A key factor in endurance performance is being able to start at an appropriate pace and maintain it to the finish. Many athletes start too quickly because they feel good in the opening stages and can be over-excited by the nature of competition. Race walkers who start too quickly relative to their ability (usually faster than their personal best pace) tend to slow considerably after halfway and their performance suffers as a result. In general, adopting an even pace throughout a race is the best approach from a physiological point of view; however, this is rarely an easy task and athletes worry that if they don’t keep up with the others that they will fall too far behind. The following graphs are the pacing profiles of athletes representing Commonwealth nations (a benefit of which is the spread of finishing times) in the 20 km and 50 km Olympic competitions. Average speeds over each 2 km (for 20 km) or 5 km (for 50 km) were calculated from the splits provided on the IAAF website.

**Men’s 20 km**

All 20 km men featured started at a similar speed of approximately 14.5 km/h, with those finishing in the top half maintaining a relatively even pace throughout. Dane Bird-Smith’s (AUS) increase in speed over the last 2 km helped him to win the bronze medal. Tom Bosworth (GBR) took the lead after 4 km and maintained this lead for much of the race although his speed was relatively similar to the other athletes until about 14 km. He maintained his speed to the end, achieving a national record and 6th place, whereas other athletes slowed from 14 km onwards. Some of these athletes, such as Thorne and Cowley (both AUS) managed to increase speed again in the final 2 km, which is not unusual and is a result of the psychological boost in knowing the finish is near (and which is even more important in the 50 km).

**Women’s 20 km**

The Commonwealth women featured in the graph below generally placed lower than the men described above, and so there is more evidence of slowing down earlier in the race. Regan Lamble (AUS) had the most even pace, and in general the women started at a more conservative pace than the men (this phenomenon is frequently seen also in marathon running). However, once again there is little difference in starting pace over the first 2 km between athletes, regardless of ability, and some of the athletes might have been better advised to ignore the opening speeds set by the leaders. Kaur (IND) and Oosthuizen (RSA) slowed quickly from this opening pace, although both did well to increase speed over the final 4 and 6 km respectively.

**Men’s 50 km**

Starting with the right pace is more crucial over 50 km than 20 km, for the obvious reason that it is much longer and exhausts the body’s glycogen stores to a much greater extent. The switch from glycogen to fat as the main source of fuel typically occurs after 30 km and is partly responsible for the great decreases in pace found in the second half of the race (e.g. as shown by Reading (AUS) below). Tallent (AUS), Dunfee (CAN), Erickson (AUS) and Rew (NZL) had relatively even pacing profiles by the standards of the 50 km and helped them achieve positions in the top 12. Kumar (IND) slowed quite early in the race although this might have been because of a realisation that the early pace was too fast, and many athletes are indeed able to finish by adopting a more suitable and sustainable pace in time. Despite slowing slightly from 30 km onwards, Mundell (RSA) was able to maintain a fairly even pace and sped up in the last 5 km, helping him to move up the field in the latter stages.
Of course, slowing down in race walking is not always the result of an over-ambitious opening pace, and indeed can be an important tactic to adopt to ensure the race is finished.

Race walkers often like to walk in groups and those isolated sometimes slow to let others catch them (as in the case of Diniz (FRA) who finished 8th). Athletes can also decrease speed because of illness or injury, or because the weather conditions are difficult. Nonetheless, an analysis of how an athlete has paced him or herself can be useful in identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the pacing strategy adopted and inform the tactics used in the next big event.

Thanks to Dr Brian Hanley for this article which may help each one of us to better assess our own tactics and racing speeds!


Source: Dr Brian Hanley, Leeds Beckett University, UK. b.hanley@leedsbeckett.ac.uk

I have known Elsa Meyer for about 4 years and she has stood out as a highly talented (and determined) racewalker of the highest calibre!

Elsa Cronje was born in Bloemfontein some time back (on the 4th August 1946 to be precise), and while she was quite young moved first to Paarl and later to Pretoria.

Elsa’s Dad was a blacksmith, but he too was a determined man and he took his Matric exam in the same year as Elsa and then went on to study business administration at university. He played an important part in Elsa’s development as a sportswoman since he kept racing pigeons and when they were competing he would want everybody out of the house so that there would be quite and the pigeons would come in easily. Since Elsa’s family was already quite sporty, playing softball and korfball (a game with similarities to netball and basketball), the rest of the family would spend this time on the sportsfields.

