Feitor, Fernandez First In IAAF Challenge Final

Murcia, Spain, Sept. 21 (Written with assistance from an IAAF release by Paul Warburton)—The 2008 IAAF Racewalking Challenge Series concluded with 20 Km races for men and women in this Spanish city today. The Challenge Final, the seventh Challenge Event of the year, saw decisive wins by Spain’s Francisco Fernandez and Portugal’s Susana Feitor. But Australia’s Jared Tallent, second in the men’s race, and Norway’s Kjersti Platzer, third in the women’s race, did well enough to top the Challenge Standings for the year.

Platzer simply retained the lead she already had. Both Tallent and Ecuador’s Jefferson Perez, third today, moved ahead of Mexico’s Eder Sanchez, the points leader going in, who dropped out at 15 Km.

Despite all of this and the fact Spain’s own Francisco Fernandez was first, Perez, who announced his retirement at a pre-race press conference a day earlier (or actually re-announced it), seemed to be the hero of the day with his gutsy third-place finish. Perez has been the man to beat since his 1996 Olympic gold medal and beating him has been a difficult task as he has added three World Championship and three World Cup golds, plus an Olympic silver, to that original triumph.

In the women’s race, Feitor defied the mid-80s temperature to finish in 1:30:17, a full minute ahead of Greece’s Athanasia Tsoumeleka, with Platzer third. Only eight of the sixteen starters were able to finish the race in the steamy conditions.

In the early going, Feitor was content in a group of four walkers that covered the first 3 Km in 13:24 about 50 meters ahead of a group of five, including Tsoumeleka and Platzer. By 5 Km in 22:16, Feitor was on her own with Sabine Zinuner gasping for air about 20 meters back and early challengers Ines Herriques and Olive Loughnane dropping quickly away. Loughnane was shown the red card at 8 Km. When Feitor hit 10 Km in 44:29, the race was effectively over, but Tsoumeleka, the 2004 Olympic gold medalist had made a strong move into second, ahead of a tiring Platzer. Feitor, although slowing over the final 4 Km, was never challenged.

But Feitor was still coming to terms with her average display in Beijing. She said: “The Olympics were just frustrating. I was as nervous as a five-year-old on the day, and considering it was my fifth time—I don’t know what happened. I’m half-happy, half-sad.”

Fernandez had expressed his fear of a race too many in a somewhat checkered season. But in the end, he walked strongly away from the rest of the field, including Perez. By the time this race started, the temperature had risen to 92 F, so it wasn’t a day for fast times. The early leader was Japan’s Yuki Yamazaki, who led the first 2 Km lap by about 40 meters. By 5 Km (20:33), four others had joined him. Perez led at 10 Km (41:22) with Fernandez, Tallent, and Yamazaki on his heels.

Fernandez took control from there, but even at that had only four seconds on Perez and eight on Tallent at 15 Km. From there, he was able to pull away and finished in 1:23:14. Tallent was able to overhaul Perez to finish second in 1:24:02. Perez had 1:24:35.
The Ohio Racewalker is published monthly in Columbus, Ohio. Subscription rate is $12.00 per year ($15.00 outside the U.S.). Editor and Publisher: John E. Jack Mortland. Address all correspondence regarding both editorial and subscription matters to: Ohio Racewalker, 3184 Summit Street, Columbus, OH 43202. E-mail address: jmortlan@colusa.rr.com. Approximate deadline for submission of material is the 24th of each month.

But even as the first two were celebrating, chaotic scenes surrounded the Olympic silver medalist as he crossed the line in his emotional last race. Having staggered the last 50 meters while vomiting, Perez was surrounded by hundreds of second-generation Ecuadorians who jumped the barriers to mob their hero. Fernandez was on home soil, but it was clear where the affections lay for large numbers of spectators—many in the yellow Ecuadorian national football shirt. “At the end of the race, I told the people how much I loved them”, said Perez “I’m thousands of miles from home, but it seems all my countrymen are here.”

As to Fernandez, he said: “Every kilometer after five I felt better and better. I thought I could then win—and, yes, this is a surprise, but I really wanted to be here for Perez.” And Jared Tallent said: “I would have settled for second, and I never thought I was going to be the overall challenge winner (worth $30,000, incidentally). I have to say it was heartening to see Eder drop out. And I really wanted Jefferson to win his last race—but that wasn’t going to get in the way of what I had to do.”

