



HEEL AND TOE ONLINE

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PAUL F DEMEESTER TALKS RACEWALKING

Thanks to US Attorney at Law Paul F. DeMeester for another wonderful article - the 41st in a row – and it's as good as ever. You can see links to all Paul's articles at the bottom of webpage <http://www.vrwc.org.au/save-the-50km.shtml>.

BREAKING UP IS HARD TO DO BUT OFTEN BENEFITS ATHLETES

By Paul F. DeMeester

Back in 1962, Neil Sedaka sang to the world that *Breaking Up Is Hard To Do*. No qualms with that, but once the break-up has been achieved, athletes often are the incidental beneficiaries. No, I'm not referring to lovers breaking up. I'm talking about countries splitting up. Take the Soviet Union, for instance. In 1991, the country ceased to exist. Fifteen countries took its place: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Estonia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan. Quite a plethora of nations coming out of just one country.

The impact of such a split on sports is huge. International sports federations and the International Olympic Committee (IOC) organize their major competitions based on nation states. Sure, they try to dress it up as if they don't, by referencing member federations and National Olympic Committees in their governing documents. But the bottom line is that athletes end up representing their nations at the Olympics, various World Championships and the FIFA World Cup. In athletics, that means that no more than three athletes per country may be entered in an Olympic or World Championship event (the latter has an exception for a fourth spot for the incumbent world champion). If you're a 100m runner in the USA or a 50K race walker in Japan, that three-per-event limit can work in oppressive ways. Just ask Hirooki Arai, who progressed from fourth at the 2015 World Championships, to bronze at Rio 2016, to silver at the London 2017 World Championships, then to the top step of the 50K podium at the 2018 Taicang World Race Walking Team Championships. But his fourth place at the 2019 Japanese National 50K Championships in 3:43:02 made him the first walker in that race to be left off the Japanese team that went to compete at the World Championships later that year in Doha. For better or worse, that's the system we are stuck with.

The Soviet Union first participated in the Olympics in 1952, landing a spot on the race walk podium right away with Bruno Junk in the 10K. Four years later, the Soviets locked out the 20K podium and obtained silver in the 50K. Guess who they did not select for Melbourne? The 20-year old 20K world record holder Vladimir Golubnichy. Such was their depth in the race walking field. Had Ukraine been a country then, Golubnichy could have made it to Melbourne. But the Soviet selectors left him out. Without Melbourne, Golubnichy still made it to five other Olympics; each time contesting the 20K. And how: gold in Rome and Mexico City, bronze in Tokyo, silver in Munich, and seventh at age 40 in Montreal (1976). At the 1968 Olympics, he was joined on the podium by a fellow Ukrainian, Nikolay Smaga who won bronze. Four years later, Smaga was fifth in the Munich 20K. Ukraine would have been a powerhouse in race walking all on its own, a tradition that continues, most recently with Maryan Zakalnytsky beating Olympic champion Matej Tóth to 2018 European 50K gold in Berlin. That race had three walkers from Ukraine, one from Belarus, two from Lithuania, and one from Latvia. In the old days, when all those countries were part of the Soviet Union, only three of those seven walkers could have participated in the European Championships. And don't forget, one of those countries has been missing from major competitions due to systemic drug problems, Russia. No doubt the Russians would have fielded full teams in each race walking event.

The Soviet 1972 Olympic 50K silver medalist Veniamin Soldatenko (1972) was from Kazakhstan. Forty years later, Kazakhstan sent one 50K walker to the 2012 Olympics in London, to compete with three Russians (all disqualified later), three Ukrainians, one walker from Belarus, and one each from Lithuania, Georgia and Latvia. That's 11 walkers at the London 2012 Olympics from countries that used to be part of the Soviet Union. At both the 2000 Sydney Olympics and the 2008 Beijing Olympics, there were 12 walkers from the former Soviet Union in the 50K. In Sydney, Latvia sent a full team of three, with great success, as Aigars Fadejevs won the silver medal, with his colleagues in 9th and 35th positions.

Another example of more race walkers getting an Olympic team spot when their country splits is Czechoslovakia, which dissolved into the Czech Republic and Slovakia on 1 January 1993. The year before, Czechoslovakia had sent three 50K race walkers to the

1992 Barcelona Olympics. Four years later, in Atlanta, Slovakia sent three 50K walkers and the Czech Republic sent two. Those five selections would have to fit into three had the country not split.

