

## **2016 Race Walk Committee Annual Report**

### **Ron Daniel, Chairman's Report**

#### **Topics Reported on:**

International Team Trials & Events; Youth Video, Pan Am Cup Team Standards (proposed); Standards & Field Sizes; Face Book Slams on US World Team; Race Walk Strategy for US Growth

### **INTERNATIONAL TRIALS & EVENTS**

#### **Olympic Trials - 50k**

While the 50k Olympic Trials (which was also the IAAF World Team 50k Trial) was held in 2016, this report begins with the Nov, 2015, National 50k Championship.

At that time, the 50k Olympic Trials qualifying standard was 4:45 (this standard was set before I was Chairman). It was also decided that the 2016 50k OT would also be the 2016 50k National Championship. That was done in order to provide Prize money to the top eight trials finishers. There is no OT specific prize money, only prize money for the National Championship. It was believed that the 50k National Championship, which normally has no qualifying standard, could be entered along with the OT race.

Coming out of the 2015 50k, there were only five walkers who had made the 4:45. And, one of these five was Patrick Stroupe who subsequently retired. Now, we're down to four starters. Because of the very small numbers, I lowered the OT qualifying standard to 5:15. Within the same week, the IAAF lowered their Olympic Games standard from 4:03 to 4:06.

Both of these changes had a curious affect on our up coming OT. During the Nat 50k, Nick Christie was shooting for a sub 4:03. When it looked like he wasn't going to make that, he coasted to the finish in order to save himself for the upcoming Olympic Trials 50k; he finished in 4:11. Had he had known that the OG standard was going to be 4:06, had he kept pushing, he may have been able to get that! During the National 50k, when Steve Washburn (first 50k, just 22) fell off the 4:45 pace, he dropped out (instruction from coach) at 40k believing that he would still be able to enter the 2016 National 50k (but not the OT). This would give him an opportunity to try for the IAAF World Team where we had a qualifying standard of 4:35. Jonathan Matthews made a similar decision when he realized he wasn't going to make the 4:45. Both would have certainly made the 5:15 Olympic Trials standard. After the National 50k there were still only nine with a 5:15 or better performance. To his credit, Dave McGovern, turned in a legal 50k at the end of 2015 of 5:14:34 to get into the OT. Now, we have ten!

Now it got tricky. In order to allow Steven Washburn and Jonathan Matthews into the Trials, I would have to invite any other walkers who had a legitimate

performance in the qualifying period. With a 'field size' of 15, I was able to get Steven and Jonathan into the Olympic Trials.

Ultimately, John Nunn made the US Olympic Team. Nick Christie, Michael Mannozi and Matt Fourges , qualified for the World Team with sub 4:35 performances.

Both Championships were held in Santee, CA

### **Olympic Trials – 20k.**

In the Fall of 2015, Salem, OR was selected as the site of the 20k OT. Tracy Sundlun was chosen as the Race Director. This necessitated two trips on my part to Salem to oversee the Trials plans. That included working with Tracy to select the course and agreeing on the positioning and moving of the judges for the trials.

As the 20k Trials date approached, some of the same issues regarding the number of starters were being discussed. During a phone conversation with USATF regarding this topic, I was informed that because the 'field size' was 15, I had to go down a performance list and take up to 15 performers even if they didn't have the standard. Had this information been known at the time of the 50k Trial, much of that hassle would have been eliminated. No one on the RW Exec Comm was aware of this either. More on STANDARDS & FIELD sizes at the end of the report.

After a somewhat shaky start (concerns about the location, starting time, course), in my opinion, I felt that the 20k OT in Salem was a very good success. Those that were there are free to voice their opinions'. Salem was a good choice to showcase race walking; but, yes, it lacked the HAYWARD FIELD backdrop. Due to the pre-race efforts of Erin Gray, there were about 2500 spectators lining the course and constantly cheering.

Both Olympic Trials under the direction of Tracy Sundlun were great successes. The special attention given to the athletes and officials in Salem was especially well appreciated. In the week before the competition, the starting time was adjusted from 10:30am to 9:00am as a concern for the weather arose.

Maria Michta-Coffey and Miranda Melville, who had previously made the IAAF standard, surpassed the standard that day while making the US Olympic Team.

The one BIG frown on the OT was the procedural error made at the Recording / Red Card Posting Board. A Red Card came in on athlete #18, Erin Gray; however, #8 was placed on the Posting Board. When the 2<sup>nd</sup> RC came in on Erin, it showed up as only the first RC on the PB. Just before 10k, the 3<sup>rd</sup> RC came in on Erin. As Maryanne Daniel (Chief Judge) was being called to notify Erin that she was DQd, the PB operator spotted her error. Erin was quite irate when she was shown the Red Paddle because all she'd ever seen on the PB was one RC. While her father filed a Protest, it was denied on the basis that there was no Rule violation. The PB is mainly an aid for the athlete. Unfortunately, in this case not a very good aid. The

lesson learned is that the Recorder must frequently check the PB for accuracy. The Recorder and PB Operator are both very experienced in those positions.