And the results and final Challenge Standings:

**Men**

**Women**

**Final IAAF Racewalking Challenge Standings**

(Challenge races were held at seven sites during the year, with both a 20 and 50 for men at two of those sites. The World Cup and Olympic races also count in the standings. The standings show the number of points accrued by each athlete in those races, with the number of races participated in shown in parentheses.)

**Women**

**Men**

(Note: If you’re wondering about the absence of walkers such as Olga Kaniskina and Valeriy Borchin, athletes who participated in the World Cup and/or Olympics, but no Challenge races were not scored.)

**National 40: It’s Sharp and Login**

Ocean Township, N.J., Sept. 14 (From Elliott Derman)—Ray Sharp of Atlantic Mines, Michigan and Solomiya Login of Philadelphia battled through steamy, 90-degree, high-humidity conditions to win gold medals in the annual USATF National 40 Km racewalk at Jo Palaia Park today.

The 48-year-old World Cup team member Ray Sharp, supposedly retired, won the title for the third consecutive year, covering the 20 two-kilometer laps in 3:58:52. In the race, that attracted walkers from 12 states and Canada, Login, the Olympic Trials seventh-place finisher, won her first senior national women’s crown with a 4:15:52 performance.

Placing 2-3-4 in the men’s division were Connecticut’s Theron Kissing, Michigan’s Leon Jasiowowski, and Indiana’s Max Walker. Following Login in the women’s race were New York’s Jennifer Marlarbo, Colorado’s Yvonne Alimaras, and Virginia’s Rebecca Carson.

Two athletes broke national Master’s records despite the tough going—Darlene Backlund of Redmond, Oregon set a women’s 60-64 record mark in 5:16:08 and Jack Starr of Newark, Delaware, lowered the men’s 80-84 mark to 2:26:47.

Pegasus AC of Michigan walked off with men’s team crown with a squad of Jasiowoski, Ray Craig, and Marshall Sanders. Only 18 of 35 starters were able to finish the race.

(The win was Ray’s 19th National title, the first coming in 1980 at 30 Km. By 1988, he had 14 titles at distances from 2 miles to 40 Km. Then he retired. In 2005, I guess he decided it was time to defend his 1988 5 Km title and he did so. Since, he has added a 15 Km title in 2006 and the 40 Km titles the last three years. And made a Pan-Am Cup and two World Cup teams.)

The results:
and you’ll find your courage when you need it most.

a mano fight of nearly 25 miles in sauna-like conditions. Patience, Grasshopper, start slow

few minutes alone to relieve myself and also to wrap my head around the concept of a mano –
gasp! – under 40 Theron Kissinger. My heart momentarily sank to about mid-abdomen

decide to

I’m no longer operating under the delusion that I will walk an Olympic A standard, and so if I

fun – calls into question either your veracity or sanity. I guess I consider myself retired because

Brett.” I did, this was just for fun, although toeing the line on a couple weeks’ training ba:

of 30 years ago.)

any recent 40 Km, you are in the presence of some of the true gods of American racewalking, not to mention demi-gods and angels like Ron and Maryanne Daniel. It is a good thing to know something of the history of our event, and to celebrate and revere its champions, as it makes you mindful of your small place in the big scheme of things and reminds you that you are not the axis around which the world spins, two kilometers per lap . . . . (Ed. That means I am leaving some things out, primarily Ray’s description of the race itself.)

I have managed to finish ahead of Theron a few times in the last four years, usually one place ahead and never by very far. He is a tough competitor, ever-gracious, and has made me push beyond my perceived limits more than once.

The times were slow but the performances were inspiring. Leon Jasiomski and Max Walker are a couple of tough 60-year olds! Rod Craig, who looks more like a first baseman/cleanup hitter on the Bad Axe softball team than a long-distance racewalker, somehow managed to outwalk the buzzards and paramedics with an amazing show of determination. Solomiya Login had the performance of the day, winning the women’s division and placing third overall. It looks like she is recovering well from a serious injury, torn anterior tibial tendon, and well on her way to joining Maria Michita and Sam Cohen in the top echelon of American racewalkers, under-40 division.

Of course, it must be noted that Theron, Solomiya, and Jennifer Marlborough were the only competitors under age 40. On the women’s side, only the 20 is contested internationally, so this is understandable. As far as American men go, the prospects at 50 Km are not encouraging. Maybe Philip Dunn, Matt Boyles, Ben Shorey, and Steve Quirke will stay with it another four years. Maybe they won’t. Maybe Pat Stroup will be the next Curt Clausen. Odds are against it.

