Dow, Dunn Win Pan Am Qualifiers

Kenosha, Wis., Aug. 30—Joanne Dow solidified her claim to the top spot among U.S. women at 20 Km, following up her win at the National Championship in the spring with another superlative victory in the Pan Am Cup Trials here. She wasn’t quite as fast (1:35:45), but was still 2 minutes ahead of runner-up Teresa Vaill, who was also second at the Nationals. The other three spots on the Cup team went to Susan Armenta, Debbi Lawrence, and Jill Zenner. That event is in Miami on October 3 and 4.

An accompanying men’s 30 Km race qualified three athletes to join Marco Evoniuk and Mark Green on the Cup 50 Km squad. With only three of six starters finishing the race, there wasn’t much suspense about the three qualifiers. Philip Dunn won in 2:26:30 with New Mexico’s Theron Kissinger, just breaking into the national scene this year, a very impressive second in 2:27:13. Cup veteran Steve Pecinovsky got the final slot. Not a particularly young team with Evoniuk, Green, and Pecinovsky all on the far side of 40. Marco will be 41 by race time, Mark is 42, and Steve 43. Don Lawrence, Dave McGovern, and Warrick Yeager (another master) did not finish. It seems sad that with three spots on an international team open and with some of the strong candidates committed to the 20 for the Cup competition (that’s why spots were open) only six competitors would show up for the race. Such is the plight of 50 Km walking in the U.S. On the other hand, 17 showed up for the women’s race at this relatively untested distance and, impressively, 11 were under 1:50, with a twelfth barely missing.

Vince Peters reports on the women’s race: The start went off as expected with Dow, Victoria Herazo, Lawrence, and Vaill out fastest. Jill Zenner was alone in fifth at 1 Km in just under 5 minutes, with Cheryl Relling, Danielle Kirk, Armenta, Margaret Ditchburn, Molly Lavacek, Lisa Sonntag, Lyn Brubaker, and Dana Yarbrough in a pack at 5:06 to 5:09.

At 2 K, it was obvious that Teresa and Joanne had upped the ante and were going to race from there till there was only one. And, if both survived, the remaining three spots would be decided by everyone else’s will and fate.

By 3 km, Debbi had opened a gap on Herazo and Zenner. There was an 18 second back to the pack, led by Relling. Little changed between 3 and 8 km except the gap between the first two and Lawrence in third, with Zenner another 25 seconds back. At 9 km, a chase pack had formed, which included Herazo, Armenta, and Relling. Armenta caught Zenner by 10 Km (49:58), and they worked together through 16, narrowing the gap to Lawrence in third and widening the advantage over Relling, and then Herazo. Meanwhile, Margaret Ditchburn was also walking a fine race and constantly gained on positions three through six over the second 10.

Out front, Dow and Vaill continued their fast pace passing 10 in under 48. Once past 10, Joanne left Teresa behind and cruised the final 10 unchallenged. Teresa also took advantage of the big lead they had established and did not stress herself as the temperature rose into the 70s.

The race for the final three spots was more competitive. Just past 16 km, Zenner and Armenta both surged. Susan, stronger on the day, broke away and went on to catch Lawrence for third. Debbi and Jill slowed significantly over the last 2 km, but were not to be caught as Herazo finished 47 seconds back in sixth. Lyn Brubaker in ninth broke the existing age 40-44 record by 5 minutes. Teresa Vaill will be making her sixth appearance in the Pan Am Cup.
Claussen, Vaill Do Prevail

Wilkes-Barre, Penn., Aug. 24—Curt Clausen and Teresa Vaill were easy winners in the "Sallie Mae" USAATF National 5 Km races held here today. Clausen didn't need to extend himself too much, covering the distance in 21:04, about what he might do to start a 20 Km on a good day, but still had 45 seconds on Al Heppner at the finish. The old fellows—Warrick Yeager (44), Gary Morgan (38), and Steve Pecinovsky (43)—followed, all in outstanding times for their advancing years.

