

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

# WALK!

MAGAZINE

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JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2009

**Setting  
Fitness Goals  
for the  
New Year**

**A Trek  
to the Foot of  
Mt. Everest**

**What is  
Walking  
Good For?**

**Thinking  
(and Walking)  
Tangentially**

**BIG SHOES TO FILL**  
Learning to Snowshoe

**Eastler  
Retires**



Happy New Year!

When a new year starts we



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# WALK! MAGAZINE

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## ▶ FEATURES

### 3 Staying On Track This Winter

By Caroline Samson

Winter is the perfect time to check in with your nutrition, to increase your knowledge and awareness, and to evaluate your eating habits.

### 5 Big Shoes to Fill

By Brierly Ostrander

A woman accustomed to harsh winters discovers she can maintain an outdoor walking program no matter how deep the snow gets.

### 19 Breathing is Fundamental: A Trek to the Foot of Mt. Everest

By Kirk Markus and Jeff Salvage

It's hard to imagine any other trek that offers as much classic Himalayan scenery step after step, day after day, than the trek to the foot of Mt. Everest.

### 23 Training with Larry

By Larry Smith

After a year of following Larry Smith as he trained for a Fall marathon, the results are in! See how Larry fared.

## ▶ COLUMNS

### 11 From the Start

**What is Walking Good For?**

By Bonnie Stein, MEd, CPTS

### 12 Racewalking

**Kevin Eastler Retires**

By Tim Seaman

### 17 Canadian Connection

**Canadian Racewalkers of the Year**

By Roger Burrows

### 22 Coach's Corner

**Thinking (and Walking) Tangentially**

By Dave McGovern

### 26 I Am A Walker

Featuring Wendy Bumgardner

### 27 Event Calendar

## ▶ ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

### 8 Setting Fitness Goals

By David Sabgir, MD

Odds are you have already made some fitness resolutions for 2009. If you are like Dr. Sabgir, you wouldn't mind some more—if they work.

### 9 More Than Medals

By Brandon Favela

Thanks to euphoria Favela hatched a plan to complete four marathons within 30 days.

### 15 Don't Fight Them - Join them

By Dave Kendall

Learn how Wisconsin walkers convinced their local running club to welcome them.

ON THIS PAGE: Photos from top to bottom—courtesy of Brierly Ostrander, photo by Jeff Salvage www.greattreks.com, courtesy of MarathonFoto, courtesy of Flash-Pro.com. ON THE COVER: © Alan Crosthwaite | Dreamstime.com.

**WHAT ABOUT LARRY?**

Cindi Leeman,

I just received my initial copy of your **WALK! Magazine**, Fall 2008 and was completely mesmerized by the article on page 7, "Fit Training into Your Real Life" by Larry Smith. It mirrors my goal exactly. I am soon to be 64 years old, I began walking when I retired two years ago, and more seriously September 2007. My first marathon goal was to go under five hours, which was Larry's goal for October 19th 2008. My time for my marathon this past August 22 was 5:00:05, and I hope to go under five hours November 2009 here in NYC. His training schedule could be very helpful to me.

My question to you is simply, HOW DID LARRY DO THIS PAST 10/19/2008? I was able to obtain his results for 2007 Columbus Marathon (5:03:29 /11:35) but no results are indicated for a Larry Smith in 2008. Can you please find out, I'm dying to know.

Sincerely,

Frank Stonitsch

**EDITOR'S REPLY**

Check out Larry's final installment on page 23.

**ELECTRONIC EDITION**

Hi Cindi,

So, I have seen my first electronic issues of the magazine—and I love it!

As I may have told you before, I am a certified ChiWalking Mentor ([www.chiwalking.com](http://www.chiwalking.com)). I will be posting a recommendation of your magazine on the website, and if you are interested in doing an interview with Danny Dreyer, founder and creator of ChiWalking and ChiRunning, let me know and I'll put you in touch with him...

I am interested in all kinds of walking—next week I start a race walking class.

Let me know if I can help you with anything.

Best,

Richard Laubly

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Thank you to everyone who has helped and supported **WALK! Magazine** from the start. There are way too many to name.

A special thank you to everyone who wrote for us, especially our columnists:

- Roger Burrows
- Dave McGovern
- Tim Seaman
- Bonnie Stein



Nutrition: Back to Basics

# Staying On Track This Winter

By Caroline Samson

For many of us, the racing season is over and the long winter lies ahead. This is the perfect time to check in with your nutrition, to increase your knowledge and awareness, and to evaluate your eating habits in the privacy of your own kitchen.

We eat for a number of reasons: for nourishment, for energy, and, of course, for pleasure. Not always in that order! The saying “you are what you eat” is absolutely true when it comes to athletic performance. The way that you eat will reflect the way that you compete.

## Checking in with your eating

How would you rate your eating habits? Not too sure? Let’s start with a few questions to really get you thinking about your eating habits. If you answer yes to any of these, you have some work to do this winter!

Do you:

- ♦ Cut out certain foods or food groups from your diet?
- ♦ Skip meals?
- ♦ Avoid snacks?
- ♦ Limit carbohydrates (carbs)?
- ♦ Want to lose or control your weight?
- ♦ Have difficulty timing eating with your training?
- ♦ Have a nutrient deficiency?
- ♦ Plan on using sports gels or beverages in your next big race?

## Going back to basics

Going back to basics in nutrition is going back to the Food Pyramid (USA) or the Food Guide (Canada). You can find a copy with a basic internet search or by contacting your public health department. These guides describe the basic food groups and provide information on portions and servings. Eating a variety of wholesome foods from the different food groups is the key to good nutrition, health, and a strong immune system. Your aim is to choose a variety of grain products, fruits and vegetables rich in antioxidants,



© Slovegrove | Dreamstime.com

Your athlete's body needs you to have a regular eating routine to fuel it. An irregular eating pattern, such as skipping meals and snacks, affects your energy...

low-fat milk or soy products, and high quality protein from lean meats and alternatives for your meals and snacks.

No perfect food provides all the nutrients that you need. Each food group provides different nutrients. If you avoid certain foods because

you have an allergy, are a “picky” eater, or for personal choices, then you need to make sure you get those nutrients in other ways. While supplementation is required in some specific cases, eating wholesome foods is definitely the best way to get your nutrients.

## Skipping meals and avoiding snacks?

Your athlete’s body needs you to have a regular eating routine to fuel it. An irregular eating pattern, such as skipping meals and snacks, affects your energy and the blood sugar level that is very important in your recovery from training and racing. If you skip meals, ask yourself why. Is it a habit you’ve had most of your life or are you just too busy to plan ahead and prepare great food for yourself? If you are a “grazer” who prefers not to have full meals, be aware that grazers generally don’t meet their basic requirements from the different food groups.

Continued on next page.

## Nutrition

Continued from page 3.

Try a simple plan: have three well-balanced meals and a couple of healthy snacks every day. Start with breakfast, the day's most important meal, to "ground" your day. Give your body a chance to adjust to eating more often. It will become a good habit in no time.

### Want to lose weight?

Planning on losing weight or trying to control it? As an athlete, remember that this is done slowly and before your main racing season begins. Losing or controlling weight usually involves a restriction in calories. Low-calorie diets are generally low in carbs and this will work against you. Forget fad diets. You can put your health at risk and you will have a poor training season. Watch for these sure signs that your diet has too few calories and carbs:

- ♦ Decreased energy during a workout or race.
- ♦ Reduced ability to train hard.
- ♦ Low immune function (you get colds easily).
- ♦ Loss of muscle mass.
- ♦ Frequent injuries.
- ♦ Chronic fatigue.
- ♦ Low motivation.
- ♦ Slow recovery.

Assuming a good basic diet and a regular eating pattern, you can do other things to help with weight control. Eat slowly and chew your food well. It takes about 20 minutes for your stomach to tell your brain that it's feeling full; so the faster you eat, the more you'll "shove" in. Stop eating when you feel satisfied, not when you feel full. Beware of those extra calories: do not eat when you are not hungry. Following these recommendations with the right training program will make you successful in attaining a normal weight.

### All those extras add up

It's easy to eat and drink a little more in the off-season when our next race is so far away. We think there's lots of time to get back on track. The little candy here, some chocolate covered cranberries there, extra cream in the coffee, one more beer, polishing off that huge turkey dinner during the holidays when you're already totally stuffed... You get the idea!

Those extra calories that the body doesn't need on a regular basis are what often turn into those extra few pounds of fat gained during the winter. One pound of fat equals

approximately 3,500 calories; so, with 500 extra calories a day for seven days, you could potentially gain 1 lb. a week! I'm not saying that we can't have sweets or treats. But if you tend to put on weight easily, keep an eye on those extras and keep training!

One pound of fat equals approximately 3,500 calories; so, with 500 extra calories a day for seven days, you could potentially gain 1 lb. a week!

