Michta's American Record Highlights Cup Trials: 
Nunn Leads Men

Manchester, N.J., March 30 (Elliott Denman reports)—"Time never stops. Life moves on. The world keeps spinning." Those 10 words are a good capsule of Maria Michta's outlook on life. The Long Island graduate school student—she's a Ph.D. candidate in microbiology at Manhattan's Mount Sinai School of Medicine—never stops either. Her dual lives as a brilliant student and world class racewalker keep moving right along. And her dossier of brilliant performances keeps on spinning, too.

Latest addition to her list of achievements—a list that will surely and eventually rank her as one of the most accomplished women's racewalkers in American history—came Sunday morning. In cold, drizzly, and generally difficult conditions, the 27-year-old Nesconset, N.Y. and C.W. Post College grad blazed to an American women's record performance of 1:31:10 for the 20 Km racewalk as she won the U.S. Trials for the 2014 World Cup of Racewalking.

She thus erased the prior American citizen's record for the event that had been in the books nearly 14 years. And, she was thoroughly delighted. "This is awesome," said Michta. "I got a PR (45:19 for her second 10 Km) and I did negative splits to get the American record, so I can't be more happy. This is everything I wanted. I worked so hard, and I had so many people who helped me," she continued. "It all came together. And now it's on to the World Cup."

When Michelle Rohl clocked a 1:31:51 on May 13, 2000 in Kenosha, Wisconsin, it became a mark destined to stay in the books until the morning of March 30, 2014. In a remarkably fine job of pacemanship, Michta reeled off splits of 5:56, 5:40, 5:45, 5:37, 5:42, 5:42, and 5:41 for each of the 1,250-meter loops on the USATF-certified course at Harry Wyrht Lake Park, breezing home 41 seconds under Rohl's record.

Twist of all twists, though, is that Michta didn't actually win the race. Even though the event was designated as the USA TF National Trials for the World Cup of Racewalking, scheduled May 2-3 in Taicang, China, it was open to athletes from other nations and Rachel Seaman of Canada, a friendly rival and wife of Michta's coach, Tim Seaman, wound up leading all the ladies and her performance of 1:30:41 was a national record of her own. The previous best by a Canadian woman was Seaman's own 1:33:05, achieved at Naumburg, Germany on April 22, 2012. (Ed: Two national records in one day should be enough to make a coach and husband proud.)

So the stage is set for yet another Michta-Seaman duel—of course involving all the rest of the world's elite—in China in five week's time. Not only that, but she'll have family company on the trip to China. Kid sister Katie Michta—both Michtas competed for the Walk USA club team—placed second to Brenda McCollum in the concurrent women's junior 10 Km and is bound for China, too, to compete against the best 19-and-underers of the planet.

Leading the men's 20 Km pack was two-time Olympian John Nunn of Bonsall, Calif. With a 1:26:35 win over Patrick Stroupe of Armstrong, Missouri (1:27:12), Nick Christie
El Cajon, Calif. (1:29:20), Alejandro Chavez of Pharr, Texas (1:29:22), and Michael Mannozzi of Boardman, Ohio (1:31:10). Stroupe, however, is already qualified for the U.S. team at 50 Km, and is likely to opt for that event in China.

Nearly as brilliant as Michta in the Trial was second-place Miranda Melville of Rush, N.Y. who bettered her PR by nearly two minutes, finishing in 1:33:10. The rest of the women’s team will be Susan Randall of Beaver Creek, Ohio (1:43:18), Katie Burnett of Rochester, N.Y. (1:43:49) and Erin Taylor-Talcott of Owego, N.Y. (1:44:26).

Melville, also coached by Tim Seamann, will be on her fourth World Cup Team. She noted: “This only leaves my hungrier for of future races and even faster times.” Coach Tim noted: “I am so excited that Miranda qualified to compete in the World Cup and that she had almost a 2-minute PR. She has moved up to now be the fourth fastest American woman ever and I couldn’t be happier with her progress.” (Ed. Be it here noted that Tim had been on the last five U.S. World Cup teams, beginning in 1997, and could probably have been on this one had he not announced that his win in the Indoor National 3000 in February was his final race.)

Results of the Cup Trial races:


Championships when she audaciously led the field for more than half the race, she was content to wait in the pack and let her rivals make the pace.

Just after 16 Km, with the leading group now down to three, Drahotova decided that her moment to put her foot on the accelerator and made her successful attack. Uncorking a closing pace of Santos, who crossed the line in a season’s best of 1:31:14. De Sena came through to take second in 1:31:22, bettering the Brazilian record she set two years ago here.