Country splitting appears to be good for athletes. Footballers also benefit. Serbia and Croatia made it to the FIFA World Cup Finals in Russia in 2018. Back in the 1974 World Cup in Germany, and the 1990 World Cup in Italy, those two nations were still part of Yugoslavia, which made it to both those Finals. Currently, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, and Slovenia, are all vying for a spot in the Finals to be held in Qatar in 2022. These seven are the successor states of the former Yugoslavia, which had a population of about 24 million when it broke up back in 1991. Instead of one team of 23 footballers trying to qualify for the World Cup Finals, a total of 161 footballers now get that chance. Breaking up countries certainly opens up athletic opportunities. China, India, USA, are you listening?

Our British football friends somehow get the benefit of breaking up without actually having to do so. England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales all field teams for the FIFA World Cup, even though all four belong to the same country. Neither World Athletics nor the IOC grants them that same privilege. Some athletes, however, are unlucky enough to belong to countries that merge with other countries. At the 1972 Olympics, both East and West Germany fielded full teams in both the 20K and 50K race walks. By 1992, there were only three spots available in that event for Germany, after East and West reunited.

Athletes have little say, however, as to how their national borders are drawn or in which country they are born (they can change nationality but that may be complicated by transfer of allegiance restrictions). One has to feel sorry for the 5th ranked Japanese or Chinese 20K race walker, male or female. They would be top of the list in many countries but not their own. Could the system be different? Sure, now that we have World Rankings, the powers that be could decide to let the top sixty athletes in an event compete at the World Championships or the Olympics, regardless of where they are from. Instead of being funded by the member federations, the Olympic or World Athletics organizers could fund their travel and stay. After all, they are wallowing in sponsor and media rights cash. Of course, such a system would open all kinds of political cans of worms, so don't expect any changes. Nor am I saying that such a system should be adopted. The national identity aspect of sports is what fuels public interest. And maybe there would be less media interest (and that is worth money) if all or most of the 100m runners at the Olympics were from the USA and Jamaica, all the marathon runners from Kenya, and all the 50K walkers from China and Japan. Breaking up the existing qualification system is hard to do. Just ask Neil Sedaka.

WHAT'S COMING UP

I hope everyone is enjoying a well earned break over the Christmas / New Year period. We won't have to wait long until our summer racewalking season resumes in 2021. The upcoming Victorian dates for January read as follows

Jan 16 (Sat), 2021	AVSL Round 5 (no walks)	Various venues
Jan 17 (Sun), 2021	VRWC Road Walks	Middle Park
Jan 22-24, 2121	Victorian Country Track & Field Championships	Ballarat
Jan 27 (Wed), 2021	VRWC Track Races	Mentone

Note that our VRWC Summer Season will resume on Sunday 17th January 2021, with road races at Middle Park. Check out our full summer season fixture at <http://www.vrwc.org.au/vrwcs21.shtml>.

There is big news for **Victorian Park Run** competitors - see <https://blog.parkrun.com/au/2020/12/17/parkrun-australia-covid-19-coronavirus-update-17-december/>.

The Victorian Government has now clarified that parkrun events in Victoria can reopen in accordance with Tier 3 of the Government's public events regulations, which applies to public events up to 1,000 participants. All 90 Victorian parkrun and junior parkrun events in Victoria will reopen on Saturday 16th January 2021 and Sunday 17th January 2021. I can hardly wait!

MARCIADALMONDO AND OMARCHADOR ROUNDUP

Marciadalmondo has 4 press releases this week

- Mon 28 Dec - The best Italian female walkers for 2019
http://www.marciadalmondo.com/eng/dettagli_news.aspx?id=3946
- Fri 25 Dec - Beijing (CHN) - 2012 Olympic walks medals finally awarded to 3 Chinese walkers
http://www.marciadalmondo.com/eng/dettagli_news.aspx?id=3945
- Thu 24 Dec - 2020 race walk review
http://www.marciadalmondo.com/eng/dettagli_news.aspx?id=3944
- Wed 23 Dec - Peter Fullager (AUS) passes away
http://www.marciadalmondo.com/eng/dettagli_news.aspx?id=3943

Omarchador has 7 press releases.