With the National 50 Km in February every year, it is time to rethink racing the 40 in September. A 30 in October and a 40 in November or mid-December would be a logical progression. In September, either you have just raced the Olympics-World Championships, or you are ending your active rest and preparing to start your endurance buildup for the following season. If your goal is 4:10 for 50 In February, a 2:30 for 30 in October and a 3:20 for 40 in December makes sense. I’m not saying the race should abandon New Jersey. Why not race in cooler weather? (Good thought. Unfortunately in the nearly 50 years I have been in touch with the sport, such logic has seldom seemed to be a major consideration in drawing up the national schedule, but certainly that can change.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Event results:

1. Marty Clark (63) 32:33 Rocky Mountain Masters 3 Km, Fort Collins, Colo., Aug.
2. Ron Winkler (58) and Bill Hosken (71) 9:01 3. Al Dubois (76) 9:06 4.

Choose A Race, a Place, and A Pace

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sat. Sept. 13</td>
<td>1 Hour, Albuquerque, N.M. (T)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sun. Sept. 14</td>
<td>USATF National 40 Km, Ocean Township, N.J. (A)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sat. Sept. 20</td>
<td>5 Km, Denver (H)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sun. Sept. 21</td>
<td>Metropolitan 25 Km, New York City, 8 am (G)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sun. Sept. 28</td>
<td>5 Km, Kentfield, Cal., 8 am (P)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sat. Oct. 4</td>
<td>National USA TF 5 Km, Kingsport, Tenn. (D or K)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sun. Oct. 11</td>
<td>2.8 Miles, Seattle, 9 am (C)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sun. Oct. 12</td>
<td>National USA TF 1 Hour, Waltham, Mass. (D or V)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sun. Oct. 25</td>
<td>5,10,30,40, 50 Km, Minneapolis (V)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sat. Nov. 1</td>
<td>National USA TF 30 Km and Jr. 20 Km, Hauppauge, N.Y. (D or U)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sat. Nov. 1 or 8</td>
<td>5 Km, Denver, 9:30 am (H)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sun. Nov. 9</td>
<td>New Mexico 5 and 10 Km Championship, Albuquerque (T)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sun. Nov. 2</td>
<td>RRC National and Florida State 20 Km, Coconut Creek, Fla. (B)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sun. Nov. 5</td>
<td>1 Hour, Kentfield, Cal., 9 am (P)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sun. Nov. 8</td>
<td>5 Km, Littleton, Cal., 8 am (H)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sun. Nov. 16</td>
<td>Conn. 10 Km, Clinton, CT, 10:30 am (Q)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sun. Nov. 23</td>
<td>10 Mile Handicap, Coney Island, Brooklyn, N.Y., 9 am (F)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sun. Dec. 7</td>
<td>5 Km, New York City, 8:30 am (G)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sun. Dec. 13</td>
<td>2.8 Miles, Seattle, 9 am (O)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sun. Dec. 14</td>
<td>5 Km, New York City, 8:30 am (G)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Contacts:
A—Elliott Denman, 28 N. Locust, West Long Branch, NJ 07764
B—Daniel Koch, South Florida Racewalkers, 954-970-9634, racewalker@bellsouth.net
C—Bev McCall, 511 Lost River Road, Mazama, WA 98833
D—www.USATF.org
Perez Retirement

In our report on the IAAF Challenge Final, we noted that Jefferson Perez had announced his retirement for the day the race. Actually, it was reported from Beijing following his silver medal performance (see August ORW) that he was retiring from international competition to undertake a master’s degree.

In a press conference the day before the Challenge Final, Perez, with tears in his eyes, announced this would be his final race. “My heart wants to go on, but my body can’t take another four years of work”, he said. “But we have an expression in my country. ‘If you’re famous, you can go to bed. I’m not like that. This is the start of my sports work with kids and other important projects.”

Regarding the next day’s race, Perez, although he had a good chance to move up in the Challenge standings (which he did), said he was there principally to do justice to the integrity of the Challenge. “If you’ve had a tough Olympics, there’s no way you can turn it around in four weeks. But it’s important to be present—the Challenge deserves it”, he said.