Henriques was third in 1:32:03.

“This win came about in the final laps, where my confidence grew because I knew my strength at this time of the season,” said Santos.

Portugal’s two-time European bronze medalist Joao Vieira was seeking a second consecutive victory in the men’s race. He battled until the final lap, but despite his best efforts could not hold off Bonfim, who came through to win in 1:23:15, five seconds ahead of Vieira, whose twin brother Sergio finished third in 1:24:15.

“I am very happy with this win,” said Bonfim, the reigning South American champion. “I’ve come to Rio Maior several times for training. It’s a great place for training and I’m trying to convince the Brazilian federation to send their athletes to train at the Rio Maior Sports Centre.”

Italy’s large entrant Marco de Luca finished fourth in 1:24:50. Results:


IAAF Challenge Continues In Rio Maior

Rio Maior, Portugal, April 5 (IAAF Press Release)-Both podiums comprised Portuguese-speaking athletes at the International Racewalking Grand Prix, a part of the IAAF Racewalking Challenge. Brazil’s Caio Bonfim won the men’s race and Portugal’s Vera Santos the women’s title for a second time. A particularly hot afternoon resulted in numerous dropouts, especially in the men’s race. But despite the weather both races were competitive.

In the women’s race, the Portuguese quartet of Ana Cabecinha, Ines Henriqu3es, Santos, and Susana Feitor were joined in the first half by Brazil’s Erica da Siena. After passing through the half-way mark, 2005 World bronze medalist Feitor dropped out, followed by
comfortable, I could speed up in the last kilometers and I was trying set a good time for the organizers. In the end, I am happy to bring them a time under 1:30 and win as well.”

Her next goal is to win the junior 10 Km in Taicang (World Cup). Brazil’s Erica de Sena hung on for second place, exactly a minute and just under 250 meters behind in 1:20:43. She improved her national record time in a week. Neringa took third in 1:30:54.

Five wins between 2003 and 2014 make Matej Toth one of the most successful competitors in the history of this event, which had its 82nd edition this year. The 2010 IAAF World Cup 50 Km winner also decided that the 17th kilometer was good moment to make a push for home and he managed to put daylight between himself and Poland’s Rafal Fedaczynski, his last opponent in the fight for another victory. With hands above his head in celebration, his last win coming two years ago, Matej crossed the line in 1:20:00, just shy of his personal best of 1:19:48 set in Dudince last month.

Toth is going to Taicang to do the 20 and then he will prepare for the 50 at the World Cup 50K. That’s when my dreams about finishing on top of the podium started, and I always like to come back. I saw world class walking for the first time here when I was 14, a junior walker with weaker personal best can do a strong finish. I say, this race is a matter of my heart.

Orahota hits the finish line in Podebrady.

“IT was a bit tougher than last time in Dudince,” admitted Toth. “I had to keep an eye on my rivals, but it was good preparation for the World Cup and I’m happy for the win. The 17th kilometer is a great point to attack, because the last kilometer can always be a danger, even a walker with weaker personal best can do a good finish. I say, this race is a matter of my heart and I always like to come back. I saw world class walking for the first time here when I was 14 at the World Cup 10K; that’s when my dreams about finishing on top of the podium started, and now those dreams are coming true,” he added with a smile. The win took Toth to the top of Challenge standings with 16 points.

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Fedaczynski was second just 18 seconds behind Toth with Ukraine’s Kovenko, now 40, edging away from the other competitors in the last three kilometers for third in 1:20:26, just 6 seconds outside his personal best. The results:


Other Results


Women's 20 Km—1. Nicole Fontaine, France 1:34:25.2. Marie Boisset, France 1:34:43.3. Cecilia Lefebvre, France 1:35:24 (11 finishers)

Salomon World Cup, Varsavia, Poland, March 29-30: Men's 20 Km—1. Piotr Wolowy, Poland 1:22:10.2. Jakub Kozlowski, Poland 1:22:45.3. Dariusz Bielak, Poland 1:23:03 (10 finishers)

Women's 20 Km—1. Anna Pinter-Vakoc, Czech Republic 1:34:56.2. Urszula Wdowik, Poland 1:35:13.3. Aga Kozlowska, Poland 1:35:26 (11 finishers)