- Sun 27 Dec - The death of Portuguese coach and administrator Eduardo Cunha (1926-2020) <https://omarchador.blogspot.com/2020/12/eduardo-cunha-1926-2020.html>
- Sun 27 Dec - Walk results from the 100th Argentinian Athletics Championships <https://omarchador.blogspot.com/2020/12/a-marcha-no-100-campeonato-argentino-de.html>
- Sun 26 Dec - Walk results from the Brazilian Masters Championships <https://omarchador.blogspot.com/2020/12/campeonato-paulista-de-atletismo-master.html>
- Thu 24 Dec - Suquin (China): Kaihua Wang and Jiayu Yang win 15km walks <https://omarchador.blogspot.com/2020/12/kaihua-wang-e-jiayu-yang-vencem-os-15.html>
- Wed 23 Dec - World Athletics 2021 World Challenge events <https://omarchador.blogspot.com/2020/12/as-provas-do-challenge-mundial-da-world.html>
- Wed 23 Dec - Walk results ath the Peruvian Athletics Championships <https://omarchador.blogspot.com/2020/12/20000-m-marcha-nos-campeonatos-peruanos.html>
- Tue 22 Dec - Results of the Brazilian U23 Athletics Championships in Bragança Paulista <https://omarchador.blogspot.com/2020/12/campeonatos-brasileiros-caixa-sub-23-de.html>

SKIPTON INTERNATIONAL 3KM WALK, CAMBRIDGE PARK, ST PETER PORT, GUERNSEY, SUN 27 DEC

No walk results from Australia this week, but I can report on one event, apart from the ones documented in the marciadalmondo and omarchador press releases above.

Rob Elliott for Sarnia Walking Club reports on the latest walk from the English Channel island of Guernsey.

Stuart Le Noury brought the Sarnia Walking Clubs racing year to a close with another easy win in the Skipton International 3km walk. Walkers had to contend with the debris thrown around from the previous night's winds, with twigs and puddles around the park course. Stuart crossed the line in 15.17, well ahead of second placed **Rob Elliott**. **Phil Lockwood** held off **Kevin Le Noury** for third, with **Mick Le Sauvage** bringing the walkers home in 22.40

3km Road Walk

Stuart Le Noury	M35	15.17
Rob Elliott	M60	18.56
Phil Lockwood	M45	20.54
Kevin Le Noury	M60	21.25
Mick Le Sauvage	M80	22.40

OUT AND ABOUT

- Sadly, Australia says goodbye to another of our elderly walkers, with Australian Centurion **Merv Lockyer** (C30) passing away on Thursday 24th December. Ballarat based Merv made history in 1996 when he completed his 100 mile walk in 23:45:51. At 65 years of age, he became the oldest walker to join the club. What made his walk even more meritorious was the fact that he had suffered a heart attack some 5 years before, and completed his walk after undergoing a complete knee replacement! What a legend. You can read more about Merv at <http://www.centurions.org.au/centprofiles/30%20merv%20lockyer.pdf>.
- I let readers know in last week's newsletter about the untimely passing of UK/Australian racewalking representative **Peter Fullager**. Peter's funeral service will be held in Adelaide, at the Semaphore Uniting Church, at 10AM on Tuesday 5th January . I will be driving to Adelaide to attend and pay my respects to a great friend and a great ambassador for our sport.
- WMA has made the decision to postpone the 2021 WMA Championships in Tampere, Finland until 2022. See the WMA announcement at <https://world-masters-athletics.com/news/letter-from-wma-president-margit-jungmann/>.
- Tokyo 2020 has revealed the details of its version five budget following the postponement of the Olympic and Paralympic Games in the Japanese capital. Compared to the version four Organising Committee budget, total expenses have increased by \$900 million to a total of \$6.7 billion. I can't even comprehend that amount of money being spent on ONE event. See <https://www.insidethegames.biz/articles/1102308/tokyo-2020-reveal-version-five-budget>.
- The 2021 edition of New York City's historic Millrose Games has been cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandems. This would have been the 114th edition. A lost opportunity for our USA based walkers. It was due to take place on Saturday 13th

February at The Armory in New York. See <https://www.insidethegames.biz/articles/1102372/millrose-games-cancelled-due-to-covid-19>.

- Readers will be familiar with the work of Stefano La Sorda (the man who came up with the Save-the-50km crossed arms campaign). He has pointed me to a new article he has just written - see <https://lamarcia.com/en/2020/12/27/today-is-my-birthday-savetheracewalking>. Stefano maintains his rage at the demise of the 50km.

2021 WORLD ATHLETICS RACE WALK CHALLENGE

World Athletics has announced the competitions that will make up the 2021 World Athletics Race Walk Challenge. World Athletics will be hoping to resume normal competition after the covid pandemic is brought under control. As usual, Taicang will start the Challenge as the inaugural meet, followed by the traditional meets in Rio Maior and La Coruña. The full list reads as follows

Mar 27 (Sat), 2021	RW Challenge Meet, Taicang (CHN)
Apr 10 (Sat), 2021	Rio Grande International Grand Prix, Rio Maior (POR)
May 29 (Sat), 2021	Gran Premio Cantones de La Coruña, La Coruna (ESP)
Aug, 2021	Olympic Games, Sapporo (JAP)
Oct 9 (Sat), 2021	RW Challenge Meet, Mexico City (MEX)
Oct 16 (Sat), 2021	Invitational Race Walking Meeting, Coatzacoalcos (MEX)

DATES...DATES...DATES

As usual, I finish with a list of upcoming events on the local, national and international fronts. Let me know of any errors/omissions. It continues to change quickly as a result of COVID-19 issues.