### Limiting carbs?

You've probably heard that carbs are the athlete's fuel. They are, especially for any kind of distance training and racing. If you have a "carb phobia," this winter is the time to deal with this issue and gently make peace with these foods.

Carbs are found in many foods: breads, bagels, pasta, hot and cold cereals, popcorn (no butter), wheat crackers, pretzels, fruit, fruit juices, vegetable juices, lower fat milk or soy products, and yogurts. Carbs are important for athletes because they provide glycogen, the fuel that is stored in your muscles and liver for use during training and racing. The ability to store glycogen depends on age, fitness level, muscle mass, and, of course, how much carbohydrate you eat. Your muscles and digestive tract need time to practice becoming more efficient at fueling your body. Low carbohydrate levels in your diet result in low glycogen levels in your body and therefore low fuel levels during your performance.

### Timing your eating and training

The body can only store so much glycogen so it is important to refuel and hydrate regularly. Eating for training is all about the timing. Eating for optimal performance does not start a few weeks before a race and that big pasta "carbo-load" dinner the night before a race will not do the trick. What you eat the night before the race won't have much impact. The difference comes in what you have been eating all through your training. Remember,

your digestion tract and muscles need time to practice storing glycogen. If you don't eat many carbs during your training, don't expect your body to be efficient at storing glycogen the night before a race.

### Sports drinks and gels

I will specifically deal with pre-race, during-race, and post-race fueling in the next article, so stay tuned! But, in preparation, if you have not experimented with sport beverages or gels, and plan on using them next season, start now. There are as many choices as there are flavors. Start using them weekly during your long walks. Your digestive track needs time to decide which ones work best for you. Race day is not the time to experiment. Your stomach won't be happy!

### Iron out any deficiencies

Now is the time to determine if you have any nutritional deficiencies. The most common one, especially for women, is an iron deficiency. Symptoms of low iron include tiredness, paleness, irritability, difficulty concentrating, headaches, shortness of breath, low immune function, and even depression. A blood test will determine whether you are fine, or at the start of an iron deficiency, or have full-blown iron deficiency anemia. If you have any of these symptoms, don't wait; a deficiency will affect your training, and if you need to take an iron supplement, your gut may well need time to adjust. Your doctor will suggest an appropriate course of treatment. While an iron deficiency is unlikely to be corrected without supplementation, you can certainly consult a dietitian for suggestions for maximizing the iron sources in your diet.

### Until next racing season

So, in summary, go back to basics this winter to assess your nutrition, just as you do with your training. This is the time to try, test, and incorporate new things into your training program. Good nutrition alone will not carry you over a 20 km or marathon finish line, but it will certainly allow the other elements of your training to operate much more efficiently. Whether winter where you live means simply throwing on a sweater, or facing chilly rain, or occasionally being buried in snow, I wish you good training until your next season begins!♦

**Caroline Samson** has been a dietitian for over 13 years and is working in Ottawa, ON, Canada. She's a competitive racewalker with a 20 km time of 2:09.

# Big Shoes to Fill

By Brierley Ostrander

I should have bought the snowshoes six years ago. But for a whole list of reasons, I didn't. I'd never been showshoeing, for one. The whole idea seemed a little frivolous—more goofy fun than exercise. I was in my mid-twenties then, convinced that fitness activities were only effective if they left me breathless, sweating and on the verge of collapse. I could justify the expense of buying running shoes several times a year the same way I could justify buying gas, a gym membership and groceries—but snowshoes? No. I wasn't going to waste my money on toys. Even though my husband would have supported the purchase unequivocally, I couldn't bring myself to actually do it.

But after two winters living in New Hampshire's White Mountains and four winters in Alaska's Coast Mountains, I finally gave in. I have long adored walking in the woods, but winter after winter I faced the frustration of “post-holing”—breaking through the deep snow one foot-step at a time, sinking in past my knees, and then lurching forward for the next leg-swallowing stride. I was well aware that a 3000-year-old solution for this problem existed, but I was intimidated. No one I knew was into showshoeing and the array of available snowshoe options seemed overwhelming. I figured I might buy the wrong pair and watch them collect dust in the garage with other abandoned exercise equipment.

Continued on next page.



## Big Shoes

Continued from previous page.

It took a post-pregnancy shift in my fitness philosophy to nudge me toward the big purchase. Shortly after the birth, when my joints were still loose and unstable as a result of pregnancy hormones and my free time was completely eliminated by the demands of motherhood, I began to come around to the idea that walking could, in and of itself, be a fitness activity. I could put the baby in a stroller or a backpack, get outside in the fresh air for an hour, rock him to sleep with the motion, and reap the physical and emotional benefits of exercise without having to vainly try to carve out a window for the gym a few times a week and then feel guilty that I'd fail to get there.

The baby was born in the fall. My exercise that first winter was haphazard because of the major life adjustment of motherhood and six months of record-breaking snowfall, but by spring I'd begun to establish a pattern of walking for an average of an hour a day. I lost 15 lbs. of lingering pregnancy weight, and then more, dropping a total of 25 lbs.—10 lbs. below where I had started before conception. All summer and fall I continued my walking habit, logging mile after mile, rain or shine. The snow that year stayed high in the mountains for longer than usual, keeping the valley paths clear until Christmas, but finally, in January, several feet fell in the woods near my house, locking me out. I couldn't push a stroller through the drifts, and the substantial weight of a squirmy toddler strapped on my back made "post-holing" a doubly difficult proposition.

"I'm buying snowshoes tomorrow," I told my husband on a Friday afternoon.

"Great," he said. "It's about time."

On Saturday morning I took a deep breath, loaded my son into the car, and drove to Nugget Alaska Outfitters. I walked around the entire store once and couldn't find what I was looking for, so I had to ask.

"The shoe section," the clerk said. That made sense. Snowshoes are really nothing more than an extension of regular shoes designed to distribute weight over a larger surface. There were only two kinds of snowshoes to choose from in the store, but I still didn't know exactly what to buy. I'd seen snowshoes in our local Walmart for under \$100, but those had looked pretty clunky. A little on-line



research had me thinking I wanted something priced in the \$140 to \$180 range—possibly a curvy woman's shoe by Tubbs. But there in the store, I instantly fell in love with some high-tech aluminum-frame snowshoes called Mountain Sports Research Lightning Assents. They weighed about 3 lbs. each and were fairly narrow under foot with easy-to-latch rubber strap bindings. But the \$225 price tag made me balk. I asked the clerk for advice. He told me about the store's demo program, discussed my weight and terrain requirements, and a few minutes later, I was out the door with a \$10 rental pair.

**Twenty feet into my walk, I was kicking myself for having waited until a few months shy of my 30th birthday to give this marvelous new sport a try. How could I have gone three decades without trying this?**

I drove to a favorite path through the wetlands that takes me an hour to walk in the summer. I strapped the shoes on before unloading my son from his car seat and letting the dog out of the back. When I was moving around beside the car getting the dog on a leash and the boy in his backpack, I was surprised by how little I had to worry about the snowshoes—they were a natural extension of my boots, and I didn't have to be especially careful not to trip over them. Spiky cleats under the balls of my feet and around the edges of the frames gave me great traction on the packed snow of the parking lot, and I could step sideways and pivot fairly easily.

Twenty feet into my walk, I was kicking myself for having waited until a few months shy of my 30th birthday to give this marvelous new sport a try. How could I have gone three decades without trying this? It's fun! It's easy! Snowshoeing is a little more challeng-



ing than plain walking, but not nearly as difficult as slogging along in bare boots in deep snow.

I soon settled into a stride that seemed to have all the cardiovascular benefits of a light jog with none of the joint-jarring impact. In fluffier drifts, I did still sink 6 to 10 in., but that was not nearly as inhibiting as the full-leg-cast strides that had frustrated me in winters past. The rhythm of my footsteps and the slow swirl of snow flakes falling all around transported me to a state of Zen. My well-bundled son nodded off to sleep on my back, lulled by the motion of my body. I could hear my steady breathing, the swish of my wind-breaker and the slightest crunch of snow compacting underfoot; these small rhythmic sounds seemed to deepen the silence. Snowshoeing presented that perfect balance between physical exercise and meditative outdoors experience that motivates me to get out and go again and again. When I returned to the parking lot 90 minutes after I had begun, my teeth were cold from so much involuntary smiling.

The one thing I didn't like about the first pair of snowshoes I tried was that their inner frames had a tendency to click, especially in shallower snow; I had to adjust to a wider stance to use them effectively. The clerk at Nugget Alaska Outfitters suggested a version of the MSR Lightning Assents designed especially for women. They are narrower, accommodating a woman's narrower stride, but provide the same amount of floatation as the unisex shoe by redistributing the surface area into longer tails. This solution worked for me. The women's shoes feel completely comfortable underfoot. I can settle into a smooth motion that feels something like moving on an elliptical machine, but with the extra challenge of a little lateral instability. While never uncomfortably unstable, I can sense the continual engagement of the muscles and tendons in my legs and core that contribute to balance. In deeper snow, ski poles can provide extra support, giving my arms more of a workout, too.

