Clausen Fourth At World Championships

Seville, Spain, August 25--Fighting for a medal to the end, Curt Clausen finally had to settle for a fourth place finish in the World Championship 50 Km with a time of 3:50:55. Surprise winner of the race was 35-year-old Russian German Skurygin, who finished in 3:44:23, 3 1/2 minutes ahead of another surprise, Italy's Ivano Brugnetti. Nikolay Matyukhin in third was the only non-surprise in the top four, repeating his World Cup finish from May.

Clausen's finish is the best U.S. performance in a world class race (Olympics, World Cup, World Championships) since way back in 1973 when Ron Laird finished third in the World Cup 20 Km. Although Curt walked nearly 3 minutes faster at the World Cup in May, that race wasn't in the late summer heat of Spain and there he finished eleventh. The effect of the heat is evidenced in the fact that only three walkers went under 3:50 today, compared to 19 at Mezidon in May, and only 14 broke 4 hours, compared to 45 at the World Cup. Furthermore, there were ten who dropped out in the heat. It was a race of survival and Curt not only survived, he excelled!

With his fourth and eleventh place finishes in the two premier races, Clausen will definitely be in the top ten when the world rankings come out at the end of the year. Laird was the last U.S. walker to accomplish that when he ranked fifth at 20 in 1973 (ORW rankings; Track and Field News had him fourth.) The only other U.S. walker in the top ten was Larry Young with a third at 50 and tenth at 20 in 1972 (both ORW and T&FN.) Track and Field News rankings started in 1971 and ORW rankings in 1972.

Latvian Aigars Fadejevs attacked the race boldly despite the heat and went through 25 Km in 1:52:01 nearly a minute ahead of Skurygin. However, the Latvian was soon on the sidelines with three red cards. (There were 11 DQs in the race, and perhaps the heat was a factor there too, as form can deteriorate with fatigue.) Skurygin was in control from there and had a three minute lead by 35 km, which he easily maintained to the finish.

Skurygin had finished fifth at the World Cup in May, but prior to that had never been a contender in international races. A sixth place finish in the 1994 European Championships earned him his only world top ten ranking. His only previous appearance at the World Championships saw him finishing 22nd in 1993. His best World Cup finish was 18th in 1995. However, he was certainly the strongest today as the favorites dropped by the wayside. World Cup winner Sergey Korepanov and silver medalist Tomase Lipiec were both DQd, along with defending tillist Robert Korzenowski. World Cup fourth place finisher and 1993 winner (and local favorite), Jesus Garcia, did not finish. Garcia had been third at 25 along with Russian Yevgeniy Schmalyuk (6th at the World Cup) who also failed to finish. Korzenowski was challenging for the silver when he was pulled at 38 km.

Brugnetti made a strong surge through the field in the second half of the race to take the silver in a personal best of 3:47:54. He was 13th at 25 km, though just a minute back of third. Brugnetti's coach described him as a teenage tearaway who was more interested in playing cards than training. In recent years, he has started preparing seriously...
for races and realizing his potential. He finished 26th in this year's World Cup race and didn't even get his name spelled correctly in the ORW (not an unusual occurrence). We had it Brugnetti.

Matyukhin was just 15 seconds behind the young Italian at 40 km, but Brugnetti hung on gamely and had 24 seconds at the finish.

Clausen, knowing he was well prepared, was unfazed by the conditions and the strength of the field. He was aggressive from the start, going out with the leaders. "I felt very relaxed and my heart rate was low for the first 10 km (46:30)" he said. At that point he was in the middle of a group just 10 seconds off the lead. He continued to cruise, going through 20 km in 1:31:38. By then, he was in fifth leading a group of seven walkers and 2 minutes behind Padeves (who was 75 seconds ahead of Skurygin at that point). When Curt hit 25 in 1:54:14, he was in sixth right on Korzeniowski heels and just 16 seconds out of third. By 30, he was fourth, but right with Brugnetti and Korzeniowski with Matyukhin and Valentin Massana right on their heels. They were 2:13 behind Skurygin. At 35, Curt was in third, just a second back of Korzeniowski (2:39:07), with Brugnetti right on his tail. They had 13 seconds on Matyukhin at this point and 12 on Korzenan, who was still in the hunt.

Curt continued to fight for the silver medal until 38 km. "I still had 10 beats to give on my heart rate monitor, but my thigh started cramping badly. At that point, I wanted to make sure I finished the race," Clausen said.

