National Title Races

USA TF National 10,000 meters, Farmingville, N.Y., May 5


USATF National 15 Km, Riverside, Cal., May 19:


European Cup: Russia Dominates

Dudince, Slovak Republic, May 18-19—Only a repeat win at 50 Km by France's Yohann Diniz prevented complete Russian domination of the European Racewalk Cup. The Russians won individual titles in the other four events (men's and women's 20 Km, under 20 men's and women's 10 Km) and swept team titles in all five events by convincing margins.

Diniz, however, was the star of the meet with an untroubled 50 Km win in 3:41:07, winning by more than 3 ½ minutes. That was 8 minutes faster than he walked at this same
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venue in March. Diniz (below) is also a two-time winner of the 50 Km in European T&F Championships. His win atoned to some degree for his disqualification in the London Olympics. He can now point to the World Championships in August.

Biding his time early, he took control of the race after 10 Km building a lead of 8 seconds by 15 and 13 at 20 (1:30:48). Mikhail Ryzhov and Ivan Noskov of Russia were trying to remain in contact and had opened a lead of a minute on the rest of the field. The lead only grew as Diniz accelerated to reach 30 Km in 2:14:05. He never let up, covering the final 20 in 1:27:05. Ryzhov finished second in 3:44:41, a game effort and a 7 minute improvement on his personal best. Finishing in 11th was Spain’s amazing veteran Jesus Angel Garcia, now 43, and recording a time only 8 minutes slower than in his Cup win on this same course 12 years ago.

Following the race, Diniz said: “It’s true I seem to be inspired by European competition, and I don’t know why. I like Dudince. It’s a small town, but it has a big, big heart and it inspires me. The problems I had over the last two years are known, but I’m particularly pleased to have won here. Because it was very, very hot, I think it gives me even more hope for the World Championships later this year.”

The women’s 20 was a Russian parade, as they swept the first four places, with their fourth place finisher, Irina Yumanova, more than 2 minutes ahead of fifth placer Ana Cabecinha of Portugal.

Anisya Kirdyapkina was in command throughout, leading by 30 seconds when she hit 10 Km in 44:06. She stretched that lead to as much as 1:05 and eventually beat former world record holder and defending champion Vera Sokolova by 39 seconds as she won in 1:28:39.

After the race, Kirdyapkina betrayed an ambition far less than she achieved. “I wanted to finish at least second Russian, and no further back than sixth. During the race the heat hurt my head, but now I will be a part of the next World championships in Moscow.”

The men’s 20 was much different, with only 11 seconds separating the first three at the finish. However, with 2 laps (4 Km) to go, Russia’s Denis Strelkov appeared to be the winner with a 35 second lead. But local hero Matej Toth and Spain’s Miguel Lopez had other ideas and began cutting into the lead. With a kilometer to go, Strelkov led by just 10 seconds. Strelkov found the strength to respond to the challenge and crossed the line in 1:21:40. 8 seconds ahead of Lopez, who managed to overhaul Toth in the final stages.

Strelkov said he “dared to dream” after setting his personal best of 1:19:53 in February. “It was very hard during the race, too hot, too hard—but I felt in fantastic form.” he added. Toth noted: “Of course there was pressure to do well at home. I got a second place two years ago and have made progress since then as well. I was thinking maybe we cold catch Strelkov, but he had just enough.”
Dunfee, Michta Shine At Penn Relays

Philadelphia, April 27—Canadian ace Evan Dunfee scored an easy win in the 10K race at the historic Penn Relays grinding out an impressive 40:51.37 to beat Nick Christie by 52 seconds. On the women’s side, Maria Michta won at 5K in an impressive 17:19.1. Junior Km winners were Alex Peters, who easily beat brother Anthony in a personal best 48:00.96 and Brittany Collins. Maria’s younger sister, Katie, won a high school 5K. The results:


IAAF 20 Km Challenge Races at Sesto San Giovanni, Italy, May 1


Other results

outstanding racewalkers, that would show up at some of our national meets in the mid-60s. I remember him as very pleasant and friendly, and quite competitive. I now find that we almost shared a birthday—he was born Jan. 24, 1930, I on Jan. 23, 1935. Felix finished seventh in our National 40 Km in 1962 in a time of 3:46:10. In 1963, he came to Chicago for the 20 Km and gave me a good race, finishing seventh again in 1:39:43, two places and 69 seconds behind me. Oakley was also there, finishing third behind the two Rons—Laird and Zinn. Akos Szekely was third. Felix was back in the fall for the 15 Km in Atlantic City, where I beat him by just 9 seconds as we finished fourth and fifth. Oakley was second in that one with Laird in front. Felix was on the Canadian team for the Pan-American Games in Sao Paulo that year. He got better with age, and in 1967 he walked a 1:36:42 at the Canadian Pan-Am Trial and then finished third in the Games themselves in Winnipeg with a 1:35:44.6 behind Laird and Mexico’s Jose Pedraza... He topped those Games off with a second place finish in the 50 behind Young, finishing in 4:35:55. In 1970 at age 40, he finished fifth in the Empire Games 20 Mile in 2:43:16. This ends my knowledge of the fine career of a great competitor who was a pleasure to compete against. The lady in Stratford hadn’t seen Felix for years and thought he was deceased. I haven’t seen him for years either, but it was great to recall our brief companionship.