Salomon World Cup, Boston, USA, April 5-6: Men's 20 Km—1. Peter Silliman, USA 1:21:03.2. Michael Ostrowski, USA 1:21:51.3. David Bratton, USA 1:22:42 (16 finishers)

Women's 20 Km—1. Sarah True, USA 1:33:57.2. Natalia Kuzmina, Russia 1:34:02.3. Alexandra Kryukovskaya, Russia 1:34:11 (11 finishers)


Women's 20 Km—1. Sarah True, USA 1:36:09.2. Natalia Kuzmina, Russia 1:36:35.3. Alexandra Kryukovskaya, Russia 1:36:46 (11 finishers)


Women's 20 Km—1. Sarah True, USA 1:36:09.2. Natalia Kuzmina, Russia 1:36:35.3. Alexandra Kryukovskaya, Russia 1:36:46 (11 finishers)


W35—1. Tatjana Kryukovskaya, Russia 16:06.45.2. Daniela Ricciutelli, Italy 16:45.03.3. Natalia Marceno, Ukraine 16:49.76.4. Heather Carr, Australia 16:51.25.5. Maria Alice Fernandes, Portugal 17:29.93.6. Maria Oriol Mendes, Portugal 17:33.65 (5 finishers)


Competition in the ancient sport of heel-and-toe walking is available at these sites

**Sun. May 4**
20 Km, Penfield, N.Y. 8am. (Y)

**Sun. May 11**
National USAFL 10K and 27th Annual Jack Mortland Racewalks (5, 10, and 20Km), Dayton, Ohio, 9am (M)

**Sun. May 18**
National USAFL Junior and Masters 15 Km, Riverside, Cal. (D)

**Sat. May 31**
5 and 10 Km, Royal Oak, Mich. (F)

**USATF National 5K, Albany, N.Y. (D)**
Wisconsin and Illinois 10Km, Pleasant Prairie, Wis. (I)

**Sat. June 7**
Michigan USAFL 5000, Olivet College (F)

**Sun. June 8**
Midwest and Ohio 1 Hour, Elow Springs, Ohio (M)

**Sat. June 14**
Midwest 3000, Waukesha, Wis. (I)

**Sun. June 15**
5 Km, Detroit, 8am (F)

**June 28-29**
National USAFL 20 Km Championships, Sacramento, Cal. (D)

**Sun. June 29**
Midwest Masters 5000, Waukesha, Wis. (I)

**Fri. July 4**
1 and 2 Miles, Berkley, Mich. (F)

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–Francis Cash@aol.com
D–www.USATF.org
E–whatleyian@gmail.com
F–Frank Soby, 4157 Colonial Drive, Royal Oak, MI 48073, franksoby@comcast.net
G–Dave Gwyn, 6502 Briar Bayou, Houston, TX 77027
H–gmulnax@sbcglobal.net
I–Matt DeWitt, cwwalker-upw@wp.com
J–Nanaracewalks, 103 Gedney St. #3B, Nyack, NY 10960
K–Gary Westerfield, garywesterfield@verison.com
L–Dave Talcott, dwtalcott@junio.com
M–Vince Peters, 607 Omer Circle, Yellow Springs, Ohio 45387 (937-767-7424)
N–Steve Darran, sdarranrdh@cox.net
O–A.C. Jaime, acjaime@sbcglobal.net
P–Lon Wilson, 1020 Grand Concourse, Suite 15X, Bronx, NY 101
d Q–New Mexico Racewalkers, P.O. Box 90111, Albuquerque, NM 87199
R–Doug Yoder, 574-535-7495, dougy@goshen.edu
S–bgillvayo@dillgraphiedesign.com
T–Maryanne Daniel, ctrywalk@sbcglobal.net
U–Roman Olszewski, 905-732-9555, roman.otfi@cocega.ca