Still, he passed 40 in an American record 3:02:18, before slowing to 48:37 for the last 10. At 40, he was fourth, but just 16 seconds behind Matyukhin. Contenders Korepanov and Lipiec were fifth and sixth at this point, but more than a minute and a-half back of Curt. Both were DQ'd before they hit 45 Kms.

While the heat could have been worse, dehydration set in as the temperatures climbed through the morning after the 7:45 am start. Clausen really began to feel it with 7 km to go, at which point his shoulders and arms cramped up.

"I didn't drink enough, but drank enough to finish," Clausen said. In the last 5 km, Massana, more than 2 minutes behind Curt at 40, surged after Clausen and managed to close the gap from 1:08 to 30 seconds. However, Clausen sped the final 2 km to brush back the crowd favorite by a full minute. He summed up his performance, "Very satisfying."

The other two U.S. walkers had tough days as both were DQ'd. Al Heppner was the first to go, just 10 km into the race, while Andrew Hermann was pulled at 31 km. "I felt good early, but after 20 km, I started to suffer," Hermann said. "It's frustrating to work so hard to get here and then have this result." For Hermann, who spent the past year training in Barcelona with Massana, the race was his fourth 50 in six months. The Portland native had nothing but praise for Clausen.

"He's off to Curt. He had one hell of a race." Well, certainly Curt has moved into position as a contender for his country's first racewalking medal since 1972.

Quotes from the medalists:

Skurygin: "I only came here to win, to give it everything, as I'm getting too old now to be cautious anymore. Each championships might be your last at this age! I live in the center of Russia in the town of Elizofon, which is famous for winter sports, particularly Biathlon. So this is the first coaching with my home has had in athletics or any summer sport. I have concentrated for so many years on racewalking and now I have achieved such a big win, I will be able to concentrate more on the rest of my life to have a real family again and maybe to have children. The heat was very bad, but I was concentrating so hard it did not affect me greatly. 50 km has always been a strong event in Russia and I'm just continuing this long, proud tradition."

Brugnetti: "This silver was as much of surprise to me as it is to everybody else. I knew I was well trained. My winter training was very hard and so was the work I did in the spring. However, I could not ever expect anything like this. Actually I was coming to Seville with only the 20 on my mind but decided to change to the 50. I really didn't know where my limits were in this event. Only during the race did I realize it was possible for me to follow with the best walkers. After 30 km I felt very strong, but it was only when reaching the stadium that I was certain of what I was about to achieve. I'm very young and I hope this is just the starting point of my career."

Matyukhin: "I did only one aim, which was not to let my bronze medal be taken from me in the last 5 km. There was one part of the course where the sun shone on our backs and that section of the walking route was very hot and difficult. I had to rely on the fact that my technique is normally very good and so I didn't afraid disqualification during the race. To have Skurygin ahead of me was a great encouragement for me and inspired me to continue walking fast as the weather got very hot."

Other notes: No official report on the race temperature, but one source has noted the temperature rose to 42°C by the finish and another said about 35°C by mid-race. Those translate to about 107 to 95°F. Valentin Massana on the heat: "The heat turned the road into an inferno. It was bad enough to kill a horse."

Clausen paid a price for his final hour of suffering in the heat with an hour of post race IV aid before being able to limp out of the medical tent. Jubilant nonetheless, he said, "I never thought it that the others are better athletes than us. I consider myself better trained, better coached than any of them. And I work as hard, or ever harder than they do." Several walkers suffering from dehydration left the stadium on stretchers.

The Australian team, with Nathan Deakes seventh in the 20, Dion Russell 13th here, and Kerry Saxby-Junna and Jane Saville 3-7 in the women's 20 (see reports to follow), is coached by Germany's Ron Weigel, who won this race in 1983 and finished second in 1987. He also won the 1987 World Cup and took second in 1991, and was second at both 20 and 50 in the 1988 Olympics and third at 50 in 1992. He had number one World Rankings in '83 and '84, second in '88, and third in '92, and was second at 20 km in both '84 and '88.