In the women's race, Teresa Vaill was well clear in 22:49, with Debbi Lawrence 29 seconds back. Lyn Brubaker was a solid third, leading the master's group.

Results:

Women's 5 Km:

1. Teresa Vaill 22:49
2. Debbi Lawrence 23:18
3. Lyn Brubaker 23:59
4. Donna Chamberlin 24:55
5. Joy Hepper 25:44
6. Carol Conley 26:03
7. Cindy Smith 26:15
8. Gayle Talmage 26:15
9. Joy Hepper 26:43
10. Linda Reynolds 27:06

Men's 5 Km:

1. Curt Clausen 21:04
2. Al Heppner 21:49
3. Warrick Yeager 22:55
4. Gary Morgan 23:24
5. Steve Pecinovsky 23:53
6. Don Lawrence 24:35
7. John Soucek 25:23
9. Bruce Booth 25:49
10. Stanley Sonnosi (48) 26:01
11. Dave Romansky 26:30
12. David Lawrence 26:43
13. Jim McGrath 26:58
14. Curt Sheller 27:04
15. John Tapper 27:13
17. Jack Starr 27:26
18. Steve Pecinovsky 27:35
20. Curt Clau~en 28:07
21. Dick Romansky 28:18
22. John Molendyk 28:24
23. John Soucek 28:24
24. Steve Pecinovsky 28:50
25. Steve Pecinovsky 29:06
26. Steve Pecinovsky 29:24
27. Steve Pecinovsky 29:54
28. Steve Pecinovsky 30:24
29. Steve Pecinovsky 30:45
30. Steve Pecinovsky 31:06
31. Steve Pecinovsky 31:27
32. Steve Pecinovsky 31:48
33. Steve Pecinovsky 32:09

Herazo, Matthews Lead Masters 5 Km

Kingsport, Tenn., Sept. 12—The Food City USA 5 Km Masters Racewalk Championship was another success in its seventh straight appearance here. Ninety-two entrants toed the starting line at 7:45 am with beautiful, crisp weather; temperatures in the mid 70s. Twenty-seven states were represented, with great support from the Indiana Racewalkers, who sent 30 walkers.

It was a very fast field with many elite, former and future Olympians. Moving at an alarmingly fast pace, Jonathan Matthews and Tori Herazo took the masters overall titles, while Curt Clausen was the open non-master winner of the Food City Championship. Matthews was second overall at 21:09. The 42-year-old professor at Carroll College in Helena, Montana made his fourth appearance here and hasn't slowed down much. Matthews explained the flexibility that racewalking affords. "What you need to do is be a good racewalker and not a long stride, but a fast stride. Unlike running, you're usually able to race well at short distances if you've been training long. Five years ago, I set an American 3 km record and won a 50 km national championship in the same year," said Matthews, whose 1995 time of 20:20 still stands as the race record.

Tori Herazo was another elite athlete familiar with the Food City Championship. The 39-year-old finished with a time of 23:31, 16 seconds off her course record. "Since I've been working full-time, trying to squeeze in my training is harder," said Herazo, who finished strong despite an injured right hip. "I plan to take off at least 6 months to train. The key to making the Olympics in 1998 was taking time off to train. When you do that, you can really focus all your attention on what you need to do. It doesn't get diverted."

Curt Clausen, the 1996 Olympian who recently placed sixth in the Goodwill Games 20 Km, was the over-all winner with a time of 20:37. He used this race as a tuneup for the upcoming Pan Am Cup. "Nationally, I do well at most distances, but internationally, I think my real opportunity is going to be 50 km," said Clausen. "Today was a little slower than last year, but basically, I felt good. My slowest kilometer was my first lap. I cramped it up a notch after that and kept an even pace." Third overall was another elite racewalker, 32-year-old Dave McGovern of Mobile, Ala. in 22:29, while Gregory Dawson, Saint James, N.Y., was fourth in 22:57.