My family is planning a reunion in Bend, Ore. soon. I'll be packing my snowshoes.

How I lived so long without this essential winter gear is a bit of a mystery to me now. I'm a snowshoeing convert, eager to proselytize to my mom, dad, sister and brothers. Snowshoeing is not a difficult skill to master, doesn't require superhuman fitness levels to enjoy and isn't prohibitively expensive to start. For those who don't live near snow, it's an activity that can be sampled easily on a winter vacation with affordable rentals from local shops, or sometimes even through free programs such as the U.S. Forest Service's guided interpretive snowshoe tours of the Deschutes National Forest in Oregon.

I know I'm not the only woman in the world reluctant to spend money on something for myself that doesn't seem completely necessary, and I know I'm not the only person interested in trying a new sport who has been intimidated by all the technical gear options. So here's a little push: if you love to walk, you'll love to snowshoe. Just keep your mouth closed the first time you go out so your teeth don't freeze from smiling. ♦

# Setting Fitness Resolutions



© Alan Crosshwaite | Dreamstime.com

By David Sabgir, M.D.

There is nothing like turning over a new leaf. That feeling is often the strongest at the beginning of the year. Odds are you have already made some fitness resolutions for 2009. If you are like me, you wouldn't mind some more—if they work.

I've been fortunate enough to be involved in two separate successful exercise programs the past three years. Never one to re-invent the wheel; here is what makes our programs work. The competitor inside me doesn't want to share them; they are that good.

Keep your goal list short; big goals/short list. Write them on a 3X5 card and keep it someplace you will see it all day long like on your computer, or in your wallet or purse, etc. I recommend three to four goals. (You successful overachievers can always adapt.) Tell people what is on your list. "Bill, it looks like you've already worked out. It's only 6:30 in the morning." "That's right, Jimmy. If I want to walk the Columbus Marathon, I need to get up early."

**Be very specific.** "I'm going to complete the Columbus Marathon on October 18th, 2009."

**Workout in the morning.** Too many things happen during the day that provide excuses to avoid the evening workout. There is only one main excuse in the morning. Give yourself a non-food related reward for just getting up and dressed. A lot of days that is half the battle. Over 90% of people who exercise consistently exercise in the morning.

**Exercise with a group.** There are millions of people out there looking for exercise partners. It's multitasking at it's finest. Two birds—one stone. Exercise hour and social hour. Hydrate well while you are working out and make it three birds.

**Exercise with a friend/group.** (I know I said it twice, it's that important.)

**Drink 8 glasses of water a day.** (I hate writing this, it's so cliché, but...) It will give us the energy we are lacking in the afternoon or on our walk. It will also suppress our hunger.

**Act as if you've already accomplished your goal.** This is a little abstract, but write down or say out loud to someone who doesn't care if you seem a little goofy (usually spouse or dog). "I can't believe I just walked the Columbus Marathon. The weather was perfect. I only stopped at the water stations. That band at mile 21 really helped for the final push! I saw so many people I know! My legs are tired, but other than that I feel great."

**Write down your activity minutes, not speed**—that's not the point and you'll burn out. "There's no way I can walk 3 miles in an hour like last Sunday; I'm just not going to do it. 2 weeks later...."

If you have room on your short list; **add an anaerobic component** like weight lifting or pilates.

**Follow the 10% rule;** never increase more than 10% over your (recent) previous best week.

Follow these simple rules and I'm confident you will have your best year to date!♦

**David Sabgir, M.D. F.A.C.C.,** a cardiologist in Clinical Cardiovascular Specialists, is the creator of **Just Walk! Walk with a Doc**, the nation's premier physician-led walking club based in Columbus, OH. [contact@walkwithadoc.org](mailto:contact@walkwithadoc.org).

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# More Than Medals

By Brandon Favela

Everyone has their own reasons for participating in a half or full marathon. Mine stem from a mid-life crisis at age 29 coupled with way too many beers and a chance meeting with legendary coach Dave McGovern. I decided I needed a challenge and signed up for the Big Sur International Marathon with only 84 days to train. My initial training strategy was to run 10 miles on the first day and add a mile every day until I was regularly doing 26 miles per day. Needless to say, this strategy lasted about two days, at which point I couldn't walk, let alone run. I knew I needed a better way and through chance, found out about Dave's clinic.

Fast forward to December 02, 2007. I was lying in my hotel room feeling totally worthless and dejected after missing the Las Vegas Marathon that morning due to illness. To add salt to the wound, I was finally able to keep down fluids when I saw on the evening news that there were still two people walking the marathon 11 hours after it started. I was crestfallen. Then it hit me, "If the marathon's still going on maybe there's still time for me." I jumped out of bed, got dressed and headed toward the long-abandoned start line with a fellow athlete. I traversed the half-marathon course weaving through people, detours and traffic all in the name of pride's sake. Aid stations consisted of whatever casino I dipped into to get fluids. It took us almost 6 hours to complete our endeavor. We crossed the long-abandoned finish line to a solo onlooker, a curious security guard. I had succeeded at redemption, but when I got back to the hotel I began to plan my next adventure.

January is loaded with marathons in close proximity to California. I had initially planned to do one or two. Thanks to euphoria (and hypoglycemia) I hatched a plan to do four events in 30 days. This may not sound like a lot until you factor in that I had 15 surgeries before I turned 30 from which the doctors said I'd never be able to run or walk distances again. My carefully hatched plan would result in over 4,000 miles being driven and more than 104 miles walked in less than 30 days.

## Orange County Marathon

Our first event was the Orange County Marathon, Santa Ana. It was a quick four-hour jaunt from Fresno. We arrived on a Saturday and did the usual pre-



Photo courtesy of Brandon Favela.

Theory meets reality. Brandon Favela in one of many races.

marathon ritual. That night saw an added treat as I was able to enjoy my pre-race dinner with my sister who lived in the area. Sunday morning arrived and we did like we always do. The marathon was quiet and peaceful, sparing us from most of the noise typically associated with big cities.

About mile 11 the sky opened up and it began to rain intermittently as we pressed on. There were a lot of school-aged kids doing the half as part of a fitness program. One kid in particular stayed close to us. There was something about his level of commitment that really

Continued on next page.

## Medals

Continued from previous page.

struck me. He was completely soaked and his head was down, but he wasn't about to quit. I encouraged him as we pressed on.

After finishing we drove directly home. Since this was my first race in a month I felt good. The four-hour car ride wasn't as bad as I thought. One down three to go.

## P.F. Chang's Rock 'N' Roll Arizona Marathon

Upon returning home we immediately began preparing for our next adventure. We would be leaving in two days for Phoenix where we would stop to see my grandparents along the way. That Saturday morning we made the four-hour drive from El Centro to Phoenix, but not without one interesting stop. We were pulled over on I-8 at a Border Patrol Checkpoint where an agent incessantly questioned us about our origin. I'm of Mexican heritage and wouldn't have had a problem had I been questioned about this. What blew my mind was that he kept asking us if we were Canadian. We were 3 miles from the Mexican border and this guy was looking for Canadians? I didn't have the heart to tell him he was 2,000 miles from the wrong border. We played along in dismay but were eventually let loose.

Phoenix is an amazing city. We wound up eating (every meal) at Ted's Dogs on Broadway Street in Tempe. This was the best hot dog I had ever eaten. It's absolutely amazing.

We were concerned about the race morning traffic so we left early for the busses. When we arrived at the pre-race area we were amazed at how seamless the whole process was.

We reveled in limitless bagels, fluids, and other foods until the start. The race is very nice with a picturesque backdrop. Great weather and ample fluid stations coupled with everything else makes this race

top notch. I was very impressed with Elite Racing and the great job they did at accommodating all of the participants.

After the race we drove four hours back to El Centro where the ramifications of our follies began to set in. We were stiff, sore and limping. Everything was in pain but our pride. After a good meal I fell asleep crossway on the bed where I would stay until the morning. The eight-hour drive home was miserable. Aspirin did little to ease the pain. That week found me befriendling limitless amounts of ice and preparing to do it all over the next weekend.

## Carlsbad Marathon

The Carlsbad Marathon is a very nice race that follows the Pacific Ocean. I toed the line practically limping. I had no idea how I was going to finish, but through some crazy feat I limped through the finish line. My well intended plans of driving home were put on hold as I was barely able to move. I returned to the hotel to extend my stay another day and filled the bath with ice water. I can judge the level of injury by how bad the ice baths hurt. The less it hurts the worse off I am. The acquired fatigue had taken its toll as I had completely lost my appetite. I forced fluids and food down. We ended up leaving late that night to skirt the Monday morning L.A. commute. I spent the next few days completely fatigued and tending to ongoing injuries. My next event would be my last in the series. I knew I'd bitten off more than I should have but with the near-Vegas miss still fresh in my mind there was no way to back out.