The results:

Markov Tops 20 Km Field

Seville, August 21—Four days earlier, on an even hotter day, Russia's Ilya Markov outclassed the field to win the 20 Km in 1:23:34, making up for his disqualification at this meet two years ago. Only seventh in this year's World Cup, last year's number one ranked walker had something to prove in this one. In proving it, he easily beat an old nemesis, Jefferson Perez who won both the 1996 Olympics and 1997 World Cup, while Markov settled for silver and bronze in those races. Despite Russia's proud history in racwalking, Markov became the first Russian to win the 20 at the World Championships.

Mindful of the heat, the walker began at a conservative pace with 25 of them grouped at 21:10 after the first 5. Markov was leading the pack, however, with Guatemala's Julio Martinez and defending champion Daniel Garcia of Mexico on his heels.

At half way, Markov, Martinez and Belarus' Yegveney Misuryla led a pack that still numbered some 20 athletes. Then Italy's Alessandro Gandellini made a break to lead at 15 km in 1:03:44. But Markov reacted quickly to establish a lead of his own and no one was able to follow as the Russian walked the final 5 in under 20 minutes. Perez was able to leave Garcia for the silver, but was no match for Markov, who won by 45 seconds, certainly one of the more decisive wins at this level in recent history. (Valentin Massana won by 35 seconds in the 93 World Championships and his countryman, Daniel Plaza, by 40 seconds at the 92 Olympics.)

After the race, Markov noted that, "My victory in Budapest (European Championships) last year was my greatest victory until now. Today is very special to me as it is my wife's birthday. I can hear my wife crying for joy at this moment (he was on the phone). It was after 16 km that I knew the race was won, but to be honest, I only came here for the gold. The other colored medals would have been a disappointment.

Perez remarked, "The weather and the walking course were not to my liking today. The crucial point was at 15 km. I was already so tired, I could only think about trying to finish. I have not seen my family much in the last eight months. That is the price of training to reach the top." And from Garcia, "This performance will confirm that I will continue to Sydney. There was not seen my family much in the last eight months. That is the price of training to reach the top."

Eventually, she got the third and was out. Sidoti dropped out early in the second half of the race and was just 21st in the World Cup race. Her last world ranking was ninth in 1995. She must like the heat and the new distance. At 38, she is the oldest woman ever to win a medal in the World T&F Championships.

While the temperature was not as high as for the men's races earlier in the competition (it reached "only" 90 during the race, it was hot enough to have a significant effect on times. (That temperature is from a Reuters report; Al Heppner reports a starting temperature of 105. So, who knows. Obviously, it was hot all week, but, apparently, a fairly dry heat.) At the World Cup in May, six women bettered 1:30 and 61 were under 1:40. Here, only 30 were under 1:40 and the new 20 Km distance for women.

A surprise third was Australia's great veteran, Kerry Saxby-Junna. Ranked number one in the world in 1989 and 1990, Saxby has not been much of a factor in championship races since and was just 21st in the World Cup race. Her last world ranking was ninth in 1995. She must like the heat and the new distance. At 38, she is the oldest woman ever to win a medal in the World T&F Championships.

Chinese One-Two in Women's 20

Seville, Aug. 27—Improving their World Cup performance of first and fifth, the Chinese duo of Hongyu Liu and Yan Wang took decisive one-two in the World Championship 20 Km today. On another hot day, Liu was more than 3 minutes slower than in Mezidon (1:27:32) with her 1:30:50 and Wang was just 2 seconds back at the finish. Not much was heard from the Chinese last year—they seem to come and go—but they certainly asserted themselves with the new 20 Km distance for women.

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The race was walked conservatively, with a group of 16 together in 46:06, led by Italy's defending champion (at 10 km in 1997) Amnurid Sidoti. Actually, the group had trailed Belarus's Cialis Kardopolitseva early, but she was shown two red cards and had to back off. Eventually, she got the third and was out. Sidoti dropped out early in the second half of the race and by 15 km the pack was reduced to eight.

Liu and Wang surged at that point and only Russia's Natalya Fedoskina was able to go with them. When Fedoskina got her third red card, the two Chinese women were on their own and battled all the way to the finish with Liu going clear only in the last 30 meters.
Winnepeg, Manitoba, July 29 (From Al Heppner)—A woozy Joel Sanchez and a fortunate Carlos Mercenario gave Mexico a 1-2 finish in racewalking at the Pan American Games on Thursday. Philip Dunn, in third, produced the first U.S. 50 km medal in 20 years (Marco Evoniuk was also third in 1979). Mexicans had also finished one-two in both men's and women's 20 km races, as reported last month.