Stan Vickers

From John Knifton, U.S. International racewalker in the late ’60s and early ’70s now living in Austin, Texas.

It was with sadness that I read in your April edition of the Ohio Racewalker of the passing of Stan Vickers. Stan was an incredibly gifted racewalker, stylist and a fine gentleman; he and I both competed for the Belgrave Harriers Athletic Club in London and so I got to know Stan quite well. A month after he returned from Melbourne in 1956 (after placing fifth in the 20) Belgrave had their junior (under 18) 5 mile racewalk—I won and Stan presented me with an autographed boomerang that he had purchased in Australia. I was very touched by the gift and kept it for many years, even bringing it to America in 1965. During the late ’50s and early ’60s, Stan led our Belgrave team to a number of British national team titles and while Stan was always our first finisher, I was lucky to garnish the third or fourth team member slot. Of course, Stan’s outstanding accomplishments must include his European 20 Km title and his bronze medal in the 1960 Olympic, but I have two anecdotes that also help to tell his story:

o At the British T&F Championships at White City Stadium in the early 1960’s, Stan Vickers and Ken Matthews (Olympic gold medalist at 20 Km in 1964) were lined up on the cinder track for the 2 mile walk. The two men walked stride-for-stride for 7 and a half laps; the 30,000 fans in the stands were on their feet. Stan then switched to another gear and literally walked away from Ken over the last 200 yards when both men were traveling at close to a 6 minute mile pace. What was really incredible about that finishing burst was that Stan was clearly racewalking every step of that finishing spurt. There was no “flight” phase and as proof I am sending pictures of Stan taken over the last 100 yards of that race. These pictures have been widely circulated over the years and are often used b leading coaches as illustrative of an international “stylist”!

o The second story relates to Stan winning British National titles at distances from 2 to 20 miles. One year, Belgrave had a very strong team for the National 50 Km and Stan was persuaded to walk even though the distance was way beyond his usual range. Well, the race proceeded and in the closing stages he found himself out in front, even leading the Olympic Gold Medalist, Don Thompson. But Stan knew that or second Belgrave man, Eric Hall (also a 1956 Olympian) really wanted to win this championship. So, with the national title within his grasp, Stan stopped and went back for Eric Hall to help Eric win the championship. How often do you see that happen in a national 50??
John Sent a series of eight photos showing Vickers progressing through a full stride. They were apparently taken from some coaching manual. Here are the first three in the series, together with the comments concerning them.

Notable points: Figure 1. The almost straight trunk as the full stride is made. The slight lean (never more than five degrees) is helping to put the forward foot down safely. The rear leg is well braced, while the front leg with foot at right angles is about to make the second contact. The front knee is not quite locked (note the pull of the hamstring underneath and this both prevents jar to the hip socket and also enables the upper thigh muscles to assist in the body carry-over from this dead position. The hands are at their maximum movement and since the elbow is well bent on the right arm it is obvious that the arm drive is in this point.

Figure 2. The rear leg has begun to break as the weight is transferred to the front toe of which the foot is dropping and the knee straightening. It is worth noting that even yet both feet are still in contact.

Figure 3. The real transference of weight as the front foot is firmly planted, the knee still slightly bent and still assisting the body carry-over while the rear leg is being abducted under the body. It will also be seen that the body carriage has reverted to the upright to counterbalance the forward movement of the rear leg.

Progress (?) At the Elite Level in U.S. Racewalking

In the December 1996 issue of the ORW, I published the following:

As a matter of curiosity, I have gone back through U.S. Lists for the three major events from 1972 on and charted the depth of performance. The following tables show a series of times for each of the three major events (women's 10, men's 20 and 50) and the number of athletes that have been at, or under, that time each year. For example, in 1996, we had 5 women walk 46 minutes or better, 10 at 48:00 or better, 16 at 50:00 or better, and so on. For the women, (we have lists only back to 1978 because there was practically no competition at distances beyond 5 Km until that year), we can see steady progress in the depth of performance up to about 1990 and then a leveling off. The peak in real depth (those under 52 and 55) was reached in 1995, and the most under 50 minutes came in 1992, but 1996 was the best year at the top (5 at 46:00 or better and 10 at 48:00). So our women are continuing to improve at the top, but it would appear fewer are making the serious effort at achieving competitive times than four or five years ago.