**From Heel To Toe**

Gus Davis checks in. (Which is a lot better than checking out.) Referring to the results of the National masters indoor meet in last month’s issue, Gus writes: “I finally won” a national championship (Men’s 75) in Boston; the other two guys got DQ’d. At this age getting to the starting line and finishing is deserved of a medal. Great sport, great fun. Please acknowledge Charles Boyle who, as the only M90, was national champion 30:21.93. He has slowed down a bit since his 80s but is still sharp, having recently written a children’s book. (Ed. Sorry that I missed Charles in the results I published) . . . Michta honored. Maria Michta was named as the USATF Athletic of the Week following her American record effort at the World Cup Trials. She is the first racewalker so honored in 2014. . . . Black Dan. Walt Murphy’s News and Results Service included the following in their “This Day In Track & Field for April 10: 1880–Frank ‘Black Dan’ Hart won the O’Leary belt walking competition before a full house at Madison Square Garden, covering a record 565 miles in 142 hours. Hart was considered the premier ‘pedestrian’ at a time when six-day walking races were all the craze.” . . Marek. In the results of a Hour race in Ottawa reported last month in which Marek Adamczew closed third behind the Tacotts, after leading by minutes at 10,000 meters (46:24.5) I suggested that perhaps he was just out for a quick 10,000. Here is what Ottawa’s and Canada’s racewalking guru, Roger Burrows, reports to me: “Yes, Marek did want a 10Km performance above all, in order to qualify for our World Cup team (Junior). After 10Km, he was simply fulfilling the rule that a performance at a shorter distance is fine as long as the advertised distance is completed. He also did it last year for the same reason (Americans Cup team). And he is not the first walker to something similar in the 7-year history of our event. But he does really shut it down! Others have cruised for a while to recover and the picked it up again. Perhaps not to pre-10K levels, but certainly enough to record a satisfying 1 Hour distance. Not sure why Marek slowed so much. Unfortunately, he didn’t get the standard he was looking for, so perhaps he wondered whether there was any point. At 46ish for 10Km, he may not have been able to exceed the overall meet record, just in excess of 13Km. But he could probably have got 12Km, or at least, stayed ahead of Erin for the overall win.” . . Kudos. National Racewalk chairman, Ron Daniel offers the following plaudits: Congratulations to Ron Salvio, Event Director, and the Freehold Area Running Chili. This past Sunday, March 30, Ron and his club hosted the 2014 IAFF Racewalking World Cup US Team Trials. The event was held at the Harry Wright Lake Park in Whiting, N.J. As advertised, the 1.25 Km course was fast. But before races began, many good things were already in place. At the host hotel, a packet pick-up with a hospitality room worked very efficiently. Goodie bags and a very nice event T-shirt were available for all. While no one was in charge of the ‘rain gods’, race morning came with a rain-calm. By the time the athletes and officials arrived, many volunteers were busy setting up the course. After a live sing of the National Anthem, the race started on time. To aid in the laps counting chip timing was also being used. There were multiple people doing the various jobs required to conduct a first-class event. The official results have already been published, so I won’t repeat them here but to say that two Women’s National Records were set… In both Men’s/Women’s Sr. and Jr. events, nearly everyone qualifying for the U.S. World Cup Team also made out Team qualifying standards on Sunday. Yes, a fast course! Plenty of fluids were available (not just the rain); and Rael MT was on hand as well as massage therapists and physical trainers. At the
Competitive walking was the national pastime until baseball came along

By Matthew Algeo (The author of "Pedestrianism: When Watching People Walk Was America's Favorite Spectator Sport.")

With opening day upon us, we again are reminded that baseball is America's national pastime. It's hard to imagine a time when baseball wasn't considered the national game, and long ago another sport was far more popular competitive walking.

In the 1970s and 1980s, the country's largest arenas were packed to the rafters with fans watching men- and sometime women-walking in circles on dirt tracks. They race around the clock for six days at a time. (Prohibitions on public amusements on Sundays made longer races impossible.)

Although running was sometimes allowed, it was not an effective strategy for races that lasted 144 hours straight-roughly the length of 50 baseball games. Stopping occasionally to catch a few winks on cots placed on the arena floor, the competitors pushed themselves to,

and sometimes beyond, the edge of physical and mental collapse. A nation starved for entertainment in the days before radio and record players savored the competition.

The sport was known as pedestrianism, and its most successful practitioners were this country's first celebrity athletes. Their images appeared on some of the first trading cards, and they received lucrative endorsement deals. Dan O'Leary, an Irish immigrant from Chicago who won a six-day race by walking 520 miles, was the spokesman for Dittman's salt. Another pedestrian, John Hughes, was sponsored by the National Police Gazette. During races, Hughes wore a shirt with the newspaper's log emblazoned across the front, one of the earliest examples of advertising on an athletic uniform (a trend that, to its credit, Major League Baseball has resisted).

Champion pedestrians were well paid. After a six-day race at Madison Square Garden (then known as Gilmore's Garden) in March 1979-attended by luminaries including James Blaine, who was then a Republican senator from Maine, and future president Chester Arthur-the winner, Charles Rowell, walked away with more than $18,000 (about $425,000 in today's money). Not bad for six days work.