## Surf City USA Marathon

I was initially attracted to Surf City USA Marathon's location and the unique medal. I figured it would be a good way to cap this little endeavor of mine while allowing me to bask in the southern California sun and take a swim in the Pacific Ocean. I definitely got wet from the ocean with one catch, I didn't go to the ocean—the ocean came to me.

We woke up to intermittent downpours which turned into a full storm by the time the race started. The starting line was about 6 inches under water. The rain and subsequent wind relentlessly battered every athlete looking to prove themselves that day. Despite everyone's best efforts at staying dry it wasn't to be. Some unsuspecting first timers stood at the start wearing little more than shorts gambling with hypothermia. I was in intense pain as I limped to the underwater starting line.

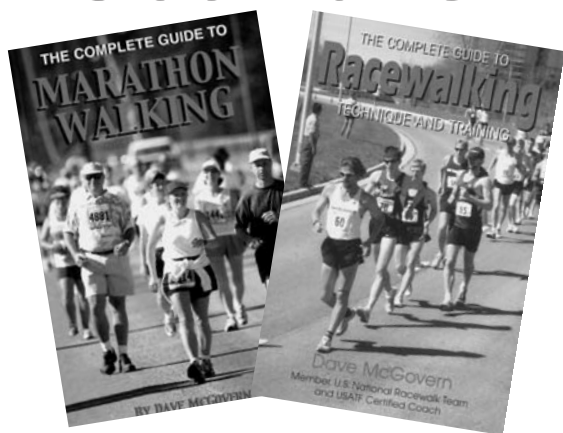
The gun went off and the race resembled a triathlon with athletes scrambling into the water more than it did a footrace. I made it about 25 yards past the starting line and had to sit down as the pain in my leg was so intense. I somehow gathered my strength and mustered back to the course. I endured (along with everyone else) horizontal rain and stinging sea spray as I leaned into the wind to keep from being blown over. People were drafting off of each other in an effort to block the wind. Occasionally a gust would blow some unsuspecting walker off his feet. Through grit, determination, and one doughnut stop, I managed to scrape across the finish line.

## The Final Finish Line

I spent the following week recovering from a cold and treating a fresh round of accumulated injuries through ice and doctor visits. I initially set out to do something adventurous and prove something to myself. I came away with a lot more than medals. I pushed myself beyond my perceived limits and through it all realized that almost anything's possible if you want it bad enough.

When the dust settled the pride belied the pain. It was through the courage I found on the race course that I gained the confidence to continue on to graduate school and take chances that I otherwise wouldn't have. You are capable of more than you know. Never give up!♦

# Got Dave?



If you **can't** wait for the next issue of **WALK! Magazine** to read the words of Dave McGovern, **don't despair!**

Pick up **The Complete Guide to Racewalking** or **The Complete Guide to Marathoning**.

For more information about these books, clinics, racewalking, or Dave, visit his web site at: [www.racewalking.org](http://www.racewalking.org)

## What is Walking Good For?

By Bonnie Stein, M.Ed., CPTS

What if you could wave a magic wand and have the shape you always wanted to have and be the size you always wanted to be without ever having to go on another diet? How about if that magical scenario could occur with something as simple as walking?



For those who are hoping for a magic weight loss pill, a daily walk is as close to magic as anything David Copperfield can conjure up.

What's so magical about walking? It's cheap, simple, and almost anyone can do it. It can be done alone or with a group, indoors on a treadmill or anywhere outdoors. Walking is for the fittest athlete (racewalking celebrated its 100th anniversary in the 2008 Olympics in Beijing) as well as the person just beginning an exercise program. It lowers blood pressure, total cholesterol, and your weight.

Walking increases HDL (beneficial) cholesterol, cardiorespiratory fitness, bone density, and muscle tone. The cost is minimal – a quality pair of appropriate shoes. Plus, you can't beat the convenience since your gym is right outside your front door.

### What Kind of Workout is Walking?

In 1984 when I became injured as a runner (I tore the meniscus in my right knee) my doctor suggested that I take some time off to allow my knee to heal. Most runners interpret "some time off" as one or two days. That's not what my doctor had in mind. "At least six weeks," he said, "and then we'll re-evaluate." Six weeks off running! No Way! I'll gain all my weight back. (I had originally started running to lose weight.) I won't fit into any of my clothes. "Please, I'll take all the anti-inflammatories that you prescribe. I'll do the ice thing every day, but don't make me stop running."

It wasn't that I even liked running. The truth be told, I didn't really like running much at all. But, I did like the aftereffects. I liked the 15-pound weight loss that I achieved and I liked being able to eat more food and not gain weight. I liked how I felt AFTER, not during, running.

He went on to say, "After a month of physical therapy, walking would be fine for your knee." I was shocked. "WALKING! What kind of workout is walking? What can walking do for a runner like me?" Back then I was sure that walking wasn't for me. Walking wasn't real exercise. It was for people who were too old or too unfit to do anything else. I was 29 years old and way too cool to walk for exercise.

When the doc saw the look on my face, he said, "Try the walking temporarily, Bonnie, just until your knee can heal." I figured that I had no other choice. Back then there weren't many alternatives to running – no Zumba classes, no Step classes and no low-impact aerobic classes.

So after four weeks of physical therapy, I set out on the walking path. I did what any respectable runner would do – I walked late at night, when it was very dark, and no one in the neighborhood would see that I was walking instead of running.

Six weeks of rehabilitation (me continuing my exercises) turned into three months, then six months, and finally a year later my knee had healed enough that I was given clearance to start running again. Funny thing, I had no desire to do so. During that year of racewalking, I had lost nine more pounds and two dress sizes. More importantly, for the first time in my short amateur athletic career, I went one whole year without an injury.

I had previously broken a bone in my foot playing racquetball. Then, when hand weights first came out, I injured my trapezius muscle (in the upper back) swinging the weights around like we used to do in Aerobics. The injured meniscus from running was my next injury. With walking, I finally found a sport in which I could get all the benefits of running without any of the pain and injuries. I was a hooked walker. I finally emerged into the light of day. Literally! I wasn't only racewalking late at night anymore. I let my neighbors see me racewalking!

### Proven Benefits of Walking

I started looking for research on the benefits of walking and found that we can achieve health benefits with any kind of walking – even strolling (what I call "Disney World Walking"). Studies done in the 1990s at Kenneth Cooper's Institute for Aerobic Research compared different walking intensities with results of previous running studies. Even the strollers, who walked at a 20 minute

per mile rate, at only 56% of maximum heart rate, raised their HDL (good cholesterol) level. The good news (here's the magic) for the high intensity walkers (86% of maximum heart rate) is that they improved in fitness (as measured by VO2 Max) similarly to an exercise runner.

## What's so magical about walking? It's cheap, simple, and almost anyone can do it.

When the University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center evaluated walking and jogging, the researchers found that both activities improved muscle tone and cardiovascular functioning as well as assisted in weight loss if the exercisers (walkers or runners) were in the Training Heart Rate zone. The THR zone is described as between 60% and 90% of maximum heart rate. I recommend 70-80% as the zone where exercise is safest and most effective for weight loss and fitness – especially for a new exercise racewalker.

Walking is also a proven winner when it comes to less incidence of injuries. A study reported in Medicine and Science in Sports and Exercise concluded that walking as an aerobic activity results in similar gains in aerobic power compared to running, with a decrease in the severity and incidence of injury. During this particular study, none of the walkers discontinued training as a result of 28 weeks of training, four days per week for 40 minutes per session at 80% of maximum heart rate. However 16.7% of the runners did not complete the program due to injury.

It's been almost 24 years that I've changed from running to racewalking. I've racewalked both competitively and for fitness, and have not yet incurred any injury that could be attributed to racewalking. Walking is the true lifetime sport for almost everyone. And you won't need a wand to find the magic – just look down at your feet. Then, put on your magical shoes and get out the door to find the results you're looking for. ♦

Bonnie Stein M.Ed. is a racewalking coach and Certified Personal Training Specialist based in Redington Shores, Fla. Take a trip to Florida for racewalking lessons. Please visit [www.AceWalker.com](http://www.AceWalker.com).

# Kevin Eastler – A Legend Retires

By Tim Seaman

In September, after returning from the Olympic Games in Beijing, China, Kevin Eastler did what he has always done – quietly went about his business. No official announcements were made, no press conferences were attended, no good-bye tour planned. Instead, a simple one-page typewritten letter was sent to USA Track and Field requesting his name be removed from the U.S. Anti-Doping Agency's Out of Competition Drug Testing list because he would no longer be competing. Simple and to the point, that was Kevin's way of retiring. For those of you who do not know Kevin, there is no other way that the former Air Force Major, now alternative energy guru for General Electric would do anything in his life. If his middle name wasn't Sinclair it would be "Respectful."