Other Results


From across the seas


The welcome mat is out at these races

Sat. Oct. 3

- 1 Mile, Frederick, Maryland (F)
- 2 Miles, Lake Bryan, Tex. (Y)
- 5 Km, Los Angeles, 7:30 am (B)

Sun. Oct. 4

- Sacramento 1/2 Marathon (E)
- USA TF National 1 and 2 Hour, Worcester, Mass. (G)
From Heel To Toe

What? An ORW error? Jim Hanley writes with two comments on our July issue. "In the 30 years ago segment, you said that the 1968 One Hour National Championship was won by Larry Young with Martin Rudow second. Not true. Ron Laird won the race (7 miles 794) and I was third (7 miles 885). I remember Young with Martin Rudow second. Not true. Ron Laird won the race (7 miles 1386 yards, years ago segment, you said that the 1968 One Hour National Champion was won by Larry Young. We camped in Grand Teton National Park and had a great time touring Yellowstone. The race was equally memorable for it was not on a standard track. Just out of Miles City, Montana was a brand-new, un-opened, two-lane(!) Interstate highway. Being part of the Great Plains, the land was flat as a pancake and the road was straight as an arrow. The mileage markers were each 1/10 of a mile so the measurements as to distance covered were easy to do. Several Native Americans participated in the race, one of who had my all-time favorite racewalker's name--Don No Runner (Ed. Thanks Jim for that bit of history. That is far more detail than we had when we first reported the event). How much do you want to bet that in 2003, I look back at the '98 issue and repeat the same mistake forgetting all about this little discussion thanks to my befogged senior mind.) Jim Hanley continues: "On a more important subject, I was very upset that you are starting to even think that the ORW might not be viable in the age of the Internet. Babelnet. I subscribed to the racewalk list on the net and gave it up. After not checking my e-mail for a few days, I had something like 121 new messages! On going through them, not a short task, I found that most were absolute garbage. Most of the letters were written by self-proclaimed 'experts' who obviously had no clue as to what our sport was all about. There were odd distance races reported that didn't have any judges, for example. Worse, most of the 121 letters dealt with the critical question, "what is your favorite color of racewalking shoes?" That did it for me!" Jim goes on with some sincere compliments on my efforts, which I certainly appreciate but won't boor you with... Mike didn't struggle. In our report of the National Invitational last spring, we said that 20 Km winner Michael Rohr "struggled"

LOOKING BACK

30 Years Ago (From the September 1968 ORW)-In the U.S. Olympic Trials in Alamosa, Col., Ron Laird prevailed at 20 Km in 1:37:45 with Rudy Haluza (1:38:14), Larry Young (1:38:40), and Tom Dooley (1:41:03) following. Young was an easy winner at 20 in 4:34:10, followed by Goetz Klopfer (4:44:02), Dave Romansky (4:47:23), and Bob Kitchen (4:50:56). (The races were at high altitude, thus the modest times.) When Young chose not to double, Dooley was added to the team. We also reported the birth of Derek Douglas Mortland, which occurred on the day of the 50 Km Trial, September 14... Dooley zipped a quick 5 miler in California (35:20) leaving Bill Ramsey and Klopfer well back... A week before the trials, Young scored a very easy win in the National 30 Km in Columbia, Missouri in 2:31:20. Jack Blackburn was second, some 24 minutes behind, as few people showed up for the race... A few days after the trials, a few of those competitors traveled to Atlantic City for the National 15 Km. Laird won in 1:08:03, with Romansky 39 seconds back. The next four spots went to Ron Kulik, Jack Blackburn, Ron Daniel, and Steve Hayden.
25 Years Ago (From the September 1973 ORW)—The U.S. women took the first four places to win an international dual match with Canada. Ellen Minkow was the winner in 26:32 (5 Km), followed by Esther Marquez, Cindy Arbhelide, and Sue Brodock. The National 35 Km went to John Knifton in 3:00:31. Bill Ranney was more than 3 minutes back, with Jim Bean and Bob Bowman neck in line. Hartwig Gauder won the European Junior title in 44:14, the first of many international wins for the 50 Km great.