Kjersti Platzer might also be ready to call it a day, but the 36-year-old Norwegian, twice an Olympic silver medalist, will delay a definitive decision for the next month. “I need some time to think and get away,” she said. “I want to go on vacation first. But anyone who knows me, also knows I always give everything in the race.”

Perez suffers from compression of the vertebrae, which produces pain, lumbago, and lumbar sciatricgia. Due to those conditions, the sciatic nerve would become inflamed and at times produced a partial paralysis of the leg. According to Chango, “There were times when he competed like that.”

Due to the high mileage covered, about 100 miles a week, he will have constant discomfort in the future. That pathology will continue to develop, affecting Perez. Perez says that during his career, he represented the millions of workers, children, youths, and old folk who built an Ecuador that is more just and more important. “It was for them that I knocked myself out day after day on the roads and on the track.”

From Heel To Toe

Junior camp. A USAFT Junior Elite Racewalk Camp is scheduled for Pharr, Texas from Dec. 27, 2008 to January 3, 2009. For further information contact the South Texas Walking Club, 621 N. 10th Street, McAllen, TX 78501, Phone 956-685-2377, e-mail acjaine@sbcglobal.net. McGovern clinics. Some 2009 dates for Dave McGovern’s World Class racewalking clinics are: Mesa Arizona, Jan. 31-Feb. 1; Santa Cruz, Aruba, Feb. 21-22; and Williamsburg, Virginia March 6-8, 2009. For more information visit Dave’s website at members.aol.com/rayzwocker/worldclass/clinics.htm. Morgan. Gary Morgan, a member of the 1988 U.S. Olympic team at 20 Km and a 17-time National Champion at various distances, is a candidate for Vice President in the U.S. Olympians. Russian walkers banned. Doping has struck at the racewalking world. Following is a release from Reuters dated September 23 and datelined Moscow: Five leading Russian racewalkers, including a world record holder, have been banned for doping, the Russian athletics federation said on Tuesday. Sergei Morozov, who holds the world record set in the 20 Km, Vladimir Kanaykin, Viktor Burayev, Alexei Vovkodin, and Igor Yerokhin were banned for two years each after testing positive for EPO. “They all had a failed test for EPO and after a hearing by our federation’s anti-doping board on September 9 each of the five athletes was banned for two years”, RAK secretary general Vladimir Usachyov was quoted as saying. “Both samples A and B for all five athletes came out positive and we had no other choice but to ban them.” All five were forced to miss last month’s Olympics because of the ongoing investigation.

Kanaykin shaved five seconds off the 20 Km record last year’s Grand Prix final in his home town of Saransk before Morozov shattered it by more than 30 seconds at the Russian national championships in Saransk earlier this year. Yerokhin, 23, and Burayev, 25), have also achieved good results either in World or European championships in recent years, while Vovkodin, 27, won the 50 Km bronze at the 2004 Athens Olympics and silver at the 2005 World Championships. All five live in Saransk and were trained by Viktor Chegin, who also serves as Russia’s chief racewalking coach. It remains to be seen how the IAAF will react in regard to the records set by Morozov and Kanaykin. Pan-Am Cup Team Selection Races 2009. The 2009 Pan American Racewalk Cup races will be held in San Salvador, El Salvador on April 25 and 26. The U.S. 50 Km team will be selected at the National 50 in Chula Vista, Cal., with a tentative race date of Feb. 15. Trials for the men’s and women’s 20 Km and the men’s and women’s Junior 10 Km races will be held in Pharr, Texas on March
29. There are no qualifying times for the trials, but minimal time standards have been set to be on the team, which is tentatively set to include 5 members each in the senior races (50 Km and men's and women's 20 Km, and three each in the two junior races. These standards are:

- Men's 50-4:45:00, Men's 20-1:36:00, Women's 20-1:48:00, Junior Men's 10 -5:10:00, and Junior Women's 10-5:50:00.
- **Shaul's book.** We noted two months ago that the autobiographical book that the great long-distance walker Shaull Ladany first published in 1997 in Hebrew was coming out in an English translation. The book, *King of the Road—From Bergen-Belsen to the Olympic Games* is available from www.israelbooks.com and from Amazon. Its ISBN Number is 978-965-229-421-0. I was fortunate enough to receive a review copy from the publisher a few days ago—Shaull's recommendation, I am sure. Since I still have nearly 100 pages to read, I will reserve my review until next month. But, I will tell you that Shaull has an amazing and fascinating story to tell. In the meantime, following are excerpts from Neil Amdur's review in the *New York Times*, published in July. (I will say that I have found both my publication and my name mentioned, so it must be a good book.)