Kevin grew up in rural Maine on a farm about 2 hours from civilization, in a small town appropriately called Farmington. His parents, Tom and Sue, were very supportive of Kevin, as well as his two older sisters, Lauren and Gretchen. As in many times the case, Kevin saw his older sister competing and wanted to be just like her. It helped that their father competed as a racewalker in the 1960s, but it was Gretchen's early success that motivated Kevin to continue. Kevin saw Gretchen win medal after medal and eventually become the Jr. National Champion.

Kevin, meanwhile, racewalked during the summer at the Jr. Olympic level, while during the long Maine winter he played hockey and cross country skied. Since the winters were so long Kevin played a lot of hockey, but it was racewalking that warmed his heart and allowed him to show his true athleticism. By high school, Kevin had won the National Scholastic Indoor Nationals 1 mile race walk and just missed the National High School Record with his time of 6:11.98.

Less than a week after graduating from high school, Kevin went to the USATF Jr. National Championships and finished the 10,000 meter race walk in a time of 47:09.2 to place second. A few weeks later Kevin entered the Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs and racewalking was put on the back burner. Kevin played hockey and competed in cross country skiing once again, and entered the occasional road race. He won the Jr. National Championships his freshman year at the Academy in a time of 47:57, and he qualified for the USA vs. Canada dual meet.

For the next few years, Kevin did some



Kevin Eastler at the Jr. Olympics.

racewalking a few weeks a year in the summer, but only at the urging of his family. As graduation loomed near, Kevin sought out the help of U.S. Olympic racewalking legend Carl Schueler. Carl was a four-time Olympian and for the first time ever, Kevin had a coach outside of his family.

Kevin's first big race was the U.S. Indoor Nationals in Atlanta. He placed third behind me and Curt Clausen. During our cool down was the first time that I had ever had the chance to forge a friendship with Kevin. I told him of the potential I thought he had and of the great opportunities for him if he came out to train with our group in Chula Vista, Calif. A few weeks later, Kevin competed in the first 20 km race of his career and once again thoroughly impressed me. Kevin placed fifth, but it was the fire in his eyes that showed his amazing potential.

After graduation, Kevin switched coaches, moved to Chula Vista and joined the Air Force's World Class Athlete Program (WCAP) to try to make the 2000 Olympic Team. Kevin sacrificed everything for this goal. He was tireless in the weight room, ferocious on the track and committed to his stretching routine. He traveled to Ecuador to train with the then reigning Olympic champion Jefferson Perez. He also competed in Spain, Finland, Norway, Mexico and Germany. He did speed work three times per week and pushed his body to the brink of destruction, but in this day and age of Olympic Time Standards, Kevin came up short before the Trials. He went to the Trials with the hope of walking the time and winning the race, but in the end placed second. The heat of Sacramento slowed the times for all, but Kevin still managed to walk 1:26:09. Since I had won the race and I had the Olympic "B" standard, I would be the sole representative to compete in Sydney unless Kevin and I could both break the "A" standard of 1:23:00. We set up a race at the University of California – San Diego the day before the final declarations for the Olympic Team were due. We toed the line with the 50 km Olympians Curt Clausen, Andrew Hermann and Philip Dunn, who were hoping to get their last hard workout in before leaving for the Games, as well as Jefferson Perez.

Under perfect conditions the gun went off. This was it, our last hope to get both Kevin and me on the Team, but it was not to be. While I went on to break the American Track Record for the second time that season in a time of 1:23:42, unfortunately Kevin struggled.

Kevin watched as his teammates and friends left to fulfill their Olympic dreams and vowed that he would not allow this to happen again.

The following year Kevin was unable to compete at all due to Air Force obligations. He worked 36-hour shifts in a missile silo in the plains of Wyoming, a situation not conducive for an elite athlete. By 2002, Kevin had a renewed sense of determination and reunited with Carl Schueler. After just a few weeks of training, Kevin placed third at the Outdoor Nationals on the track at Stanford University. Kevin once again applied and was accepted into the Air Force's WCAP Program. He moved to the suburbs of Denver and began his quest to make the 2004 Olympic Team.

That fall the two of us traveled to Flagstaff, Ariz. for the first time to train with Eric Tysse, Kjersti Plaetzer, and Coach Stephan Plaetzer. It was there that a collective seed was planted that grew into an

understanding of how a group of athletes could help each other train and still remain great friends. We learned how to racewalk without pushing the pace, we went aquajogging, we went hiking, but most of all we became a family to help each other every step of the way.

In 2003, in his first full year back in training, Kevin won his first 20 km National Championship in a time of 1:23:52, just 10 seconds off of my American Track record. More importantly though, Kevin qualified for his first IAAF World Championships in Paris. I will never forget watching the splits live online while talking to Danish Olympian Claus Jorgenson on the telephone. Claus watched the race live on TV and even though I wasn't able to see it, the excitement that ran through me kept me awake at 2 a.m.

Kevin walked his way to 18th place in an amazing time of 1:22:25! At the time it was over a minute faster than Curt Clausen or I ever walked and only Tim Lewis had ever walked faster. The next day while watching TV I heard an expression for the first time that was like a "eureka" moment for me. The expression was, "A rising tide, lifts all boats." A simple expression but I had never heard that before and I could not contain myself. I immediately sent e-mails to Kevin in France and to his dad in Maine and told them that Kevin's performance in Paris would propel racewalking in America.

That fall and early spring we went to Flagstaff twice to train with Team Plaetzer. We bonded like brothers and since Kevin was the only person in the United States with the "A" standard, and since neither of us wanted the United States to send just one athlete to the Olympics, Kevin made an offer that I couldn't refuse. He said that if I walked the "A" standard, thus solidifying his spot on the Team for Athens, he would buy me an X-Box. (Kevin had taken his X-Box to Flagstaff and we all became completely addicted to a game called Halo.)

After our second training camp in Flagstaff in March, we all flew to Missouri to compete in the U.S. World Cup Trials. It was our first opportunity to compete together in a long time and we were looking forward to it. Unfortunately it didn't go so well for Kevin. We were walking stride-for-stride, but by 8 km Kevin slowed due to stomach issues. By 12 km, both he and Erik were throwing up on the side of the road. Both had decided that the tomato sauce on their pasta the night before was so delicious that they were going to drink it like soup! Obviously it didn't taste as good the second time around, but we did make the World Cup Team.

The next race up was the IAAF World Cup in Naumberg, Germany. Stephan, my coach, decided that since Kevin and I were



Kevin Eastler at the Jr. Olympics.

training so well together, we should help each other so that I could qualify for the Olympics. We walked step-for-step until 16 km when my legs just ran out of gas. Kevin went on to walk 1:22:51, while I finished a disappointing 1:24:20, thus missing the standard. I thought my Olympic dream was over, but Kevin was instrumental in convincing me that it was not.

About four weeks later I went to a small race in Copenhagen, Denmark. Kevin, who was back training in Denver, flew to Europe to compete with Erik and me. As the gun went off Kevin realized that he was in need of the restroom. When he reached the start, Erik and I were long gone. He decided that he would walk easy until we caught him on the next loop. It wasn't until just before the half-way mark that we caught him. Kevin walked with us until the end, but once we finished he was so excited, he didn't finish his own race! The reason I tell this story is that as we were turning the last corner heading toward the finish line, I suddenly heard the theme song

from the video game Halo coming from Kevin. Kevin sang the song not only in celebration of my making my Olympic qualification time, but also my breaking the American record.

## Olympic Games

The 2004 Olympic Games 20 km in Athens, Greece was perhaps one of the most amazing days in U.S. racewalking history. We had three guys finish in the top 26 but more importantly we had THREE guys on the Team (meaning three who met the IAAF "A" standard). Since time standards were instituted in 1992, the U.S. has had only one person qualified to be on the Team in each of the Olympics before Athens. In Greece we had three high-caliber athletes ready and willing to fight for their country. Due to the heat, Coach Plaetzer told Kevin and me to start off the race very conservatively and to save our energy for later in the race. After the start, we left the Olympic stadium in last place. Well, actually last and second to last place, and about 40 meters behind the next group in front of us. As the race progressed, we moved up, slowing picking off the "dying" athletes. We were very consistent with our pace, in fact our second half of the race was one second faster than our first. In the end, Kevin placed 21st and I placed 20th in times that were both faster than any other American racewalker at the Olympic Games. One of the great comments after the race was made by Jeff Salvage from [racewalk.com](http://racewalk.com), who said that Kevin and I helped each other so much that he couldn't get a dang photo of either of us alone!

After the Olympics the Air Force decided that Kevin's Air Force career was more important than his racewalking career and put him back to active duty once again. He didn't have to report to the missile silo, but he did get put on some very important projects. Kevin gladly accepted this role reversal, but by May 2005 he was ready for a chance to compete once again. I remember flying to Maine to try to convince him to start training again. With only a month to go until Nationals I knew that Kevin needed to get started if he wanted to salvage the season. Once again, he walked a pretty solid race even though he had trained for only about four weeks since the Olympics. He ended up placing fourth, but that allowed him to petition and be accepted back into the Air Force's WCAP program.