In junior school Elsa was a keen korfball player as well as a 100m sprinter. Later in high school she played softball and continued with the korfball as well as taking up Javelin. Elsa captained the school’s korfball first team from Std 8 (Grade 10) to Matric. She represented her province (NTvI) for softball from a young age and at one point the majority of the team were related to her. She gave up javelin on leaving school.

Elsa comes from a very sporty family. She has 4 siblings - 2 sisters and two brothers – all 5 of them had Northern Transvaal colours for softball! An aunt had Springbok colours in 3 different sports - softball, korfbal and athletics and was an active Masters athlete until she was 86! Elsa’s mom played bowls until her death at 82.

Elsa continued after school with both korfball and softball, playing both for her province. Elsa married Henkie Meyer at the age of 20 and subsequently was chosen for the Springbok team in softball but unfortunately did not get her colours since she fell pregnant and was not able to be capped.

Elsa continued with her softball in between raising the family. However, in the early 1970s, the children’s sports activities took up too much time after school and Saturdays, so Elsa stopped her active sports life. At the time she was following her career as an administrator in the Department of Welfare and Pensions.

Interestingly fellow racewalker Winnie Koekemoer (featured in Issue 1) and her husband Harry were also working at the Dept. of Welfare and Pensions at the time, although Elsa did not know them then!

Later Elsa turned her hobby of sewing into a business that still continues today. At one point Elsa branched out into uniforms for hotels, companies and schools and had a couple of employees, but her real love is in making wedding dresses, as well as dressing the rest of the wedding entourage, and it is in this area that she remains active.

Sundays were always very special to the family. They would all go to church and afterwards they would do something exciting with the children – they went on picnics, roller-skating or to the zoo or for any other fun activity that they could enjoy as a family. When the children started university they also all had part time jobs on the weekends and Elsa and Henkie, struggling a little with empty house syndrome started walking on Sunday afternoons. However they stopped after a few years when Henkie tired of the walks and Elsa’s business expanded.

In the 1980’s Elsa had her first spinal surgery having lumber vertebrae no’s 2, 3 and 4 fused, and although this did help tremendously she has had continued problems.

In the mid 1980’s Elsa took up aerobics and later had her own club meeting in the church hall for about 5 years. Later she joined a gym. However after a visit to America for a holiday with her daughters in 1996 the Gym closed and Elsa still wanted to keep fit. Remembering the walks that she and Henkie had done, Elsa started walking in the mornings – however this also had its challenges since Elsa was bitten 3 times by dogs in the early years (they probably cannot catch her now since she is so fast!).

Elsa’s daughter Danel encouraged her to do the Makhulu fun walk in Irene – there was a gold medal for the first 10 to finish – Elsa finished 8th, and the taste of gold was good! Danel and her boyfriend were running for Wingate and asked Elsa to join as well.

In the 50+ category.

In 1998 Elsa joined Agape and carried on with her winning streak, when there was a prize she would sometimes splash out on a dinner for herself and Henkie.

Elsa particularly enjoyed the longer distances and in 2003 on a walk, Belinda Skinner suggested that she consider joining Masters. Elsa did and she won the very first AGN 5000m race that she walked! Then at the Central Gauteng Champs she received 2 warnings – so she decided to get some assistance to clean up her style. She spent several months training under the eye of Carol van der Wall – who told her once that she could race any distance she liked because her “head is strong enough”.

Two years later in 2005 Elsa earned her National Masters colours in the 5000 and 10k events. That year the world Masters Athletic Championships was held in Spain, and Elsa at the age of 59 just...
Number 5: August 2016

missed the podium coming 4th in the 5000 m and 10km events. Elsa feels that at that point she had still not learned to train correctly but that her training improved once she realised the potential that she had. 2005 was also the year that Elsa had her second back operation with vertebrae no’s 5 and 6 pulled into place and fixed with screws in December. But Elsa was always a fighter and this did not stop her continued racing achievements. She was racing again in January when she did the George Claassen, then she competed in the SA Masters in Port Elizabeth to get a bronze.