### Ladany, an Ultimate Survivor, Recalls Painful Memories

Even as the Beijing Olympics beckon next month, with an exotic host city and the promise of peerless performance, the specter of Munich never quite fades.

**The renewed threat of terrorism, first exposed in the 1972 massacre of 11 Israeli Olympians, now hovers in new forms unsponged through intense security preparations. The death last month of the sportscaster Jim McKay, who served as the American voice and conscience of the Munich tragedy, has added another layer of sadness. The August**

**publication of the English translation of King of the Road,** the autobiography of the Israeli racewalker Shaull Ladany, is certain to connect the dots between past and present.

**Ladany, 72,** is the ultimate survivor. Not just of Munich, where he managed to escape the wrath of terrorists during the attack in the Olympic village. Ladany also spent months in a Nazi concentration camp, had recurring bouts with skin cancer any lymphoma, and endured enough legal and administrative skirmishes to tear down most mortals.

But then, Ladany has always been beyond us. He speaks nine languages and is a professor of industrial engineering with eight patents, 110 scientific papers, 13 books, and more up my sleeve.

How many athletes, to spare themselves from training under a searing desert sun, would lay out a course in their house, roll up rugs and walk laps, changing directions every 15 minutes for hours at a time—with a wife, a daughter, and two dogs under the same roof?

**Ladany says he has slowed since accomplishing long-distance world records and a 100-Km world championship. But he was sturdy enough to finish the four-day, 300-Km Paris-to-Brussels walk in May, participated in the recent seven-day, 300-Km walk from Schleswig, Germany to Viborg, Denmark; and will swim 3.5 Km across the Sea of Galilee for the 48th time this fall as part of Israel's largest amateur sports event.**

**Ladany, who also competed in the 1968 Mexico City Olympics, has always been at odds with some published accounts of the Munich tragedy. He devotes 21 pages of his book to the attack, starting with being awakened “from a deep sound sleep” in the Olympic village and culminating in a lawsuit against the author and publisher of *The Blood of Israel* for being portrayed as “running away by jumping like a goat” in an attempt to escape.**

In reality, Ladany wrote, he and two other Israeli Olympians “went out to the terrace, and with straight backs and confident steps we crossed the lawn and left the building behind.” Citing dozens of errors in *The Blood of Israel,* Ladany said, “I believe it hurt my character.” Ladany was equally critical of German security and botched attempts to save the Israeli hostages at an isolated airfield. “The operation was carried out in a shabby and amateurish,” he wrote, listing miscommunication to snipers and a reluctance of some German commandos placed inside the empty plane to engage the terrorists.

Since turning 50, Ladany has marked birthdays by walking a kilometer for each year of his life. Last year, at 71, on a five-Km loop, Ladany could not contain himself. “I failed to complete the event as initially planned,” he wrote in the postscript to his book. “The brakes in my legs failed to function properly, and I managed to stop only after 75 kilometers. How long will I be able to keep up the tradition? I can't say. I don't have a crystal ball.”

And here is a fine tribute to one of Canada’s finest walkers and a positive article on our sport.

### Walking Man

**A few strides With An Unsung Hero of Canadian Sport**


I first met Guillaume LeBlanc when I was the late night sportscaster at CBMT in Montreal. He finished fourth in the 1984 Olympics in an obscure event known as the 20-Km racewalk. All that I knew about the racewalk was that it seems something akin to the migratory march of penguins. It is, on the surface, a weird, torture test of a waddle, which sways through the streets of any given Olympic city and finishes at the main stadium with much less fanfare than the more glamorous marathon.

Still it holds a certain strange fascination and Guillaume was—in his day—one of the best on the face of the earth.

Upon hearing that I would host the Olympic Hall of Fame induction ceremony in Calgary, I found that Guillaume was the only summer athlete to be honored this year. I figured his entrance might go almost unnoticed. I was wrong.

By way of background, it should be noted that Canada’s most accomplished walking man has delivered a fair amount of glory over the course of his career. Born in Sept-Iles, Quebec in 1962, LeBlanc won championships at the Commonwealth Games, the Jeux de la Francophonie, and once held the world record at the 30-Km distance. Most importantly, he captured the silver medal in the 20-Km event at the 1992 Olympics, finishing just behind Daniel Plaza of Spain.