The same story of continuing progress isn't seen for the men. In the 20, we did have five at 1:27, matching the peak in 1991, but there were no more under 1:30 than in 1990 and fewer than in 1984; the number under 1:36, matching 1994, was the fewest since 1987, and the number under 1:40 was the fewest since 1981. Way back in 1979 there were 36 under 1:40, compared to 23 this year. And even in 1972, when no one broke 1:30 and only three 1:33, there were 20 under 1:40. Also, look at 1984. There were few; at 1:27, but significantly more at every other level than this year. So, where is the progress in our program. Likewise, in the 50, this year's two under 4 hours matched 1995, 1988, and 1987, and the four under 4:10 was bettered only in 1994 and 1988, with five. But, when we look at those under 5 hours, a time that takes some dedicated effort, there have been only two years since 1977 with fewer than this year's 12 athletes. The peak was in 1979, when 32 walkers went under 5 hours! And, there were 20 under 4:40 that year, compared to 12 this year. Well, look at the numbers and draw your own conclusions. (Note I had arbitrarily decided that times of 1:40 and 5:00 for men and 5:50 for women required very serious training efforts and the outer limits of what we would consider elite walkers.)

That was in 1996. I have updated the tables through 2012, adding the women's 20 Km in 1998 and dropping the 10 Km in 1999 when the 20 had finally become the primary distance for women, choosing 1:55 as the outer level of elitism.) (We still await meaningful competition for women at 50). Again, I will let you study the numbers and draw your own conclusions, but, there is no good news to report about the depth of competition at the elite level. The numbers continued to drop and have stagnated, particularly on the men's side. The women had a peak year in 2000, but that only appears as an anomaly now.

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I welcome all comments.

Strolling Through American History and Spectacular Scenery: The New England Walkers Club
by Tony Miksanek (From the National Masters News)

New England. This northeastern region of the United States calls to mind our history—pilgrims and Plymouth Colony, the Boston Tea Party, and Paul Revere. And boasts gorgeous geography—coastlines, hills, mountains, and autumn leaves. And is famous for maple syrup, Maine lobster, and Ivy League schools, including Harvard and Yale. Perhaps less-well-known is a hardy group of walkers hailing primarily from Massachusetts and New Hampshire with a few from Vermont and Rhode Island too—the New England Walkers Club.

Founded in 1982, the New England Walkers (NEW) number about 50 active members, but almost 150 folks are involved with the club in one way or another. The majority of members are over the age of 50. The New England Walkers have only ever had one Club President, Thomas Knatt. Tom is a graduate of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology with a degree in science and the humanities. He has worked for WGBH-TV in Boston and for the MIT Instrumentation Lab, where he wrote a navigational software program for the Apollo space project. For a long time, he has designed and constructed musical instruments, primarily guitars and violins. Tom began walking competitively in 1969. He participated in the U.S. Olympic Racewalking Trials in 1972 and 1976. He was also a member of the 1975 American team that competed for the Lugano Cup in France.

Although Tom has manned the helm of the New England Walkers for 30 years, he has been ably assisted by Ed O’Rourke. For the past 2 years, Ed has served as Vice-President of the club. Like Tom, he also resides in Groton, Massachusetts. Ed’s professional background is environmental consulting and geotechnical engineering. Ed has been involved in the U.S. Olympic Racewalking Trials in the 1984 and 1988 Olympic Games. He participated in the Junior Pan Am Games 10 K walk in 1980. While in high school in New York, he set the 1 mile racewalk record for high schoolers. That mark, 6:40 stood for many years. His personal record time for the mile is 5:38, which remains one of the fastest U.S. performances in the event ever.

Other notable Masters members of the club include Bob Keating, 65, who enjoys competing in ultra distances. He recently walked a 100 mile course in New Hampshire and a 116 mile event in Florida. Bob racewalked at the 1984 U.S. Olympic Trials and was a 100 Km racewalk National Champion in 1982. Brian Savilonis is another member of the group who walks in ultra distance meets.

Both Tom and Ed are proud of their club and the accomplishments of its members. They cherish the friendships that have been forged. Ed especially encourages people in midlife to take up walking as an effective and enjoyable form of exercise that is easier on the joints than running. Although most members of NEW are masters, Tom is making a recruiting pitch for younger people also. He’d like to see more high school athletes involved in the sport.

The NEW website (racewalkers.com) is friendly and informative. Members of NEW
LOOKING BACK

50 Years Ago (From the May 1963 American Race Walker, published by Chris McCarthy in Chicago)—Ron Zinn won the National 2 Mile in St. Louis with a 14:03.2 ahead of A1cos Szekely and a honeymooning Jack Mortland. (This was a very late May issue since that race took place on June 22, one week after the betrothal of Jack and Marty. Yes, our 50th is on the horizon.) Ron Laird edged Matt Rutyna for fourth. The British 50 km went to Ray Middleton in 4:16:43.