On her 60th birthday Elsa walked in the Transwerk 10km race and got a surprise birthday present recording a time that bettered the AGN record! However Elsa still had a love of distance and in 2007 she walked the Comrades with Gerhardt van der Raad and Bea Pretorius in eleven and a half hours, she subsequently also walked the 50km ‘Om die Dam’ in 6:06 and the Loskop 50km in 5:54.

In 2009 Elsa asked Marc Mundell (Olympic 50m km walker) to assist with her training – he suggested she ask coach Chris Brits. But since Chris was busy at the time with plans for the Gautrain, he could not spare the time. Marc gave Elsa a program that included speed work for the first time and she also had 2 sessions with him, but she did not feel that this was assisting her. Still she went to the Sydney masters games and at the age of 64 took the Gold for the 20 km and silver for the 5000m in both cases setting a new South African age group record.

At the Masters athletics Champs in Oudtshoorn in 2013 Elsa set new National records for the 5000m and 10km events and later in the year a new 20km record in Cape Town. Later in the year she went to the international Masters Athletics Championship in Brazil where she easily won all three of her races.

Her results in Brazil where:
5000m track Racewalk: 29:45.48 (nearly 1:11 ahead of the silver medallist)  
10K Road Racewalk: 1:03:24 (nearly 3 minutes ahead of the silver medallist)  
20K Road Racewalk: 2:11:06 (4:50 ahead of the silver medallist).

Elsa currently holds the following SA records:
65-69 5000m track Racewalk: 29:28.70 (Oudtshoorn, 2013)  
65-69 10km road Racewalk: 59:07 (Oudtshoorn, 2013)  
60-64 20km road Racewalk: 2:02:39 (Oudtshoorn, 2010)  
65-69 20km road Racewalk: 2:03:18 (Youngsfield, 2013)

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Although Elsa is a fierce competitor she is also quite fatalistic about racing; she says “A race is a race…and nothing more”. In general Elsa tries to walk to her best in a race rather than checking time much.

The masters racewalking event this year in Cape Town will be on Elsa’s 50th wedding anniversary and she hopes to celebrate with an SA and world record! In Perth she hopes to do very well and has her eye on a few South African records currently held by Annatjie Greyvenstein (5000m [31:26.25] and 10km [62:38]) as well as the 20km record of Hildegard Vey (2:15:42). The world record for 20km is well within her grasp – but of course, by then she may already hold it!

When I asked Elsa to leave us with something to think about she was quick to answer “Respect your fellow walkers!”

Source: Interviewed by ChrisC
What did the Olympics mean for me?

Anél Oosthuizen

For me the Olympic Games was a once in a lifetime experience. From qualifying for the Games to actually participating in the race, the experience is something you cannot describe to anyone who has not experienced it themselves.

Standing at the starting line about 30 seconds before the gun went off, I looked up and looked straight into the logo of Rio Olympics 2016. It felt surreal. Standing there between the best in the world was truly a dream come true!

The disappointment of not doing a PB, or even a good time for that matter, was devastating. But, amazingly, as soon as I finished, I started to receive messages from all over the world, some from people I didn’t even know, congratulating me. It was wonderful having all that support even though I felt disappointed, and that I had let down those around me.

The positivity from the people closest to me helped me realize that I was now an Olympian, regardless of how the race went, I finished. Not only am I incredibly grateful for such a wonderful opportunity, but also for an even more amazing support system that carried me through the good and not so good times.

I have realized over the past few years that you just have to have faith. Work hard and believe you can achieve it. It has been spectacular journey and I will forever be humbled by the experience.

Source: Anél Oosthuizen

Racewalking in the CGA until year end:
- 24 September T&F Germiston
- 1 October T&F Germiston
- 8 October T&F Germiston
- 23 October - Diepkloof 10km (League Race)
- 20 November Alberton 10 & 20km
- December - Princess Crossing (date to be confirmed)

AGN Racewalking event

Unfortunately this event which was due to be held in Pretoria in September has met with some setbacks, but it is hoped that we will soon have confirmation for a date in November.

Monthly one hour Challenge

Join other AGN Racewalkers on the track on the third Thursday of the month and experience the new Tuks track!