But still, when compared to the others on this year’s Hall of Fame roster, Guillaume, like his sport, seemed to be a conversation piece rather than the guest of honor.

A couple of days before the ceremony, I called Guillaume at his home in Laval, where he works for Bell Canada and coaches kids in soccer and football, to get a sense of what this meant to him. In halting, but emotional, English, the walking man got his message across loud and clear.

“I feel that I am an Olympian and this is very important to me,” LeBlanc said. “I live the Olympic values and keep them always in my heart and in my mind. It a great honor to be understood and recognized for something that I did at the Olympics.”

It was very moving to speak with LeBlanc that day and as I listened, I recalled the way he competed. He gritted his teeth and moved his arms furiously while his legs took on the characteristics of eggbeaters. The rules require that a racewalker must have one foot in contact with the ground at all times, thus causing the exaggerated sway of the hips. On the race course there are countless judges at regular intervals to ensure that each contestant plays fair and LeBlanc had been disqualified on occasion, as was the case in the longer 50-Km race at Barcelona. Still, he learned more than proper technique from all the distance he covered over the years.
"Sport makes you discover many things and one of those things is how to judge yourself," LeBlanc figured. "Racewalking is a sport where you are often alone and beyond the eyes of the judges. I learned to judge myself and be comfortable with what I did in my own heart.

Tim Barrett agrees with Guillaume’s assessment of the sport. Barrett is a 43-year-old and has recently qualified for the 50K race in Beijing. His first Olympic appearance was at Barcelona in 1992 and he was in the field when LeBlanc won that silver medal. China will mark Barrett’s fifth trip to the Games as a competitor for Canada.

"It’s important for Guillaume to go into the Hall of Fame. It tells me that there is some recognition at the end of it all," Barrett estimates. "He did nearly everything in his career that could be done. Racewalking is a bit misunderstood, it’s more than a walk in the park. We’re out there twice as long as the marathoners."

Indeed, athletes like Barrett put in upwards of 200 Km a week, or three hours a day, on the road. Then there’s the weight training and time in gym beyond that. With very few competitors across the country, racewalking can be a lonely pursuit. "You don’t get into it for the fame or the fortune that’s for sure," Barrett chuckles. "You are out there for so long on your own that you have to be convinced that it is indeed worthwhile."

Which begs the question, in an unheralded sport, why does a forty something father of two young children keep up the chase? "It’s the constant challenge and there’s always a perfect race just around the corner," Barrett claims, "And in Beijing a personal best in terms of placing is a possibility given the environmental conditions that we will face. Anything can happen, as it did for Guillaume in Barcelona in 1992."

As he walked to the stage to accept his induction to Canada’s Olympic shrine, Guillaume LeBlanc interrupted his stride and paused for a moment. The people in the crown of 650 were on their feet to applaud this modest and once unfamiliar gentleman. He bowed slightly and wiped out a few tears, as he suddenly understood that he more than belonged on this podium and amongst these people.

"I am so used to being second," LeBlanc had said earlier. "I am the Vice Olympic champion because I finished second in that race. And I am a twin who was the second one to be born. Still, I am so happy to be apart of the Olympic family.

On this night, Guillaume LeBlanc was the first to be honored and reserved a special chapter in our nation’s sporting history. He is one of Canada’s beloved champions and an unsung hero no more.

Rushing to the airport following the ceremony and bound for the red-eye to Toronto, I happened to look at the Calgary Tower, an icon of the 1988 Olympic city. The flame was alight, just as it had been for the duration of the Games 20 years ago. This is a sight not often seen since the Olympics made their departure from the Stampede City. The tower’s torch on this night was meant to celebrate the people who had just entered Canada’s Olympic Hall of Fame. I’ll not soon forget it. It struck me that the walking man never let such a flame die. He kept it burning bright and deep within him as he kept one firmly planted on his way to this well deserved and precious moment.

Costas unrepentant

Bob Costas through his years as Olympics TV host has not been a friend of racewalking, as most racewalkers know. And despite many letters from the racewalking community through those years—both educative and indignant—he seems to carry on. The American Airlines magazine American Way, carried an interview with Mr. Costas in its Aug 1, 2008 issue, first brought to my attention by Valerie Silver.