### **IAAF World Team Trials**

The Racewalkers' Club of St. Louis hosted the IAAF World Team Trials. While there were four races (M&W 20k, M&W 10k) conducted, they were held concurrently. Even though it was windy, there were several PRs for the day. With the 50k Team decided in Feb, the full team was now available.

With John Nunn deciding to not go to Rome, IT and Nick Christie going for the Olympic Games standard at 50k, we were left with only two men qualifying at 20k. After reviewing the results, I felt that it was worth asking the RW Exec Comm to add Anthony Peters (next finisher in line) to the Team. By adding Anthony, that would make a complete scoring 20k team. In his first year after being a Junior, Anthony was making terrific gains. He was only 94 seconds off the standard. By an overwhelming majority, Anthony was added.

By the end of the following week, things got real interesting.

With only three weeks until the World Team Championships, the IAAF announced that there would be women allowed in the otherwise known men's 50k. It was now a gender-neutral 50k, i.e. there would only be a single team competition at 50k. Any women entered would score amongst the men.

Before the Exec Comm was convened on April 12, a Italian newspaper stated that Erin Taylor-Talcott would be representing the US at 50k in the World Team Championships; within the same week, USATF put out a news release saying the same thing. While it seems to have been any easy choice to add Erin, she was not the next finisher at the 50k Trials. That position was held by Steven Washburn. Following protocol, Steven had to be proposed before Erin. Even though neither had made the 4:35 standard, it was argued that we had just added Anthony Peters who also hadn't made the standard. Steven and Erin were added at 50k.

Now things got even more complex. Tim Seaman requested that since we were affectively now selecting the World Team outside of the Trials, he requested that we allow Matt Forgues (his athlete) to race the 20k (he was next in line) instead of doing a third 50k within the year. That now opened up another spot on the 50k Team. We concluded the meeting by agreeing to have full Teams at all race distances. The US Team was now 21 athletes, up from 17. We also had three staff plus two medical members.

All-in-all, we still had a respectable team for the IAAF World Team Championships.

### **IAAF World Team Championships, Rome, Italy**

In 2015, the Pan Am Cup was held in Arica, Chile. A main concern of the US athletes was that because of the nearly 20 hours of travel, the arrival on Thursday did not provide sufficient recovery time for the Saturday, Sunday races.. For the trip to Rome, USATF allowed travel from home to commence on the Tuesday before the Sat – Sun competitions. That was well received.

With most everyone arriving by Wednesday, the Team was looking forward to a better than usual performance. What no one was expecting was a flu like ‘bug’ wiping out, nearly, the whole women’s team (including Maria who was a DNF for the first time ever) and a couple of the guys.

In spite of the ‘bug’, there were several very good performances. First, the PB’s: Steven Washburn had a greater than twelve minutes PB (4:28:20) in his second full 50k, and finished the year as the third ranked US 50k walker; Anthony Peters with a plus two minute PB (1:31:19) , finished as the number two US walker; Meaghan Podloski with a new US U-20 Record of 49:57; Anali Cisneros missed her PB by one second (50:38); Alex Bellavance, 47:38. Other very good performances: Miranda Melville, 1:34:10, made Olympic Standard once again; Matt Forgues, 1:35:42 (only 42 seconds off his PB), third US; and, Cameron Haught, 45:42.

Needless to say, after the competition there were several Face Book slams on the US Team. More on this at the end of the report.

### **IAAF U-20 World Championships, Bydgoszcz, Poland**

Thirty five of the Worlds best U-20 women met for an evening competition with temps in the mid 70’s. Meaghan Podlaski and Anali Cisneros both had the same goal in mind; break 49:00 for 10,000m. At 5000m, Meaghan held a 5 sec lead over Anali with a time of 24:28.00. They were still together with 1500m to go, when Meaghan ‘ran out of gas!’ Anali went on to set a new US U-20, 10,000m record at 49:31.88 (25<sup>th</sup>) and Meaghan at 50:21.22 (28<sup>th</sup>). The winning time was 45:18. It was great year for both Anali & Meaghan.

### **US vs. CAN Jr Dual Meet**

In this 28<sup>th</sup> edition of the US v CAN Junior Dual competition, the US Men defeated the Canadian Men’s team, 16 to 7; the US Women defeated the Canadian Women, 16 to 6. AJ Gruttadauro had a terrific PB of 46:33 to easily defeat Cameron Haught, 48:07 as they went 1-2. The US women went 1, 2, 3 with Anali Cisneros (25:00) finishing just 14 seconds ahead of Meaghan Podloski (25:14), Lauren Harris finished a very close third in 25:17.

### **NACAC U-23, San Salvador, El Salvador**

San Salvador, El Salvador – In high temps and 99% humidity, Anthony Peters did very well finishing 2<sup>nd</sup> (1:35:04.77) 32 seconds out of 1<sup>st</sup>; Steve Washburn was 5<sup>th</sup>, 1:46:21.86. In the woman’s race, Molly Josephs also finished 2<sup>nd</sup> (53:34.86), the winning time 49:24.70 was a new meet record; Jennifer Lopez was 4<sup>th</sup> in 58:29.16.