20 Years Ago (From the September 1978 ORW)—In the European Championships, East Germany's Roland Weiser won at 20 and Spain's Jorge Llopart at 50. Wieser pulled away from 4:24:05 with Augie Hirt and Carl Schueler also under 4:30... U.S. junior titles went to Pete Timmons at 5 Km (25:31) and Morris at 20 (4:17:10). Dave Cummings was second at 20 and Timmons at 20... Sweden won the women's World meet with Britt Marie Carlsson first at 5 Km (23:05) and Elisabeth Olsson first at 10 (49:22). Sue Brodock was the top U.S. finisher in the 5 with 24:41. Liz Dufour was seventh at 10 in 52:39. The U.S. team finished third behind Norway.

15 Years Ago (From the September 1983 ORW)—Alan Price won his fourth U.S. title at 100 miles in Columbia, Missouri, covering the distance in 22:39, well of his best of 18:57:01 in 1978. The only other finisher in extremely hot conditions was Chris Custer in 23:50, her first attempt at the distance. She became the 42nd U.S. centurion and the fourth lady... Our analysis of the T&F News rankings for the previous 12 years showed the USSR as the leading walking nation during that period, followed closely by East Germany (German Democratic Republic), and Mexico. Everyone else was far back, with the U.S. ninth.

10 Years Ago (From the September 1988 ORW)—Curt Clausen won the National 40 Km in Union, N.J. in 3:25:51, becoming the youngest man (age 20) ever to capture the title. Mark Fenton was second in 3:31:10 and Alan Jacobson third. Gary Null, in sixth place, won the Masters title in 3:48:08. The first woman was Dorit Atlas in 4:13:39. In the World Junior Games in Sudbury, Ontario, Spanish women Maria Diaz and Olga Sanchez finished one-two in the women's 5 Km, with Diaz clocking 21:51:31. Dierdre Callier was the first U.S. finisher in 12th with 24:40:14. The men's 10 km went to Cruz of Mexico in 41:16:11 with Spain's Valentin Massana, the 1993 World Champion, at 20, second, 17 seconds back. John Marter led the U.S. walkers with a 47:40 in 18th.

5 Years Ago (From the September 1993 ORW)—National 5 Km titles went to Victoria Herazo (22:55) and Andrzej Chylinski (21:06). In the Denver races, Debbie VanOrden (23:25) and Curtis Fisher (21:40) were second... The National 40 in Fort Monmouth, N.J., went to Puerto Rico's Jose Ramirez in 3:40:10. Gary Null in second (3:44:33) won both the National title and the National Masters title. Bob Keating, also in 45-49 age group, followed him in 3:50:31. As a matter of fact, the first non-master was Herb Zyzek in 10th (4:11:55)... National Junior 3 Km and 5 Km titles went to Debbie Iden in 15:13:88 and Al Heppner in 21:39:28. The races were in Orono, Maine...Bernardo Segura, Mexico, won the Alonzo 20 Km title in Dearborn in 1:21:55 with Gary Morgan the first U.S. walker in 6th (1:29:31). Italy's Annarita Sidoti won the 10 Km in 46:06, 47 seconds ahead of Debbie VanOrden.

Interview with Jonathan Matthews

Rick Williams of Newburgh, Indiana has provided the following interview he conducted with U.S. international racewalker Jonathan Matthews. Taking up the sport in his mid 30s, Jonathan has been on the U.S. World Team and the 1993 World Championship team, and the 1993 Pan-Am team. He holds the U.S. record at 1 Hour and reportedly has 20 U.S. Masters records to his credit. Coming from other endurance sports, Jonathan is very knowledgeable about training and is a great ambassador for our sport, although quite realistic about its place in the greater scheme of things. His remarks are well worth repeating to the ORW audience.