By 2006, Kevin was back training full time and asked Coach Plaetzer to assist him. Kevin was unstoppable that season, losing only once all year—at the Indoor Nationals.

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## Eastler

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Kevin needed a new challenge though, and that challenge was the 2007 50 km Nationals.

Kevin trained all fall with the sole purpose of getting the “A” standard in his first real attempt at the 50 km. The problem was that it was snowing constantly in Denver. I remember talking to Kevin on December 28th and his asking when I would be back in San Diego. Three days later he met me at the airport on my return and stayed with me for the next three weeks!

Kevin’s 50 km went off pretty well but he struggled home the last 10 km and missed the “A” standard, but it set him up with some great base work for the 20 km season.

The first real race of the season was the Pan-Am Cup Trials in Miami. Kevin and I expected horrific conditions, but the clouds came and we had 50 degree temperatures and made the most of it. Once again we walked stride-for-stride, but with 1 km to go, after Kevin made sure that we were both under the “B” standard, he took off, beating me handily.

Later in the year, Kevin and I went to La Coruna, Spain to compete in the IAAF Racewalking Challenge for one last chance to get the “A” standard before the Olympics. Coach Plaetzer said if we wanted weather this good weather again, we might have to wait until the May right before the Games. Although I was nursing an injury (which at the time I didn’t know the extent of), I decided to go and try my best to get the standard with Kevin. Once again we walked stride-for-stride, but by 8km, we were slightly off pace. I knew I couldn’t go any faster without crashing later, so I told Kevin to go ahead; he took off. By 15 km I thought that I might be able to catch him, but it was not to be. Kevin finished in a time of 1:22:52 once again, and I finished in the second best time of my career, 1:23:38.

The IAAF changed the standards for the 2007 World Championships so that an “A” standard athlete and a “B” standard athlete could both compete. That was good news, but by the time the competition came around I was limping with every step. Kevin competed in both the 20 km and 50 km in preparation for his goal of competing in both at the Olympics the following season, but tragedy struck. We both struggled in the 20 km but Kevin was very excited about the 50 km. By 5 km into the 50 km, Kevin had problems with the new sports drink he was trying and couldn’t keep anything down. He ended up stopping on the side of the road several times and only finished because I helped him with the race.



Photo by Jeff Salvage, www.greattreks.com

Kevin Eastler in the 2008 Olympics.

## The Final Season

Kevin began his 2008 season like he did any other season, with a few easier walks. After a few days though, he began to have a small pain in his lower abdominals that would just not go away. He went to doctor after doctor but no one could diagnose him correctly. Kevin finally found the best doctor he could in Denver and was advised that he had a sports hernia. By this time, Kevin wasn’t able to run or walk one step so he was looking for any answer that could help him get ready to make his second Olympic Team.

Surgery would be required to repair the hernia. Kevin was told that he would then have to take another month off for recovery. He was ready to quit, but with the urging of his team and family he kept focused.

After the surgery he again flew to San Diego to begin training. After about a week another injury cropped up in his knee, sidelining him for another month. He flew to Miami in early February to support the athletes competing in the 50 km Olympic Trials. He was asked to start the race and he was able to walk just 2 km before the pain forced him to stop.

Kevin was ready to quit again. He flew to

Flagstaff a few weeks later to get together with Team Plaetzer. After a few days, Kevin was finally able to racewalk, but when he returned to Denver, his training derailed again. It was now the end of March and Kevin was at his wits’ end. He was ready to retire, ready to crawl into a hole. I called him and said that since both of us had a standard to compete in the Olympics and since the most likely scenario would be that it would come down to only one of us going to the Games, I didn’t want him to roll over and die. If I made the Team, I wanted to make it the right way, by being the best in America.

Kevin went to Norway to train for a few weeks. We all then traveled to La Coruna, Spain for our last race (and Kevin’s first race of the season) before the Olympic Trials. Kevin did much better than he expected, finishing just over 1:30:00. He commented after the race, “what a difference a year makes.” He was completely right.

He returned home to Denver with a smile on his face for the first time all season. He was focused and utterly driven to make the Team. He had only a few more weeks; all he had to do was stay healthy. As the Olympic Trials approached a calm came over him. He knew that all he had to do was beat me to make the Olympic Team, but he also didn’t want to make the Olympic Team being “second best.” In his eyes he had to win the Trials in order to be considered a “real” Olympian.

Kevin won the 2008 Olympic Trials in convincing fashion, winning handily in a time of 1:27:08. It was a shining moment in his career as Kevin had taken second and third in his last two Olympic Trials. He was finally the Olympic Trials Champion.

As the Olympics approached, Kevin was unsure he would be able to compete. The pain in his knee flared up again and he was unable to walk even one step. He called me every day for a week to get out the door training, just in case. I told him he made the Team fair and square and that he should be the one to represent the United States on the world’s biggest stage. He finally responded to therapy just as he arrived in Beijing, and walked a very respectable 1:28:44.

So it went for the young man born in the western mountains of Maine who started track and field at age 8 and became a two-time Olympian and a legend among his peers. ♦

**Tim Seaman** is a two-time Olympian who has represented the United States in both Sydney 2000 and Athens 2004. Seaman has won 32 U.S. National Championship titles. He is co-founder of the Residency Program for race walkers at the ARCO Olympic Training Center in Chula Vista, CA.

How to get your local running club to accept members who walk.

# Don't Fight Them — Join Them

By Dave Kendall

How many of us can recall being told to move over into the gutter to get out of the way of the runners, the real athletes in the race? Can you remember someone from behind yelling at you to get out of their way or perhaps physically being shoved by runners?

Do you see runners doing that to fellow slower runners? Of course not and there lies the problem that never seems to go away. Prejudice.

Discrimination is still alive and well in the marathon world and even in events of lesser distance. Walkers are constantly reminded, depending on the venue, that we are inferior and unwanted, when runners with prejudice are involved.

There are a number of events today that make an effort to get both camps to coexist, but the underlying tone seems sometimes to be set in stone and prejudice is hard to erase. Many times out of frustration we would like to steal a quote from Rodney King and declare, "Can't we all just get along"?

I have been a competitive walker dating back to 1996 when I did my very first full marathon. Being told to get in the gutter every time a runner trotted by was my first taste of sport bigotry. At the start and finish line, I was constantly reminded that I was just a walker. I honestly don't think people realize how demeaning the phrase, "just a walker" really is. Part of the problem is walkers label themselves, "just a walker," and are apologetic for what they do. Walker pride can go a long way in developing self esteem for a sport that is growing leaps and bounds and surpassing runners. You are not "just a walker;" you're an athlete who deserves recognition and respect.

Based on the constant infighting between runners and walkers, a 2004 Runner's World article written by John Hanc narrated his



Photo courtesy of Dave Kendall.

Members of the Pace Setters before a recent running and walking event.

experience completing the Rock 'N' Roll Arizona Marathon as a walker, rather than as an accomplished runner, which he is. The long and short of this dated yet appropriate article is John developed a new found respect for walkers and the amount of work it took to complete the race. I think many of us with runner friends have heard positive comments about walkers but also have felt the surprising stinging negative comments as well. You then perhaps have mused like me; if friends can make negative comments, I wonder what people who are not friends are thinking and saying, which perpetuates this riff.

Part of the issue is being on the receiving end of this prejudice, which tends to put us hard core walkers on the defensive and we dig in and become belligerent. All this does is add to the problem rather than come to some sort of resolution.

This got me to thinking one day after completing an early spring half marathon race in 2008. My wife Marsha and I entered a medi-

um-sized but well-run race in Wisconsin called the Cellcom Green Bay Marathon, which included a full marathon and half marathon, but no competitive walk. The walk was dropped years earlier because of a lack of enforcement. At the start of the race there was plenty of pushing and shoving and quite a bit of grumbling about three- and four-wide walkers blocking the start of runners. Being a faster walker, I too was forced to pull up and maneuver around slower walkers who insisted on starting in the front of the pack. I might inject here that I encountered this problem with plenty of slower runners as well. After about a mile or so, the walkers and slower runners ended up at the back of the pack as the runners moved ahead.

To be perfectly honest, stepping back and looking at the situation, walkers in my opinion should lose the attitude about paying the same entry fee as the runners and starting wherever they damn well please. This accomplishes nothing more than to sustain the feud

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## Don't Fight Them

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between both camps and quite frankly, even though I am a proud walker, feel it's out of line. Walkers should start at the appropriate spot for their pace—along with slower runners simply out of safety and courtesy. The “In your face” attitude could cause preventable injuries on both sides of the aisle.

At the end of my race, I waited for my wife to finish and heard plenty of chatter from runners, which of course included complaints about walkers blocking lanes. Because I finished 2327th out of 3400 half marathoners, I passed quite a few runners. I heard plenty of high praise from the perceived enemy (runners), even though I was a walker. A ray of hope perhaps.

