from making the sport a joke.

It seems to me that the vast majority of top performers are not meeting the basic requirements which separate walking from other forms of progression. Do those in control of the sport recognize this fact? Or, are they merely adding some camouflage to the definition?

The recent judging system, in which a board is displayed with the number of warnings accumulated by each competitor, has encouraged walkers to 'hide' in bunches in the early stages of
an event and then throw caution to the winds in the closing kilometers when they have warnings to spare. Just look at some of those crazy 5 km splits in major Games!

I certainly do not condemn the walkers, whose fitness, endurance, and determination cannot be questioned. It is the judges, who should enforce the contact rule as consistently and humanly as possible. Misguidedly, they probably think they are preserving the sport, whereas, in reality, they will eventually bring it to destruction.

The most recently introduced Championship event is the women's 10 Km, and this event has caused the greatest controversy. Again, the existing judging methods are to blame, but there is also the factor that the majority of female walking exponents have greater flexibility of hip and pelvis than their male counterparts, and thus they are even more likely to flaunt the contact rule.

In conclusion, then, I would say that racewalking faces an uncertain future, as it frequently has through its checkered past. To prevent the event becoming a complete lottery, judges will have to be strict, though I sadly forecast they will concentrate on knee movement rather than on constant contact.

That being so, the farcical finishing witnessed in major races in recent years will be repeated again and again, and the sport, which has meant so much to me for so long, will destroy itself.

On a more positive note, Viisha Sedlak, Director of the American Racewalk Association, P.O. Box 18323, Boulder, CO 80308, offers the following:

**How To Build The Sport Of Racewalking**

The elders of the beautiful sport of racewalking perhaps too easily recall the days of obscurity and the resultant difficulties for walkers: little financial or educational support for competitors and empty bleachers by the time the racewalkers stood at the start line, more than a fair share of mockery towards a rarely understood technique, and near-total anonymity of the benefits of racewalking as a fitness alternative.

Those days are over in all but the last machismo-ridiculoso strongholds in the world. We are part of a growing fitness sport and racewalkers like you are setting powerful examples as you join competitive events. Your friends, family, and strangers see you losing weight, getting stronger, and finding a small bit of peace in your workout time and they are following suit. Enough fans of walking have paid their dues by being at the forefront of the sport and by donating time, personal moneys, and a lot of passion towards building the sport in the United States.

How can we reinforce and expand upon this growth, and slow and reverse the problems competitive walking faces at the local, national, and international levels? Some suggestions:

1. Learn about walking healthfully so you do it safely and efficiently.
2. Always be positive about walking and your participation in the sport.
3. Support your fellow walkers in fitness to encourage them through the uncertainties you felt when you first learned the initially awkward and unique technique.
4. Support your fellow competitors; when you out-race them, be grateful for the motivation of their presence. When they beat you, be grateful for their example.
5. Put in a few hours of research periodically to learn more about the behind-the-scenes work of racewalking: judge, organize, help out as a volunteer with your local club, become a certified coach, or any of hundreds of possible contributions.
6. Rather than feel you have to defend racewalking from skepticism, set an example with yourself and the sport; out walk runners, with a smile. Quit talking about that fat you want to shed and walk it off. Walt the Talk.
7. When problems occur with the logistics or awards or anything else at a running/walking or walking event, be patient, diplomatic, and look for a solution rather than simply criticize. You have good ideas to improve the sport: let's start applying them together.

Following the women's 10 Km at the Atlanta Olympics, we find (from left to right) Jim Hanley (noted official, "lap counting" author, and former competitor), Kerry Saxby-Junna, Australia (12th in Atlanta and many times world record breaker), and Victoria Herazo (many-time US champion, DQd in Atlanta), who, according to photographer Jim Bentley, are discussing weather (heat and humidity), the road course, and the DNFs and DQs.