But just a decade later, pedestrianism was dead. By then, charges of race fixing and doping had diluted fan interest. During one race in 1976, the famous pedestrian Edward Payson Weston was caught chewing coca leaves-a practice that was considered unsportsmanlike.

Meanwhile, baseball was on the rise. The National League, founded as a ragtag enterprise in 1876 became a stable, profitable business after team owners imposed a $2500 salary cap in 1885. Of the eight clubs in the league in 1890, only one, the Cleveland Spiders, no longer exists. The other seven clubs were, and still are, the Braves, Cubs, Dodgers, Giants, Phillies, Pirates, and Reds. (Ed. Although the Braves, Dodgers, and Giants have relocated, the Braves twice.) Fans who once flocked to six-day races instead filled spacious new wooden ballparks. For all its popularity today, baseball would do well to remember the demise of its predecessor as America's favorite spectator sport. Players; use of performance-enhancing drugs has sullied baseball's image. TV ratings are declining. For a brief time, it seemed that pedestrianism would be out national pastime forever. Even if it takes more than a century, history has a way of repeating itself.

LOOKING BACK

50 Years Ago (From the Spring 1964 issue of the Midwest Race Walker, published by Chris McCarthy in Chicago)--In an exciting 1 Hour Race (the first National 1 Hour Championship race), Ron Laird led three others beyond the national record, covering 8 miles 797 yards on Chicago's Rockne Stadium cinder track. Laird pulled away from Ron Zinn after 4 1/2 miles, with Zinn missing the 8 mile mark by just 28 yards. Art Mark, with 7 miles 1649 yards finished just 9 yards ahead of your editor. In reality, the latter two probably missed Rudy Haluzs's national record of 7 miles 1614 yards set in 1963 as the finishing gun missed.

McCarthy's article says it was finally fired an estimated 8 seconds late, which would be worth at least 4000. My recollection says it must have been a bit more than that. I recall passing 7 3/4 miles in just under 59 minutes. Finishing strongly after struggling mid-race, I had a 7:20 for my last mile and was still carrying that pace. So, I expected I would have 7 or 8 seconds left after another half-lap and would perhaps get to 1570 yards-at about the end of the backstretch. As I entered the turn, I knew something was amiss and actually backed off because Art Mark was at a crawl and I didn't want to take a place away from him in what I knew was "overtime". So, I figured we had perhaps an extra 12 seconds, which would still put Laird well past 8 miles. Whatever, it was an outstanding race for that era, with nine walkers going beyond 7 1/4 miles, despite some noticeable absences, including Haluzs and Jack Blackburn. McCarthy himself won the Ohio 50 Km a few weeks earlier in 4:43:44, 3 minutes ahead of Blackburn. Phil MacDonald was another 2 minutes back.
45 Years Ago (From the April 1969 ORW)—Mr. Laird won his fifth consecutive National 15 Km title in the Columbus suburb of Worthington as he edged away from Dave Romansky in the final 5 Km. Ron finished in 1:06:45 with Dave just 12 seconds back. Tom Dooley, Goetz Kloper, Ron Daniel, and Gary Westerfield rounded out the top six, with Westerfield at 1:12:09, leaving aging race director one place out of the top six...In Point Pleasant, N.J., Bob Kitchen did a track 50 Km in 4:19:41...Romansky beat Kitchen by 2 minutes in a New Jersey 10 miler finishing in 1:13:31.

On the West Coast, Laird set an American records at 3 miles (20.51.8) and 5 Km (21.24.2)...Dooley beat Kloper by a half-minute in a quick (50:32.7) 7 miler. The ORW postal 10 Mile Relay (alternates quarters) went to Dooley (1:36.7 average) and Kloper (1:37.72) in 64:49.8. Klofer also teamed with Bill Ranney (obviously not on the same day) to take second with 67:07.02, followed by Gary Westerfield-Gerald Bocci (69:07) and Jack Blackburn-Jack Mortland (69:33) Youth prevailed as the latter two teams head-to-head on the Worthington track.

40 Years Ago (From the April 1974 ORW)—Within a three-week period, Shaul Ladany won both the National 75 and 100 Km titles. The 100 came in Des Moines, Iowa, where he had a 10:12:53, leaving Augie Hirt 38 minutes back. Jerry Brown and Bill Walker took the next two places. In the 75 in West Long Branch, N.J., Shaul had 7:25:09. Gary Westerfield trailed by nearly 25 minutes in second with Tom Knatt third and Alan Price fourth...Jerry Brown beat Colorado TC teammate Floyd Godwin in the National 1 Hour in Boulder's altitude, covering 7 miles 1671 yards, with Godwin just 34 yards back. Bob Henderson and Augie Hirt followed.