When asked what the quirkiest Olympic Sport is, Bob replied: “Well, curling is kind of an endearing Olympic sport. People think ‘Wait a minute. I can get an Olympic gold medal—the same medal that they gave Jesse Owens and Carl Lewis—for a sport where they use a broom and drink beer while they’re doing it.” Not at the Olympics, of course, but, yes, people can drink beer and still excel at curling. That’s unbelievable. Why don’t they just have Ed Norton and Ralph Kramden show up with their bowling bags and make that an Olympic sport. (Perhaps someone should tell Bob that lots of Olympic athletes drink beer. And if he just means during competition, there are a lot of weekend softball, basketball, soccer, etc. players, just like weekend curlers, who consume during competition. And if the truth be known, Granny Blackburn once consumed a glass of wine enroute during one of our old New Year’s Eve races.)

Still, on balance, you have to say the weirdest is racewalking. I made a bunch of people mad in 1992 in Barcelona when they showed the racewalking. Look, I know that they are athletes. I know I couldn’t do it. I know it takes training and dedication, and I know that there are pockets of the world where racewalkers are big sports celebrities. But it looks so funny. You know what it really looks like? It looks like a person who has to go really bad. ‘I gotta go, gotta go, gotta go right now’—except they just don’t want to break into a full-scale sprint.

So I say, coming off this racewalking footage in Barcelona, ‘You know, having a contest to see who can walk the fastest is kind of like having a contest to see who can whisper the loudest? If you’re really in that much of a hurry, run. And if you really want me to hear you, shout.”

Valerie responded to Bob, via e-mail, as follows:

“Ten lashes with a wet noodle for a lousy analogy comparing racewalking competition to a contest over ‘whispering the loudest.’ If you follow your logic, then we also should eliminate every swimming competition except the freestyle. Why move forward in the water with the butterfly swim technique when freestyle is faster? (Ed. Or even worse the bobbing in the water breaststroke.) Or, why jump over hurdles when running flat is faster?"

By the way, a very good reason to racewalk instead of run is the lack of pounding on bones and joints!

“We’re all entitled to our opinion about the value or looks of anything “foreign”, but I hardly expect “reducing-the-foreign-to-the-funny” thinking from a prominent broadcaster! How about a discussion of the technique beyond the two basic rules, and the benefits of no pounding? Wish I had a good joke to lighten this up, but, alas, my writers are all on vacation.”

LOOKING BACK

40 Years Ago (From the September 1968 ORW)—In the U.S. Olympic Trials in Alamosa, Col., Ron Larid 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 50 Km three days later in 3:43:10, followed by Goetz Klopfer (4:44:02), Dave Romansky (4:47:23), and Bob Kitchen (4:50:56). The races were at high altitude to simulate conditions in the upcoming Mexico City Olympics, thus the modest times. When Young opted to walk only the 50 in the Games, Dooley won a spot at 20. We also reported the birth of Derek Douglas Mortland, an event that occurred early on the day of the 50 Km Trials, September 14. Your editor attended the birth, not the Trials... Dooley zipped a quick 5 miles (35:20) in California, 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 Blackmun was second, some 24 minutes back, 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 29 seconds back. The next four spots went to Ron Kulik, Jack Blackmun, Ron Daniel, and Steve Hayden.

35 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 Arbelhide, and Sue Brodock. The National 35 Km went to John Knifflon in 3:00:31. Bill Ranney was more than 3 minutes back, with Jim Beam and Bob Bowman next in line. Hartwig Gauder won the European Junior 10 Km title in 44:14, the first of many internationals for the East German 50 Km great.

30 Years Ago (From the September 1978 ORW) In the European Championships, East Germany's Roland Weiser won at 20 Km and Spain's Jorge Llopart at 50. Weiser pulled away from three Soviet competitors on the final 5 Km to win in 1:22:12. He had a 20:30 on that last loop. Pyotr Potschenschuk and Anatoliy Solomin finished in 1:23:43 and 1:24:12. Jose Marin was fifth and Maurizio Damilano sixth. Llopart took command after 30 Km to win in 3:53:50. Next were Soviet Veniamin Soldatenko in 3:55:12 and Pole Jan Ornoch in 3:55:16. Four others broke 4 hours. The U.S. 50 Km title race saw Mexican guests Domingo Colin, Pedro Arache, and Enrique Vera take the first three spots. Colin had 3:55:50. Marco Evoniuk took the U.S. title in 4:24:05 with Augie Hart and Carl Schueler also under 4:30... U.S. Junior titles went to Peter Timmons at 5 Km (25:31) and Mike Morris at 20 (1:47:10). Dave Cummings was second at 5 and Timmons second at 20. Sweden won the women's race with Brittle Marie Carlsson first at 5 Km (23:05) and Elisabeth Olsson first at 49:22. Sue Brodock was the top U.S. finisher in the 5 with 24:41. Lis Dufour was seventh at 10 in 52:39. The U.S. team finished third behind Norway.