45 Years Ago (From the May 1968 ORW)—Larry Young captured the National 35 km in Pittsburgh with a 2:53:15, ahead of Canadian Karl Merschenz and Dave Romansky, who were about 4 minutes back. Bob Kitchen turned in a good track SO on June 22, one week after the betrothal of Jack and Marty. Yes, our 50th is on the horizon.) Ron Laird edged Matt Rutyna for fourth. The British 50 km went to Ray Middleton in 4:16:43.

40 Years Ago (From the May 1973 ORW)—Mr. Consistency we called him. Bill Weigle won the National 50 km in Des Moines with a 4:22:37. That marked his fourth 50 km in 11 months with times ranging from 4:20:09 to 4:22:53. John Knifton was second in 4:30:21 and Laird third in 4:37:21. England’s Roger Mills captured our 1 Hour title, covering 8 miles 252 yards, some 72 yards ahead of Knifton, a native Brit himself, but by this time an American citizen. Todd Scully and Ron Daniel followed with the first seven bettering 7 1/2 miles.

35 Years Ago (From the May 1978 ORW)—Marcel Jobin, Canada, moved away from Todd Scully in the second half of the race to win the National 15 km in Nassau, N.Y. in 1:06:49. Scully (1:09:09) finished second well ahead of Dave Romansky (1:11:29). The NAIA 10 km (track) went to Parkside’s Chris Hansen in 46:20. John VanDenBrandt (Parkside) and Carl Schueler (Frostburg) followed. (Carl eventually got his, qualifying for four Olympic and two World Championship teams). Sue Liers had a world best for 1 Mile with 7:00.6 and four days later (Frostburg) followed. (Carl eventually got his, qualifying for four Olympic and two World Championship teams). Sue Liers had a world best for 1 Mile with 7:00.6 and four days later

30 Years Ago (From the May 1983 ORW)—Mexico invaded the U.S. and Martin Bermudez led the field home in the National 50 km in Monterey, Cal. His 3:50:43 was nearly 10 minutes behind countryman Felix Gomez. Marco Evoniuk won the U.S. title in 4:01:43, with Jim Heiring second in 4:07:28, just behind a third Mexican, Marcelo Colin. Dan O’Connor and Tom Edwards followed, with eight U.S. walkers under 4:30. ... Two weeks earlier, Colin came first in the National 15 km in Santa Monica, Cal., his 1:02:58, edging Canada’s Marcel Jobin (1:03:07). Heiring won the U.S. title in 1:03:26 a minute ahead of Sam Shick. Larry Walker, Peter Timmons, and Dave Cummings followed. Also at Santa Monica, Susan Liens-Westerfield won the National Women’s 15 km in 1:17:17, 50 seconds ahead of Teresa Vaill, who was quite early in her seemingly endless career. Carol Brown and Vicki Jones were third and fourth.

25 Years Ago (From the May 1988 ORW)—Defying heavy rains, Teresa Vaill blitzed the first mile in 6:50 to take a substantial lead and she continually built on as she won the National 5 km in Overland Park, Kansas in 22:31.71. Debbi Lawrence was a minute behind in second with Wendy Sharp third in 24:05. Mike Stauf chanted his own meet record in winning his third straight NAIA 10 km title in 41:56.4. His old record was 43:22.2. Dave Cummings just missed the old record with his 43:24.4 in second, 10 seconds of Doug Fourrier. ... Ray Sharp id a 42:45 for 10 In San Francisco, beating Marco Evoniuk (42:21). Wendy Sharp (Mrs. Ray) was fourth in 49:30, her second race ever.

15 Years Ago (From the May 1998 ORW)—Joanne Dow won the National 20 km in Albany, N.Y. with a record 1:34:26. Teresa Vaill was second in 1:36:26 and Victoria Herazo third in 1:41:16. In the National 30 km held at the same time, Gary Morgan prevailed in 2:25:37, less than a minute ahead of Mike Rohi and John Souchek. Bob Keating won the Masters race in 2:47:57, less than a minute ahead of Jim Caramine. Dave Romansky was another 2 minutes back in third. ... In Elk Grove, Illinois, National 15 km titles went to Debbi Lawrence (1:13:24) and Pat Seaman (1:14:46). Victoria Herazo was 2 1/2 minutes in back of Lawrence with Cheryl Rellinger third. Curt Clausen was on Seaman’s heels for the first 10 km and finished second, just 9 seconds back, with Andrew Herrmann third in 1:07:19. A couple of weeks earlier, Matthews won the Masters title in 1:07:41. ... The NAIA 10 km went to Jim Heiring second in 1:08:21. ... On the home front, NAIA races ...