Source: Lucia Willemse, Chris Britz

Ethics in Racewalking

The IAAF definition of racewalking is “Race Walking is a progression of steps so taken that the walker makes contact with the ground, so that no visible (to the human eye) loss of contact occurs. The advancing leg shall be straightened (i.e. not bent at the knee) from the moment of first contact with the ground until the vertical upright position.” (Rule 230.1).

Because we do not generally have judges at our Saturday morning events in Pretoria – and due to the fact that most of the people wearing a “W” would probably be disqualified if the rules were strictly applied, it may be detrimental to have them applied to the entire field especially in the case of “bending”.

However, a heavy moral responsibility rests on the racewalkers that take part in Provincial, National and International events, to ensure that they provide a clear example at these races, and that they remain within the strict rules of the racewalking sport.

Because the Saturday races rely so heavily on the top walkers to remain strictly within the bounds of Rule 230 it is a great pity to see some walkers blatantly running to gain a small lead of 30 or 40 meters.

We often complain that our walkers are overlooked in regards to prize-money; however one of the counter arguments by organisers refers back to the legality of the walkers that are winning the prizes.

Come on Racewalkers show all the other walkers just how it should be done!

Source: Translated from input by Gerard van den Raad

Source: Lucia Willemse, Chris Britz
Men

Senior Men:
1. Sizwe Ndebele - Tuks-49:34
2. Tumosang Pule - Tuks-49:42

Men 35-39
1. Mzwakhe Kобue - Pmww-53:56

Women

Senior Women
1. Chanice Klink – Tuks - 59:46
2. Palesa Masheba – Tuks - 01:10:17

Women 30-34
1. Natalie Lubbe – Love Running - 01:12:11

Women 35-39
1. Rhoda Willemsae – Aurecon - 57:35

Women 44
1. Elma King - Agape - 01:11:52
2. K Moatshe – Pmw - 01:20:30

Women 45-49
1. Marlaan Serdyn - Pmw-01:04:32
2. Stienie Kompagne – Transnet - 01:12:43
3. Isabel van der Schyff – Pmw - 01:22:24

Women 50-54
1. Celeste Schepers - Pmw- 01:03:56
2. Celeste Ruck – Love Running - 01:05:36
3. Petra van Rensburg – RWFL - 01:11:01

Women 55-59
1. Sandra Steenkamp – Irene - 57:02
2. Anet Muller – Irene - 01:12:41

Women 60-64
1. Retha Knoetze – Pmw – 01:07:15
2. Lucia Willemsae – Irene – 01:08:40
3. Hannelie Roothman – RWFL - 01:26:57

Women 65-69
1. Letha Kotze – Irene - 01:17:22

Women 70-74
1. Elsa Meyer - Irene-01:03:34;
2. Kiebet Strauss – Agape - 01:19:12
3. Dorothy van Heerden – Fit 2000 - 01:28:50

NOTE: I am but human, I make mistakes. If anything here is incorrect don’t tell your friends and family – tell me! In that way I can correct it and the correct figures will appear in future.

Good advice from Jürgen Spencer

Feeling at times down a bit, having too many rest days per week with many other priorities, when things are not going quite right? It happens to all of us at some time or the other. When motivation is lacking and a “pick me up” is required, then Dave Mc Govern and Tim Seaman, have some advice: - “You are in control of your own racewalking destiny. Set ambitious but reasonable goals for yourself, make a plan to achieve them, visualize your goals becoming reality, then stick to your plan and make it so. Let each small victory motivate you to raise the bar a bit higher, then visualize yourself achieving the next success.”...“If you can’t imagine racing fast and with perfect technique, and if you don’t believe you can beat your rivals and your best times, you’re probably right.”...“During competitions, stay alert and in control of your mind. Challenge the negative thoughts with positives at all cost. Your brain will try to make you slow down when things start to hurt. Be ready for it, and don’t let it happen. There are always two feuding influences in your head during competitions, the one that wants to be a champion, and the one that wants to go home and take a nap. It’s up to you to decide which will come out on top. After a race write in your training log, what went right and wrong. If you don’t know your own history, you’re doomed to repeating your mistakes, and failing to replicate your successes.”