25 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 off his best of 18:57:01 in 1978. The only other finisher in extremely hot conditions was Chris Custer in 23:50, her first 3:48:08. The first woman was Dorit Attias in 4:12:39. 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. Dieudre Colier 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 Valentino Massana, destined to be the 1993 World Champion at 20 Km in second 17 seconds back. John Marter led the U.S. walkers with a 47:40 in 18th.

15 Years Ago (From the September 1993 ORW) National 5 Km titles went to Victoria Herazo (22:55) and Andrez Chylinski (21:06). In the Denver races, Debbie Van Orden (23:15) and Curtis Fisher (21:40) were second... The National 40 Km in Fort Monmouth, N.J.

went to Puerto Rico's Jose Ramirez in 3:40:10. Gary Null, second in 3:44:33, won both the National title and the National Master's title. Bob Keating, also in the 45-49 age group, followed him in 3:50:31. As a matter of fact, the first non-master was Herb Zyddek 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 21:39:38. The races were in Orono, Maine... Bernardo Segura, Mexico, won the Alonzi 20 Km title in Dearborn, Michigan in 1:21:55 with Gary Morgan the first U.S. walker in sixth (1:29:31). Italy's Amherita Sidoti won the 10 Km title in 46:06, 47 seconds ahead of Debbie Van Orden.

10 Years Ago (From the September 1998 ORW) In the Pan-Am cup trials, Joanne Dow won the women's 20 Km in 1:35:45 and Phillip Dunn the men's 30 Km in 2:26:30. Teresa Vaill trailed Dow by 58 seconds and Susan Armenta was nearly 3 minutes further back in the women's race. Theron Kissinger (2:27:13) and Steve Pecinovsky (2:35:36) followed Dunn... In National 5 Km races, Curt Clausen and Teresa Vaill prevailed. Clausen (2:21:04) beat Al Heppner (2:21:40) and Warrick Yeager (2:21:54). Debbi Lawrence (2:23:18) and Lyn Brubaker (2:39:23) were 2-3 in the women's race... The National 40 Km went to Gary Morgan in 3:27:31 with Duan close behind (3:22:58). John Soucheck was third ahead of Yeager... Clausen also had a 20:37 to win an open race at the National Master's 5 Km two weeks later... The master's titles went to Victoria Herazo (23:31) and Jonathan Matthews (21:09). Don DeNoon had a 2:32:32 in winning the 55-59 title... European titles were won by Russia's Ilya Markov (1:21:10), Italy's Amanda Sidoti (42:49), and Poland's Robert Korzeniowski (3:43:51). All were competitive races... In the 20, Latvia's Aigars Fedevics (1:21:25) and Spain's Francisco Fernandez (1:21:39) were second and third. Italy's Erica Alfridi (42:54) and Portugal's Susan Feitor (42:55) followed Sidoti... Finland's Valentin Kononen (3:44:29) was second at 50.

5 Years Ago (From the September 2003 ORW) Curt Clausen was a walkaway-winner of the National 40 Km in Ocean Twp., N.J., finishing more than 25 minutes ahead of John Soucheck in 3:25:58. Nick Bdera set a U.S. 50-54 age group record of 3:51:06 in third and Ed Parrot also finished under 4 hours. Geryl Rilling won the women's race in 4:32:50. Later, Clausen was a distant second to Tim Seaman in the National 5 Km. Jim's 20:32 left Curt 82 seconds back but well clear of third-lace finisher Dave McGovern (22:20). On the women's side, Bobbi Jo Chapman was an easy winner in 24:28. A week earlier, Seaman had gone much faster in Hildeshiem, Germany as he finished third in 19:09, behind Ivan Trotskiy, Belarus and Eric Tysse, Norway. Trotskiy had 18:57 and Tysse 19:01. The next day, Tim was sixth at 10 Km in 39:59. Poland's Robert Korzeniowski won the race in 38:44, 8 seconds ahead of Trotskiy. At the same site, Norway's Kjersti Platzer won a 3 Km in 11:41 and a 5 in 20:08.