Q. I suppose a good place to start would be to ask you what brought you to racewalking or how did you get started?

A. I became an avid runner in my early teens, but my feet were not made for intense running training. I had chronic injuries. Still, I managed a 1:57 half mile in high school. Trying to run college track, I severely injured my Achilles tendons. I turned to cycling as a non-impact alternative and eventually made the USA cycling team. Unfortunately, cycling has its own, different sort of impact problems, and I retired from cycling after rearranging my face during a crash, while racing for the National Team. For a couple of years after that, I tried running again, but this time I developed chronic plantar fasciitis. So, around about 34 years of age, I turned to racewalking as the safest, most appropriate (for me) endurance sport. My first year was very slow, by myself, walking around 11 minute miles. Within 3 years, I had progressed to the point where I could walk a mile in 5:55 and 50 Km at 7:47 per mile. I won several open National Championships and set several open American records. I've always loved to train and race hard. I finally found an activity that would allow me to do this with the fewest interruptions. Because of this, success followed.

Q. The 1998 USATF Rule Book shows you as having 21 US National and Master records. I couldn't find another individual who has so dominated an area of T&F at various distances as you have. Was your goal to go after specific records?

A. Actually, I was unaware that there were that many. In general, I have not specifically tried to get records. I was able to get several open American records in my late 30s, but only one of them remains now. The reason that I've been able to get so many Masters marks is that I have tried to continue the training and mindset of an open class competitor, even though I am now in my 43rd year. Rightly or wrongly, I still believe that if I could only get the right sort of training, I could still set outright PRs and continue to be among the top several open walkers in the country. Even with sub-par training during the past season, I managed to snag third place in the open 20 Km Nationals this past June. This is the one race that all top open U.S. racewalkers race each year, if they are able.

Q. When I mentioned that I was going to be interviewing you and asked what questions folks would like to have answered, the number one question was "What makes you so fast?" That's actually a good question. What do you attribute it to, training, genetics?

A. I honestly do not believe that my success is primarily genetic. At least, I don't thing that I have any natural proclivity for endurance sports. Genetically, I am a speed and power type of person. I'm made for short, quick bursts of work, not racewalking-length events. If you line me up against the top U.S. walkers (and especially the top international walkers) you'll see that I look pretty bulky in comparison. At 6'1", I should weigh about 145 pounds for endurance sports. But I weigh about 180. My suitability for endurance sports is psychological. I have the mind of an endurance athlete trapped in the body of a sprinter. So this big body keeps me from doing the perfect endurance training that I would need to become one of the best open racewalkers in the world. But since the
mind can bend the flesh to its ways, within limits, I have been able to achieve some success. The one advantage of naturally being a speed/power/sprinter body is that I can maintain the high turnover necessary for fast racewalking easier than a naturally endurance body can.

Q. I'm sure folks would be interested in your training regime and how it varies from race week to non-race week, as well as off season. For example, what type of mileage do you do a week for the various distances you race? How do you break down a typical training Week?

A. The bottom line in my training, as I mentioned above, is that I have never done the amount of training that I believe would be ideal for racing 20 km on up. In the 6 months prior to my PR 4:01:36 50 km National Championship, I averaged under 50 miles a week. One-hundred miles a week is the normal training load for someone racewalking 50 km at this pace. Of course, I have been doing some sort of endurance training, with only occasional breaks, since I was 14 years old. The years of running and cycling prior to my walking career probably laid the cardiovascular foundation that has made it possible for me to race fast on minimal training. Of course, you should work up to this, but for me a long day is at least 2 hours, and as many as 4 hours of racewalking at a heart rate of between 120 and 145 (given my max heart rate of 193). Even if you are only racing 5 km, you need a long workout such as this at least every other week in order to achieve your potential. In general, the best speed workout is the one that has you moving near your desired race pace. Expressed another way, the most productive speed workout for racewalkers hoping to go faster is to walk at your lactate threshold point. For me, this is the pace that brings my heart rate to about 90 percent of its max. Effort intervals should be from 5 to 40 minutes long (depending on your fitness). Of course, there are other sorts of speed workouts, but this one is the most productive one, and you can do it year round to build fitness. The fitter you are, the more you can do on your "easy" days, but the general rule is that these easy days need to be easy enough to allow you to be ready for your required long and speed days. The super-fit (not me!) might be able to handle 20 miles of comfortable walking, broken into morning and evening sessions, on their easy days. The less fit might need to simply do a half-hour of regular, 3 mph strolling.