For VRWC race details, see <http://www.vrwc.org.au/vrwc21.shtml>

For Ballarat Race Walkers Club race details, see <https://www.ballaratracewalkers.com/wp/>

For the Athletics Australia summer fixture, see <https://cdn.revolutionise.com.au/cups/aa/files/aexjryarznk08gxh.pdf>

Victorian Key Dates – Summer 2020/2021

Jan 16 (Sat), 2021	AVSL Round 5 (no walks)	Various venues
Jan 17 (Sun), 2021	VRWC Road Walks	Middle Park
Jan 22-24, 2021	Victorian Country Track & Field Championships	Ballarat
Jan 27 (Wed), 2021	VRWC Track Races	Mentone
Feb 6 (Sat), 2021	AVSL Round 6 (no walks)	Various venues
Feb 10 (Wed), 2021	AV 5000m Teams Race Championship	Mentone
Feb 13 (Sat), 2021	AVSL Round 7 (events TBA)	Various venues
Feb 14 (Sun), 2021	VRWC Road Walks	Middle Park
Feb 14 (Sun), 2021	Australian 20km Roadwalk Championships	Adelaide, SA
	Entries close on Monday 1 st February - https://www.athletics.com.au/events/83392/	
Feb 19-21, 2021	Victorian T&F Championships (Weekend 1)	Lakeside Stadium
Feb 26-28, 2021	Victorian T&F Championships (Weekend 2)	Lakeside Stadium
Mar 5-8, 2021	Australian Masters Championships	Canberra, ACT
Mar 6 (Sat), 2021	AVSL Round 8 (events TBA)	Various venues
Mar 13 (Sat), 2021	AVSL Round 9 (events TBA)	Various venues
Mar 20 (Sat), 2021	AVSL Round 10 (events TBA)	Various venues
Mar 21 (Sun), 2021	VMA 5000m Walk Championship	Mentone
Mar 27 (Sat), 2021	Australian 50km Championship (Men)	VIC
Mar 27 (Sat), 2021	AVSL Playoffs	Lakeside Stadium
Apr 12-21, 2021	Australian Athletics Championships	TBA
Apr 23-24, 2021	Australian Little Athletics Championships	VIC
Apr 24-25, 2021	Victorian Masters T&F Championships	Doncaster

2021 World Athletics Race Walk Challenge

Mar 27 (Sat), 2021	RW Challenge Meet, Taicang, CHN
Apr 10 (Sat), 2021	Rio Grande International Grand Prix, Rio Maior, POR
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Aug, 2021	Olympic Games, Sapporo, JAP
Oct 9 (Sat), 2021	RW Challenge Meet, Mexico City, MEX
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Other International Dates

May 16, 2021	European Race Walking Team Championships, Podebrady, CZE
July 23 – Aug 8, 2021	32nd Olympic Games, Tokyo and Sapporo
July, 2021	23rd World Masters T&F Championships , Tampere, Finland (NOW POSTPONED TILL 2022)
Aug 8-19, 2021	World University Summer Games , Chengdu, China

Aug 20-21, 2021 **18th World Athletics U20 T&F Championships**, Nairobi, Kenya (POSTPONED FROM 2020)

Jan 2022 **Oceania Masters Championships**, Norfolk Island (POSTPONED FROM JANUARY 2020)
TBA, 2022 **9th World Masters Indoor T&F Championships**, Edmonton, Canada
Apr 23-24, 2022 **29th World Athletics Race Walking Team Championships**, Minsk, Belarus
July 15-24, 2022 **18th World Athletics Championships**, Eugene, USA
July 27 - Aug 7, 2022 **XXII Commonwealth Games**, Birmingham, GBR
Aug 11-21, 2022 **European Athletics Championships**, Munich, GER
TBA, 2022 **19th World Athletics U20 T&F Championships**, Cali, Colombia

TBA, 2023 **24th World Masters T&F Championships**, Gothenburg Sweden
Aug 2023 (TBC) **19th World Athletics Championships**, Budapest, Hungary

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