### **Olympic Games, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil**

All three of our athletes performed very well under the hot and humid conditions in Rio. Three time Olympian, John Nunn finished in 4:16:12, 43<sup>rd</sup>. Two time Olympian, Maria Michta-Coffey finished strongly in 1:33:36, 22<sup>nd</sup>. And, first time Olympian, Miranda Melville, finished very well in 1:35:48, 34<sup>th</sup>

### **Youth Video**

This video is most useful for coaches, parents and judges who are participating at the Youth Championships. It shows demonstrations of the various faults one sees at the youth championships races. There are also scenes of what legal race walking looks like. During the course of the video, the rules of race walking are presented as the scenes are shown. It was first presented during the Youth Committee meeting at the 2015 Annual Meeting; it was placed on the USATF web site in March 2016.

### **Pan Am Cup Team Standards (Proposed)**

At the Feb Exec Mtg, the following standards were agreed upon, with further discussion regarding the Women's 50k standard

Men, 20k: 1:35 new (old 1:36)

Women 20k, 1:45 new (old 1:48)

Men 50k, 4:40 new (old 4:45)

Women 50k, 4:45 (assuming there is a NACAC or PAC division)

Jr Men, 10k, 50:00

Jr. Women, 10k 54:30

50k Qual Period, Oct 25, 2015 (date of 2015, 30k) to March 13, 2017

10k & 20k Qual Period, Oct 25, 2015 (date of 2015, 30k) to \*\* mid April, 2017

At the May meeting, the women's 50k standard was amended to 5:10

The decision to announce these standards at this time is so that anyone wishing to have a PAC qualifying standard would know more than a year in advance. At that time, there was no host for the 10k, 20k PAC Trials; that date is now known to be April 2, 2017 in Philadelphia, PA.

### **Standards and Field Sizes.**

Now that we, the RW Committee, is aware that we can set the Field Size along with the Standard, my proposal, is to have our standards be modestly difficult but limit the Field Size to whatever the number is that USATF will offer Travel Assistance to. If more make the standard than the Field Size, they are invited. If fewer make the standard, then additional walkers are invited, in performance list order, to fill the Field Size.

### **Face Book Slams on US World Team**

Ignoring the personal attacks on some Team members, I'm focusing on the challenges to our overall team depth. The critics offer no real solutions but merely parrot the usual suggestions (more HS, NCAA etc.); they don't realize the efforts that are being made. But one area we can delve into is the difficulty or lack there-of of our standards. Yes, we can make them tougher. Will that help, or drive away the

few dedicated athletes we have? Something to think about. To be discussed at a future meeting. For the moment, I'm encouraged by the young walkers that are showing great promise.

On our standards, I wish to remind everyone that three years ago I proposed a very modest toughening of our World Cup standard. They were to be either be at 70% of the average of the prior four sea level performance, or 80%. Collectively, the Committee went for the 80% level. Even there that would have been 4:22 for 50k. But because this was 'too' close to the 50k Trial, it was bumped back to 4:35.

While the IAAF praises the US for usually sending a full Team, that is not in our best interest. For the present, we should consider abandoning the Team element of the Team Championship, and do as many other federations do and just send only our very best walkers.

### **Race Walk Strategy for US Growth**

In January, 2015, I wrote this multifaceted 'strategy' in response to a question from Max Siegel, CEO-USATF; "What can USATF do for Race Walking?"

It is presented in three sections: 1. Education, Media Awareness; 2. Talent Initiative; and, 3. US Race Walking Centers. It is a five year plan.

The first section would be mostly driven by USATF, e.g. letters to NCAA, div. III, HS districts. The second, Talent Initiative, is where most of the action takes place. One or two race waling individuals (prefer coaches) would go to several sports events (triathlons, X-C Championship, X-C Skiing, etc.) interview & technically evaluate athletes that have an interest in representing the US. Choose the most fit and invite them to a training / evaluation camp for 7 to 10 days. Those that show the most 'kinesthetic' ability would move on. Their next stop is a more specific training site, again for 7 to 10 days. Those showing thee greatest potential would be offered more of the previous two steps. The third section, Centers of Excellence, is utilizing current 'centers' Ian Whatley, facility Greer, SC and Tim Seaman, in San Diego. These 'centers' would be made available to our current top race walkers.

This strategy was written in a bullet format; from that I then did a cost estimate. I presented this cost estimate to Mr. Siegel in Aug 2015. The first two years costed out at \$225K. Depending on the success to that point, the next three years would continue.

In Sept 2015, in a tele-con with Max Siegel, Duffy Mahoney, Chief of Sports Performance, Renee Washington, COO and Maryanne (Development sub-committee), we discussed the strategy. During the call, Max stated that because of the recent change to the Board of Directors, he no longer had the same control over projects. He then suggested that Duffy oversee the moving forward of the 'strategy'. At last year's Annual Meeting, Duffy request that two race walk athletes review the 'strategy'. Other than a very short conversation with one of the athletes, I didn't

receive any feedback. Nor were any reports made to Duffy. Subsequently, in a discussion with Duffy, he is looking at this being a 10 to 12 year project with more emphasis on the 'centers'. This plan would have the race walkers living at the 'center' for several years. This 'new' plan is to be further defined.