The results of today's race were in doubt for nearly 1 1/2 hours. At first, officials disqualified Mercenario, claiming he was given assistance along the course. The Mexicans appealed, and the officials overturned their original decision.

The two Mexicans, along with Dunn and Gary Morgan, were the only ones from the field of seven to finish the race in oppressive heat. Another walker was disqualified and two others dropped out.

Sanchez’s first major international victory, in 4:06:31, was the sixth straight by a Mexican in the Pan-Am 50 km. They have not lost since Larry Young won in 1971. There was no race in 1975, and Raul Gonzales won in 1979 and 1983, Martin Bermudez in 1987, and Mercenario in 1991 and 1995.

When Sanchez finished, he appeared dazed. After answering a couple of questions, he began to wobble and was escorted into the medical tent. "I was very tired in the final laps," he said, after taking 25 minutes to recover. "I began to feel the temperature. I felt lost at the end of the race. My muscles were fatigued because your body just needs to relax."

Sanchez and Tim Berrett of Canada were locked in a tight duel for the lead through 35 km. Then the weary Berrett dropped out and Sanchez had the lead. "The Canadian was looking strong, but when he went out it was all over," Sanchez, the silver medalist in the 1991 Pan Am 20 km, said. The results:


**Mexicans Sweep, Dunn Takes Pan-Am Bronze**

**Good Tuneup For Clausen**

Wilkes-Barre, Pa., Aug 1 (From Al Heppner)—Continuing his dominance on the American racewalking scene, Curt Clausen pulled away from Tim Seaman at the 7 kilometer mark to win the National 10 km title in 43:08. At the same time, Michelle Rohl once again took care of her competition, winning the women's race in 47:49.

Record high temperatures and a soaking humidity reaped havoc on performances at this meet. Combine these conditions with a rolly course, and any walker's hope of a fast time was crushed before the gun went off.

As planned, Clausen and Seaman (44:53) worked together through 7 km at which point Seaman slowed because he received a few cautions. Clausen held pace. Sean Albert (46:37) finished third to give the ARCO Olympic Training Center group a podium sweep.

For me the race was a great tuneup for the World Championships, Clausen said. "I felt very comfortable at 4:20/km pace, which is plenty for the 50." The race continued the year long battle between Clausen and Seaman in what may soon become the best rivalry in American racewalking history. (Ed. Let's reserve judgment on that.) The two have combined to break seven American records this season. Clausen holds a slight 4-3 advantage so far this year, including three in a row and his efforts are aided by flawless technique. The 31-year-old has seen only a single red card on the board this year.

The women's race was equally competitive with Michelle Rohl and Joanne Dow working together early. Susan Armenta was out in third. Rohl, this year's national outdoor champion,
### WAVA Championships (World Masters), Gateshead, England

Some outstanding performances by U.S. athletes, including a sweep of the medals in the women's 40-44 km event. Here are the results.

**Women's 10 Km, Aug. 1:**

**Women's 20 Km, Aug. 1:**

### 2000 Olympics

- **Women's 5K, Aug. 6:**

- **Women's 10K, Aug. 1:**

- **Women's 15K, Aug. 1:**

### 2000 Olympic Qualifiers

- **Women's 5K, Aug. 6:**

### 2000 Olympic Qualifiers

- **Women's 10K, Aug. 1:**

- **Women's 15K, Aug. 1:**
Other Results


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From Heel to Toe

Not much heel and toe' this month with the plethora of race reports and results that have nearly filled this issue. Several things I had expected to include will have to wait until next month. But, sape for a few tidbits. **The Chinese secret?** From Runner's World/USATF coverage of the World Championships: Watermelon, the latest marathon secret. Everyone's looking for an advantage in Saturday's men's marathon, expected to be run in hot conditions, and the crack Japanese runners believe that they've found one. Says Nabuyuki Sato, captain of the Japanese marathon team: "We will be taking a lot of watermelon during the race. We've been doing this all year in training, and it has given us good results. We learned it from the Chinese Walkers." (Note that the Japanese finished 3-6-7 in the men's marathon and the 2-8 in the women's. And the Chinese were one-two in the walk. So, let's all go for the watermelon... **Qualifying races.** For anyone who has a legitimate chance of making U.S. Trials standards or Olympic A/B standards, the Monterey Peninsula Walk Walk Walk Club has offered to keep their course open (approximately 1 hr 50 min) during the annual 10 Km Megawalk on October 23 at Cal State Monterey Bay Campus. It's a 1 km certified loop. Contact Hansi Rigney 831-626-6602, e-mail rigney@redshift.com for further information. Also note in the above schedule that the Potomac...
Valley Club has scheduled a 50 Km on November 7, which will offer an opportunity for those seeking a 50 qualifier. With the 50 Olympic Trial in February, there will be few chances.