35 Years Ago (From the April 1979 ORW)—Jim Heiring broke Larry Young's American 20 Km record by 6 seconds with 1:30:04 on the Grosse Pointe, Michigan track. Chris Hansen stayed with him for 5 miles and then slowly drifted away to finish in 1:31:45. Martin Kraft had 1:32:35 and Steve Pecinovsky 1:32:45...Paul Hendrickson took second in a 200 Km race in France with 23:08:18. Luxembourg's Josey Simon won in 22:55:48 (5:42 per 50 Km)...The Spanish 50 Km went to Jorge Llopart in a swift 3:50:03 ahead of France's Gerard Lellivre (3:56:49)...In England, Marrian Fawkes set a women's world record with 48:36.7 for 10 Km.

30 Years Ago (From the April 1984 ORW)—Carl Schueler walked an impressive 4:07:23 in very muddy conditions to win the National 50 Km in Cleveland. Vincent 'Sullivan had a 4:10:00 in second and Tom Edwards 4:14:39 in third...Teresa Valli was an easy winner in the women's National 20 Km in Seattle with 1:43:50. Gwen Robertson was second in 1:49:46. Martin Kraft had 1:51:46 and Carol Brown third in 1:52:52...At the same site, Tim Lewis pulled away from Jim Heiring in the last 10 to win the National 25 Km in 1:49:36. Heiring had 1:50:49, Ed O'Rourke 1:54:47, Carl Schueler 1:55:40, Dave Cummings 1:58:38, and Tom Edwards 1:59:01

25 Years Ago (From the April 1989 ORW)—In the U.S. World Cup Trials, Deblai Lawrence prevailed in the women's 10 Km and Tim Lewis in the men's 20. In Tampa, Lawrence got away from Lynn Weik in the final 3 Km to win in 47:46. Weik had 48:10 and Teresa Valli 48:35 in third. Wendy Sharp, Maryanne Torrellas, and Susan Liers rounded out the top six. In Washington, D.C., Lewis dominated the race.

20 Years Ago (From the April 1994 ORW)—Tim Seaman prevailed in the Easter Bunny 20 Km in Racine, Wis. In 1:29:47 ahead of Don Lawrence and Will Van Axen...Gary Morgan won the Mortland 20 Kmi in 1:36:24 and Lisa Somay the women's 10 Kmi in 51:41.

Early history of the World Cup

With the World Cup coming up the weekend after this issue goes in the mail, here's some ancient history on the event. Originally known as the Lugano Cup because the first edition was held in Lugano, Switzerland, in 1961, it has been held mostly at two-year intervals since, although for a short period in the 1970s there were three-year intervals. The first three competitions involved only European nations, not because of exclusion, but because no one else chose to enter. The U.S. was the first nation from outside Europe to compete, entering the fourth edition in 1967. In the early days, there were regional competitions in Europe with just a few teams qualifying for the final. Here are results of the first six competitions:

1961, Lugano, Switzerland

20 Km
1. Ken Matthews, GB 1:43:05
2. Lennart Back, Swed. 1:43:12
3. T. Ambo, Nor. 1:43:32
5. E. Soderlund, Swed. 1:43:51
8. T. Balsea, Hung. 1:43:16
total Points: Great Britain 29, Sweden 28, Hungary 14, Italy 7

50 Km
1. Abdon Pain, Italy 4:25:38
2. Don Thompson, GB 4:30:35
3. D. Soderlund, Swed. 4:31:48
5. T. Green, Swed. 4:41:37
6. E. Leonard, Swed. 4:42:45
Points: Sweden 25, Great Britain 24, Italy 22, Hungary 9
Total Points: Great Britain 58, Sweden 53, Italy 28, Hungary 24 (Great Britain wins by virtue of first in the 50.)
1963, Varese, Italy


1965, London


1967, Ed Saaow, E.G.


1970, Eschborn, W.G.

Early Lugano Cup Action. Ken Matthews, who won the first Lugano Cup 20 Km in 1961, is seen here in a Cup Preliminary in London on August 12, 1961. Matthews won in 1:32:12.4 with his team qualified for the Final in Lugano. Germans Karl Heinz Pape and Dieter Lindner are in second and third in this picture from Athletics Weekly.