Further, Tim Seaman recalled: - “I’ve always trained hard, but I try to never let it get in the way of me having fun. The key to racing and training well is really to have fun with what you are doing. If you are not having fun, you will not do well. You and you alone must want to do this, and you and you alone will be the person who has to make most of the sacrifices. But sharing the good times, as well as the tough times, with other likeminded athletes really makes the tough times and hard workouts and races a lot easier to handle. Take it easy and enjoy yourself is the only way to stay motivated in your training, and you should make sure that you’re having fun when competing in races as well. Don’t dread them. Take them as opportunities to test yourself, not as pressure packed do-or-die situations.”

Source: Jürgen Spencer
Masters News

The SAMA champs 2017 will be hosted by WP Masters at the Green Point Stadium in Cape Town, on the 4th, 5th and 6th May 2017.

International news

Statement from Evan Dunfee on the 50km racewalk result

What a day. 4th place at the Olympics in a new National Record. I couldn’t be more proud of my efforts out on the course today, I know that I left everything I possibly had out there and I can’t ask for anything more than that.

As many of your know after the race I was temporarily upgraded to the Bronze medal due to a disqualification of the Japanese athlete after an altercation we had around the 49th mark. Following the race our coaching staff asked for a review of the video at which point the track referee decided that an infraction had taken place. Following that the Japanese, as is their right, filed an appeal. This afternoon we learned that this appeal was successful and he had been reinstated to the Bronze medal position.

It was then left for me to decide whether to pursue this further with an appeal to the Court of Arbitration for Sport. Following my return to the village and my viewing of the incident I made the decision not to appeal, as I believe the right decision stood.

Not many people can understand the pain athletes are in three and a half hours into such a gruelling race. I believe that both the Japanese athlete and myself got tangled up but what broke me was that I let it put me off mentally and once I lost that focus, my legs went to jello. Contact is part of our event; whether written or unwritten and is quite common, and I don’t believe that this was malicious or done with intent.

So, I went….

However he came back every time to be a part of the race. I never allow myself to be defined by the accolades I receive, rather the integrity I carry through life.

Finally, thank you to everyone who supported myself and my teammate Mathieu Bilodeau today. To see race walk receiving such a wide reception is absolutely amazing! My teammates and my competitors in this event never cease to inspire me and I hope that we have done the same to you today.

Evan Dunfee

Well said Evan – you are a true Olympian! (ed.)

Source: http://athletics.ca/

Tough Diniz fights to the end

Although many people do not credit racewalking, the Olympic 50km event in Rio showed once again just how difficult the sport can be. Although he did not feature on the podium Yohann Diniz stood out as having completed an heroic race!

The 38 year-old Diniz holds the world record over the distance but the Rio race was perhaps the toughest that he has had to walk! He was clearly in pain, he was dehydrated, and appeared to have diarrhoea.

Source: NBC

Race footage showed Diniz struggling with blood running down the backs of his legs. Diniz stopped at least once and also collapsed on the road at about 36 km. However he came back every time to finish in eighth place in 3:46:43! He was taken to hospital after the race where he made a quick recovery.

In an interview Diniz said: “I didn’t know where I was, straight away I had massive gastro problems, which quickly got worse and I started bleeding from the 12th kilometre… I didn’t even know what direction I had to go on the road… I was in a lot of pain.”

In hot and humid conditions, 19 athletes retired from the race.


Editorial

September is always a very busy month for me since I breed Clivias and I take part in speaking competitions. This year it meant 3 speaking competitions and two Clivia shows. To top it all I had to plan in a trip to my sisters 80th Birthday celebrations! The result is a delayed newsletter.

But I am now centred on racewalking again, and working hard on my preparation for the interprovincial on the 8th October. My biggest problems with training in Port Elizabeth are to find good courses. The beachfront is remarkable short when you are training…

From here I am off to Cape Town (Kuils River) – where good courses may still be a problem!

Any PE or Cape Town walkers that can advise me on good routes please contact me and let me know where the best places to train are.

Remember that the website for back issues is http://racewalking.letlapa.com and please contribute to the facebook page (South African racewalkers).

Make this YOUR newsletter rather than mine – be a part of the fabric of South African Racewalking.

Contact me

Chris Callaghan: Chrisc37@gmail.com

Love Running: Sport for the Glory of God

“To walk is to live, to walk fast is to live well.”

If you want to receive this newsletter in your inbox, you need to email me and ask!