Looking Back

15 Years Ago (From the August 1984 ORW) - In the L.A. Olympics, Mexico captured both gold medals in the persons of Ernesto Canto and Raul Gonzalez. In the 20, defending titlist Mauricio Damilano, Italy, led Canto by 8 seconds after 8 Km, but was no match for the Mexican over the final 5. Canto won in 1:23:13 with Gonzalez also catching the Italian to take the silver in 1:23:20. Damilano was another 6 seconds back and Canada's Guillaume Leblanc, only a second back of Canto starting the final 5 km, finished a brilliant fourth in 1:24:29. For the U.S., Marco Eroniuk stayed close to the leaders through 10 km and then hung well for seventh place in 1:25:42. Jim Heiring finished 23rd in 1:30:20 and Dan O'Connor 33rd in 1:35:12. In the 50 eight days later, Damilano hung with Gonzalez through 35 km, but when the Mexican accelerated at that point, Maurizio had no answer and dropped out at 40. Gonzalez won easily in 3:47:26 with Sweden's Bo Gustafsson second in 3:53:19 and Italy's Sandro Bellucci third in 3:53:45. Carl Schueler captured sixth for the U.S. in 3:59:46. Vincent O'Sullivan was 14th in 4:22:51 and Marco Evoniuk dropped out after 25 km, which he reached in 1:55:51, 2 minutes back of the leaders. The fields were weakened by the absence of most Eastern European walkers due to the Soviet boycott of the Games.

10 Years Ago (From the August 1989 ORW) - At the U.S. Olympic Festival in Norman, Oklahoma, Mark Fenton won at 35 Km in 3:03:50, Richard Quinn at 20 in 1:32:23, and Debbi Lawrence in the women's 10 with a 49:21.8. Carl Schueler (1:33:00) and Curt Claussen (1:34:00) followed Quinn. Lawrence was unchallenged in the very hot conditions, with Wendy Sharp second in 51:41 and Victoria Herazo third in 51:54. In a seven-nation match, Italy's Maurizio Damilano won the 35 km in 2:31:52, guest Kerry Saxby from Australia the women's 10 in 43:13, France's Therry Toutain the 20 in 1:23:42, Spain's Valentin Massana the junior 10 in 41:32, and Kathrin Born of the GDR the junior women's 4 in 22:07. The Paris-to-Colmar 521 Km race went to Roger Quemener in 64:35, 26 minutes ahead of Pheulpin.

5 Years Ago (From the August 1994 ORW) - In the European Championships in Helsinki, Finland's Sari Essayah, the defending world champion, won the women's 10 Km in 42:37. Essayah lead all the way, but had only six seconds on Italy's Annarita Sidoti and Russia's Yelena Nikolayeva-Kuznetsova, who were given the same time in their near photo finish for the silver. The 20 was a walk-away victory for Russia's Mikhail Schennikov in 1:18:45. Yevgeniy Misyulya, Belarus was second in 1:19:22 with Valentin Massana (1:20:30) trailing far behind in third. In a U.S.-Canada Junior match, Anya-Marie Ruoss won the women's 3 km in 13:53.71 and Justin Marrujo the men's 5 in 22:12.25. Deborah Iden (14:28.59) and William Van Axen (22:15.81) completed one-two sweeps for the U.S.

(Note: There is nothing for earlier years, because I just realized that last month's Looking Back covered both July and August for 1969, 1974, and 1984. That came about when I didn't have space for the feature in 1989 and doubled up the next month.)

Pan-American Games Racewalks Medalists on the Stand. As reported last month, the Mexicans were one-two in both men's and women's 20 Km races. Above: Daniel Garcia (silver), Bernardo Segura (gold), and Jefferson Perez, Ecuador (bronze). Below: Maria Sanchez (silver), Graciela Mendoza (gold), and Michelle Rohr, U.S. (bronze). (Steve Vaitones photos.)