



## Masters Racewalking

by ELAINE WARD

### Active Stretching – The Last Word

**R**emember the era of ballistic stretching? Jump jump, bounce, bounce, kick kick. My introduction to this method of warming up was at a community run and walk. About fifteen or twenty minutes before race start, an announcement came over the loud speaker that an organized warm-up was about to begin. Following the migrating pack, I found myself in front of a smiling young thing standing on a raised platform. Soon she began to move with loud, fast, upbeat music while inviting her audience to join in. If you were like me, you spent half of the time trying to see what the leader was doing and the other half fumbling around trying to imitate her. Up-down, jump jump, sideways bounce, floor touch and up-down again. Just as you started to catch on and feel a little pride, the routine changed and the fumbling resumed.

At the conclusion of the warm-up, everyone headed to the start line with a positive affirmation of voice and waving arms. As for being warmed up, that depended on whether you were giving "A" to effort or to accomplishment. In my case, I usually felt my eyes were warmed up, but my body was undecided.

Gradually, ballistic stretching was phased out as unsafe. It was felt that the bouncy movements increased the possibility of muscle stress and tears. So entered the era of static stretching.

Static stretching, or long, slow stretching, still dominates exercise prescriptions. It is believed that holding a stretch for 20 to 30 seconds is the safest way to improve flexibility, increase performance, prevent injury and counter the aging process. However, the safety of static stretching is conditional. Athletes are cautioned to warm-up cold muscles before stretching them which leads to a real problem. Static stretching is not only quite boring, it hogs a precious amount of workout time. Good intentions, therefore, frequently get shelved.

#### Quicker Results

In contrast, a new form of stretching is gaining popularity. It made its debut about the time of the 1988 Olympics and offers a compromise between ballistic and static stretching. It is called "active" stretching. Active stretching can target specific muscles, combat stiffness by improving joint range of motion, and is time-efficient. Most importantly, athletes may notice results rapidly.

In active stretching you hold a stretch only 2-3 seconds, but you repeat each stretch 8-12 times. The briefer repetitive motions promote a gradual warming up of the muscles. As the opposing muscles contract and relax relatively quickly. The stretching is closer to natural movement.

#### Stretch Exercises

For example, warming up for the racewalking footwork might include the following active stretches:

- Facing a wall, stand three feet or so away with hands shoulder height against the wall. Rise up on the balls of your feet, hold 2 seconds, and lower your heels to the ground. These two movements both stretch and contract your calf muscles, Achilles tendon and shin muscles. Repeat the two movements 8 to 12 times.

- Stand with the balls of your feet on the edge of a stair step. Rise as high up on your toes as possible and hold 2 seconds. Then lower your heels below the level of the stair and hold 2 seconds. Again, these up and down movements both lengthen and contract the opposing calf and shin muscles. Repeat this exercise 8-12 times.

- Obeying the "straight knee rule" is aided by flexible hamstrings and strong quads. A simple active stretch for the hamstrings and quads can be done in a standing position. Straighten one leg in front of your body so your heel is 6-8 inches off the ground with your toes pointed up toward your shin. Hold 2 seconds. This movement stretches the ham-

strings and other back leg muscles while contracting the quads. To reverse this action, bend your knee and point your toes toward the ground without letting them touch. Again hold 2 seconds. Repeat 8-12 times.

- Hip flexibility is important for maintaining stride length and push-off. Any active movement involving hip rotation makes a useful warm-up for racewalking. However, an example of an active stretch for the hip involves a lying leg raise. Lie on your back with your legs straight. Wrap a rope around one foot. Keeping your leg straight, raise it up and across your leg. Hold 2 seconds and return your leg to its original position. Repeat 8-12 times.

#### Starter Kit

Meg Waldron is a certified neuromuscular therapist who has a starter kit of 13 active stretches using a rope. Waldron states that the kit has stretches for the hamstrings, quads and calf muscles as well as stretches for hard-to-name areas like "right behind the knee," "on the outside of the back of the thigh," and "that tight spot in the butt." For information on active stretching with a rope, call Waldron at 1-800-9-megafit.

Whether using a rope or turning favorite static stretches into active stretches, this new method of warming up may help you become a warm-up regular. □



Laurel Williams, 44, Arkansas, W40 winner (18:46.92), 3000 racewalk, National Masters Indoor Championships, Boston, March 21-23.

Photo by Jerry Wojcik

## Masters Hall of Fame

Report by BEV LA VECK

Racewalk Rep on Masters T&F Committee

The National Racewalk Committee has nothing to do with the Masters Hall of Fame. Selection is made by the National Masters T&F Committee (of which Racewalking is part) and the National Masters Long Distance Running Committee.

In 1995, when we thought there would be three men and three women plus two contributors in the initial selection for the Hall of Fame, I corresponded with the masters racewalk subcommittee members who agreed that the men with greatest priority were Gordon Wallace, Larry Walker, Giulio DePetra, and Robert Mimm. Women were Lori Maynard and Viisha Sedlak. Not only were/are all of these athletes outstanding walkers, but they have had lasting influence and represent an important era. Contributors were Alan Wood and Elaine Ward. The thought was that Max Green, Don DeNoon, (maybe Mimm, too) and several others, including many currently competitive women, would have a chance in the future.

As it turned out, the selection procedure did not allow for recommendations from the racewalk, or any other, subcommittee. Rather, the voting was by the 150-member Masters T&F and LDR committees, based on performance data from WAVA, USA Championships, records, etc. Various things happened to prevent some of

the above-nominees from submitting their specific data (as opposed to testimonials from nominators) to Hall of Fame Administrator Marilyn Mitchell by the deadline. I gathered together the data for the posthumous awards.

At the 1995 Convention there was some small, vocal, and very obdurate opposition to RW having as many "slots" as T&F and LDR, since the latter two categories had many more candidates over the last 30 years or so. That is why the number of racewalkers was reduced to one man and one woman. I don't remember if the Racewalk Contributor category was merged in with the T&F Contributor category, or if there were so many contributor nominees that nobody got a majority of the vote. A majority vote was necessary to be selected with no run-offs. Many truly great T&F, LDR athlete and contributor nominees weren't chosen this time because the votes were scattered through a long list of candidates.

It's important to learn the selection procedure for 1997. If the Hall of Fame selections require a majority of the vote, there is a disadvantage in having lots of candidates. A Racewalk Subcommittee could help by paring down a list in some kind of "primary vote". However, this presupposes that the subcommittee recommendations are then heeded. □

## Hoerneke-Gil Sets 50K RW World Best

by BEV LA VECK

Marina Hoerneke-Gil (Spain) edged Pam Ficken (Great Britain) in spirited competition for the W55 50K racewalk world best in the annual 50K event in Basildon, England, April 5. Hoerneke-Gil's time of 5:56:47 bettered the previous mark by Elizabeth Petterson (USA) by almost one hour, and was accomplished in very windy condi-

tions. Hoerneke-Gil also holds the W50 50K WB, and is known to athletes throughout the world for her language translation skills in WAVA meetings.

Sandra Brown, an accomplished ultra walker and runner from Great Britain, was first 45 (no time available). Sandra holds the W40 and W45 RW WB at 50K. □