At that moment, tying together the good, the bad and the downright ugly of that day, the proverbial light bulb went off in my head. I have always been a big fan of old sayings, because over the passage of time they always seem to ring true. Two that came to mind are “if you can't lick em, join em,” and my all-time favorite, “take a negative and turn it into a positive.”

My wife and I have been members of the Pacesetters Running Club of the Fox Valley for the past nine years and have been accepted by most members, even though some are hardcore and less apt to co-mingle. We joined because of the value of the monthly speakers and information sharing that definitely made us faster walkers. The fun runs, weekly run groups and marathon-training sessions of course were not applicable to our slower pace. The informal conversations focused on running, which at times made us feel like we were from another planet. We were referred to as “the walkers” rather than by name.

After reading several issues of **WALK! Magazine** I could not help but notice the idea of walking clubs, which does not exist in my home town. I looked into what it would take to create a non-profit club and decided the venture was beyond what I wanted to undertake. Then it struck me. Why not create a walking faction within the already existing and successful Pacesetters running club?

I asked if I could make a presentation to the board of directors. The next month, my wife and I and Ann Simon, a local accomplished racewalker, addressed the board and outlined the value of what walkers would bring to the

club. The questioning was to the point.

- If they create a walking division, would we be willing to make the commitment to organize and run the walking venues?
- How many walkers did we think we would bring to the club?
- What did we expect of the club?

After the presentation, the board had an open discussion with the three of us present and made the decision to include a walking division. My wife and I were named co-directors of walking and are now on the Pacesetter board which gives us two votes in the decision-making process for the club! More importantly we have a voice as walkers. One minute we were on the outside looking in and now we are part of the decision-making process. Only in America!

We immediately went to work living up to our end of the commitment. We created a Saturday morning walking group open to the public that meets at a local park at 8:00 a.m. each week. Similar to the weekly running groups, but at a different location. Our weekly walking group started with three people and has now grown to 20 participants and I believe will continue to grow as the word spreads. Each Saturday we have at least 7 core walkers if not more.

We are included in the monthly fun run/walks and walkers are encouraged to attend co-events in the weekly e-mail newsletter and monthly published newsletter. Walkers could join fun run/walks in the past, but now they are more comfortable and plentiful.

Ann, Marsha and I were the next month's featured club speakers, which was open to the public and drew a very large crowd. We explained why we were creating a walking faction and more importantly, how much we all had in common. In most cases, walkers are just a slower version of runners who share the same wellness and self-esteem goals. When I pointed out a fact I learned from a Runner's World article that walkers work harder than runners when they go 5.0 mph or faster, I think that was an eye opener. I demonstrated from one edge of the room to the other the difference between the slowest walkers on Earth to the fastest runner on Earth. Using actual times, there was considerable co-mingling of times of both runners and walkers. In other words, as many of us walkers already know, many walkers are faster than many runners.

The club's mission statement is one that all running clubs should adopt, which leaves the

door open to all silent sports and primarily walkers.

“The Pacesetters of the Fox Cities is a 501(c)3 tax exempt, non-profit running club dedicated to increasing activity, improving nutrition, enhancing our community's and member's enjoyment of the sports of running, jogging, walking and individual health activities for all ages and abilities. The club goals are met through leadership and the social, educational and informational year-round programs of the club. These include: meetings, races, fun run/walks, training, training partners, mentoring and other club functions.”

One fun run/walk event this past August demonstrated the commitment to partnering walkers and runners—the “T-shirt Swap,” which teamed up runners and walkers on the track. Each person brought an event shirt and placed it on the fence. Then 5K times were used to equalize the three-person teams made up of runners and walkers. Each team did 4, 3, 2 and 1 lap and all team members' times were combined. The fastest team had first choice, the second fastest had second and so on. Runners cheered on walkers and walkers cheered on runners.

Mutual respect and recognition was felt after this fun event. More importantly the club activities create talking points and understanding that never existed before at this level. Once walkers and runners create dialogue, then there's a better understanding of each other's sport and perhaps in the next race walkers will move further to the back at the start of an event and runners will stop calling us, “just walkers.”

Check out your local running club and see if they already have or are willing to accept walkers into the fold. It's a step in the right direction to laying to rest prejudice and creating understanding and awareness. Are you ready to get along?♦

**Dave and Marsha Kendall** are avid walkers living in Wisconsin. They are members of the Pacesetters running and walking club in the Fox Cities area. <http://www.pacesettersrun.com/>



[www.walk-magazine.com](http://www.walk-magazine.com)  
[walk-magazine.blogspot.com/](http://walk-magazine.blogspot.com/)

## Canadian Race Walkers of the Year 2008

By Roger Burrows

It's Racewalker of the Year (RWOY) time again, eh! The second annual edition for **WALK! Magazine**, but not for the concept. For some years, I distributed a newsletter to race walk enthusiasts as part of my function at Athletics Canada. Its role was to communicate pretty dry programming and administrative information. But each December's yearly wrap-up was much more fun. **WALK!** provides a new vehicle, but the approach is the same.



The idea is to recognize Canadian race walkers who do something exceptional or inspiring between the starting gun and the final click of the stopwatch. The achievements have to be in races. They do not need to be elite level, but they all have to show elite attitude. We look for a balance of year-long distinction and the best flashes of racing brilliance.

We recognize 12 walkers per year, though not on a strict "one per month" schedule, like a pin-up calendar. (Not a bad idea for the future, though!) The order is purely alphabetical.

As a true Canadian bureaucrat, I confess to having a geo-political eye for regional balance. But I will not distort a merit-based list to be "PC". If this year's list seems a little western-leaning, so be it. Gerry Dragomir's group in Vancouver, for example, had a phenomenal year. The traditional powerhouses in Ontario and Quebec were left clutching their hats in the wind as the British Columbians swept past. The appropriate response from the east? Suck it up and give chase.

### Tim Berrett – Alberta

In Beijing, Tim joined the exclusive ranks of five-time Olympians. Canadian track and field, to my knowledge, has only three. Tim's typically focused year involved qualifying for the 50 km with a wonderful 3h52:40 – done the hard way, on a track! – winning yet another national 20 km championship, and then producing a steady and creditable 4h08:18 at the Games themselves. My unofficial five-timers' tie-breaker gives another walker, the indestructible Alex Oakley, a slight lead: he missed one Olympics during

his career, which therefore spanned a six-Games period. Here's to Tim nailing the record in 2012 by actually racing in six Games. You can't beat the symbolism; guess how far host city London is from his birthplace in Tunbridge Wells? Yup, 50 km!

### Evan Dunfee – British Columbia

At the World Junior Championships in Poland, Evan became the second fastest Canadian junior of all time. His 42:56.82 ranks behind only the legendary Guillaume Leblanc, who went on to win an Olympic silver medal in 1992. Evan heads the 10 km rankings, ahead of some impressive seniors, and owns four of the year's top 10 km performances. His outstanding 10th place at the World Juniors is Evan's only race this year without a "1" in the finishing position column.

### Nicola Evangelista – British Columbia

If you looked vainly for Nicola's name in the 2007 rankings, you might feel that she qualifies for "Rookie of 2008" status. Her ever-faster series of races culminated in mid-September with a stunning 52:17 in the moderate altitude of Edmonton, Alberta. But Nicola did compete in 2007; she just wasn't fast enough to make the modest ranking standards! What a difference a year makes. If you want to see how power and rhythm define successful race walking, just watch Nicola race – she has got it!

### Johanna Flipsen – Alberta

Too bad if Johanna was hoping that no one would notice her comeback race, late in the season in Edmonton! While out of the sport for several years with nagging injuries, she still occasionally managed to turn heads here on the other side of the country. "I saw this tall woman race walking, and she was really motoring – do you know who she is?" "Oh, that's probably Johanna on another business trip to Ottawa!" Technically sound and immensely powerful, Johanna stormed back to seventh in the 5 km rankings on the strength of her comeback 27:46. If she is really back, bring on the Intergalactic Team Championship for W50; with Johanna, Linda Wilson, Nanci Sweazey and the rejuvenated Sherry Watts, Canada would be unbeatable!

### Iñaki Gomez – British Columbia

In his first year as a senior, Iñaki negotiated the athlete-devouring transition from junior with maturity. He ended the year ranked second, third and first for 5 km, 10 km and 20 km respectively. He won the NAIA 5 km

Championship with an impressive 21:06. In the 20 km, he represented the country well at altitude in the IAAF regional championship for U23 athletes. He gained immense experience walking stride for stride with Tim Berrett for almost the entire National 20 km Championship, and he ended the season by triumphantly slipping under 1h30 for the distance in Edmonton. And the name? Yes – I decided that, this year, I would find out about "Iñaki." It's Basque.



Jean Harms, a racewalker who also swims, bikes and runs.