Q. A lot of views have come along in the last 10 years concerning nutrition. What are your personal preferences and thoughts?

A. I maintain a low-fat, high-carbohydrate, moderate-protein diet. I rarely eat any animal flesh (perhaps once a week). I get most of my protein from non-fat milk and derivatives. I eat lots of fruits, vegetables, and grains as I can. The best distance athletes in the world are the Kenyan runners. The overwhelming majority of their diet is a tasteless corn mush.

Q. Our local group has a fairly large contingent of walkers who are banging their heads against the 30 minute 5 km barrier. Any words of wisdom?

A. See my above training advice. Other tips: Even on your easy days, try to walk with as rapid a cadence as possible, given the speed you are travelling. In other words, put at the forefront of your mind that racewalking is a game in which the one with the fastest turnover prevails and flourishes. Once you get your technique problems under control (a big condition), a great workout is to sprint the straights and take it easy on the curves for a couple of miles on the track. This will teach you to handle a higher cadence and it will increase your endurance.

Q. At your level of performance, the mental aspects must play a significant role. How do you focus during a race or does it start well before a race?

A. I feel that this may be my biggest advantage competitively. I used to get very nervous and anxious before races when I was a teen. But after a number of years of hard training and racing, I came to the realization that there was nothing to get bent out of shape about. I now see racing as a very straightforward enterprise in which I discover how much my body can give me on the appointed day. In other words, I feel that I am always able to give my best effort, though this effort often falls short of my race goal due to body-involved factors. A few minutes before a race, I will focus on the task at hand, reminding myself that it is now time to give everything I have in me while keeping relaxed. My basic approach is to go as hard as I can, given the distance to be covered. For this reason, some of my PRs have come against tough competition, and others have come when no one has been within many minutes of me. Racing is a self-motivating activity for me more than an other-monitoring one. I am constantly monitoring what my body is doing, reminding myself that, for instance, "I push at least this hard during my speed training." I should be able to endure a little more discomfort, "relax all tension while maintaining maximum turnover, etc." I don't do any formal visualization training, but I sometimes fantasize about racing success without any attempt to do so.

Q. What was your best or most memorable race and why?

A. The most memorable was winning the USATF 50 km title in 1993. It was unexpected. I won by a large margin, had a huge PR, negative split by nearly 3 minutes, and qualified for the World Championships. It was the fastest time by an American since 1988. It was by far the easiest 50 km I have ever done. It actually felt easy until the last half hour. Shin problems had caused me to do no racewalking during all of December. I basically had a month of hard racewalking training during January before the mid-February race. So, with 2 1/2 months to go before an important race, should you take a whole month off? Probably not, but it worked for me, somehow.

Q. This interview came about as the result of a posting about how you personally caused two runners to quit a race when they realized they had just been passed (with authority) by a walker who started 15 minutes behind them. Is blowing by runners one of the perks of being an elite racewalker or do you even notice?

A. Yeah, it is plenty of fun, because even the slower runners at the back of a road race tend to automatically assume, unconsciously, that what they are doing is inherently superior to walking. "I am not walking; I am running and I am going to run the whole 5 km!" They are usually very tired and not walking; I am running and I am going to run the whole 5 km!" They are usually very tired and trying their best. When you walk past them, you convince them—at least for that shocking instant—that racewalking is not something to ridicule, that it is a powerful and worthy athletic form.

Some of Jonathan's impressions of various aspects of our sport in next month's conclusion of this interview.