### Jean Harms – Alberta

Depending on the day, Jean will describe herself either as a triathlete with a race walk habit or a racewalker who can also swim, bike and run. However you look at it, one glance at her technique shows her remarkable talent. She is clearly faster than her fifth place national 10 km ranking suggests and she deserves more company in the gap between the pack behind her and the international royalty ahead. A valiant attempt to hit the 20 km big time in September was ruined by the unusually oppressive, post-hurricane conditions in Welland that affected everyone in the race.

### Megan Huzzey – British Columbia

Once our leading junior, Megan took some time away from the sport before bursting back

Continued on next page.

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### Canadian Connection

Continued from previous page.

on the scene this year. Those who had not seen her before were impressed by her effortless “roll” over the ground in her first season of 20 km racing. At the Nationals, Megan walked steadily enough to slip into second place. Then, in the withering humidity of Welland, she “rolled” past a fading Rachel Lavallée for a very impressive victory. Both races were careful because conditions demanded it. But Megan is also FAST. A few years ago, she was one of the rare juniors to crack 50:00 for 10 km. This year, only a dearth of shorter races prevented her from showing her true speed. Watch out when she does!

### James Kenny – Alberta

The unassuming Calgarian (M50) finished the year with nationally ranked personal bests of 25:18 and 51:45 and 1h51:05 for 5 km, 10 km and 20 km. The last of those three placed him ninth in demonstrably the strongest National 20 km championship for two decades. With the injured Nil Lavallée racing infrequently, and Gerry Dragomir focused more on coaching his magnificent group than his own racing, the stylish James quietly established himself high in Masters ranks.



James Kenny finished the year with nationally ranked personal bests in the **5K, 10K and 20K.**

### Rachel Lavallée – Ontario

This was something of a gentle come-back year for Rachel after a winter of well-deserved rest and recovery. But she quickly resumed her accustomed place at the top of the national rankings in all three standard events. Rachel’s dominance is eloquently

clear in the rankings: she is the only Canadian woman under 24:00 at 5 km, the only one under 50:00 at 10 km and the only one to remotely approach 1 h 40 at 20 km.

### Pierre-Luc Ménard – Québec

Québec, traditionally a bastion of Canadian racewalking, was perhaps most affected by this year’s onslaught from British Columbia. Pierre-Luc was second to two different west-coasters in the 10 km and 20 km rankings. But what a treat for the 20+ walkers on the track at the Ontario 5 km championships! They witnessed first-hand one of the great walks of the year. Pierre-Luc unleashed a combination of the youthful rhythm that burst on the scene so impressively several years ago and the power of an experienced senior. “Yup, grandkids, back in oh-eight, I was lapped umpteen times when Pierre-Luc did his 20:53!”

### Blair Miller – British Columbia

Just one race? A RWOY with a “mere” 48:58 at 10 km? Well, Blair’s appearance at the Nationals in Windsor is only part of a story that deserves to be told. Blair was a regular member of junior and senior national RW teams in the 1990s. He then spent several years teaching in London, England, which is why his name may not be familiar to current enthusiasts in Canada. He came back this year because he is also an accomplished runner. At the Olympic Trials in Windsor, he narrowly missed making our 400 m/800 m team ... for the Paralympics. Blair has cerebral palsy.

### Linda Wilson – Ontario

Linda (W50) debuted as a RWOY last year, partly on the strength of very respectable sub-30:00 5 km. In 2008, now 53, her progression continued. In October, heads turned at the USA One Hour Championship in Waltham, MA when the horn sounded to end the race – why is that Canadian still going? Linda had done 9812m in the hour. But she knew that the Canadian track-race record for her age group was less than half a lap away. Meet officials were also aware, of course, and had agreed to let her go for the record, which she duly claimed in 61:03. On the road, Linda went faster several times. By year’s end, her best of 59:47 remained 10th in the national rankings for all ages. ♦

**Roger Burrows** has been a coach or manager of Canadian track and field teams since the 1970s, including race walk teams at several Pan-Am and World Cups and the Olympic Games. After a two-decade career as a sports administrator at provincial, national and international levels, he currently works as a Parliamentary translator in Ottawa.

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By Kirk Markus and Jeff Salvage

In our last article we introduced you to trekking and its appeal to avid walkers. Now let's get out on the trail at one of the Earth's finest walking destinations:

## THE ABODE OF THE SNOWS

Mysterious and exotic, Nepal holds prime position in the imagination of every mountain lover and trekker in the world. It is home to the bulk of the Himalayas and of course Mt. Everest, Earth's highest peak. In fact, of the world's 14 highest peaks, eight are in Nepal. Everest is also the birthplace of Buddha and home of the famed porters and mountain climbing Sherpa. The mixture of mountains and ancient culture make Nepal a magical land of superlatives and an absolute delight for walkers and trekkers.

Himalaya means "abode of the snows" and the main purpose of any respectable pilgrimage to Nepal is to reach out to the Himalayas and to touch a piece of these wild and jagged mountains, to feel their power, and of course, to walk among the high peaks and deep valleys. It is the embodiment of a trek. It is no surprise that Nepal is one of best places in the world to do just that. Considering that 80% of the villages of Nepal are not connected to roads, walking is the means by which everybody and everything (carried by porters) gets around. Trekking is second nature here.

It's hard to imagine any other trek that offers as much classic Himalayan scenery step after step, day after day, than the trek to the foot of Mt. Everest. In addition to the fantastic vistas, there are rewarding visits to the villages along the trails. While most of the culture is Buddhist Sherpa, somewhat akin to Tibetan Buddhism, you will also find some migrant Hindu Nepalis who work in the shops and guest houses, giving a taste of the two predominant cultures in Nepal. Time the market days just right and you will probably see traders who have ventured from Tibet to the markets in Namche and even farther south. Their distinctive red braided head garb makes them easy to spot!

There are two primary destinations for the average trekker. Everest Base camp at



Photo by Jeff Salvage, www.greatreks.com

**Spinning Prayers at the Gokyo Ri and Everest Base Camp Treks, Nepal. Reminders of the strong faith were everywhere. One popular symbol was the rotating prayer wheels seen here.**

17,500 ft. is the stepping off point for most mountaineering expeditions to summit Everest and is the destination most people think of when trekking to Everest. The other destination is probably more impressive from a trekker's standpoint. It is a small chunk of rock nestled at the foot of Pumori Mountain overlooking Everest Base Camp. This modest piece of earth is called Kala Pataar (Black Rock) and its peak sits at 18,200 ft. and commands stunning views of Mt. Everest, the surrounding massif, Everest Base Camp, the Khumbu glacier and finally the famously deadly Khumbu Icefall—are all part of one of the most breathtaking 360-degree panoramas available in the world! This panorama is accessible, without using a rope and ice axe.

## FINDING YOUR WAY

The thought of climbing Everest is a daunting, dangerous, and expensive endeavor requiring technical skills and a lot of money. Kala Pataar, in contrast, is a long, but straightforward hike that doesn't require a rope, ice axe, or even a tent.

While you could spend your nights in a cold and cramped tent, there are alternatives. Nepal is the birthplace of the independent tea house trek. In the "old days" before guided treks, travelers ventured forth into the mountains going from village to village, staying at the same little tea houses where locals stopped for a night's rest and a cup of tea on

Continued on next page.

## Everest

Continued from previous page.

their own journeys to and from their homes in the mountains. Ultimately as more travelers trekked to these remote areas, guest houses were built and small restaurants opened to cater specifically to trekkers. Toting only a sleeping bag, a trekker just heads down the trail.

If time is in short supply you can pay slightly more for a guide service. One can do this through an international company and pay a premium, or easily hire a guide in Kathmandu. There are many local companies in Kathmandu and with a few days' time you can find a qualified and reasonably priced guide and set off. (In fact many of the international guide companies subcontract to such firms.) Your guide can hire porters in Lukla, so all you need to carry is a day pack. Relying on hired help has pros and cons. For an organized trek the upside is the simplification of the planning and logistics. All you have to do is show up ready to trek. The downside is that your interaction in the location guest houses is more limited.

### Not Just Any Walk—On the Trail with Jeff and Kirk

Our trek started with a short flight from Kathmandu to the small village of Lukla. There is a jostle for seats on the left side of the plane for those in the know, as these are the best seats for a view of the mountains. Nervous anticipation is in the air while waiting to receive clearance for take-off. When the tiny prop plane lifts off, it is engulfed in the majesty of the Himalayas. The flight is short and soon we are approaching the short strip of land they call a runway.

Everyone is apprehensive as the landing strip is tiny and surrounded by peaks and valleys. The runway is sloped to assist landings and takeoffs, however, there is still little margin for error. We contemplate if the sandbags surrounding the runway are part of military security for the ongoing civil war in Nepal or if they provide a barrier in case the plane does not stop in time.

While the town of Lukla doesn't have much charm, it is an effective launching point and a good place to hire porters to lighten our daily load. Once on the trail and walking at over 9,000 ft., breathing becomes strained. By the second day, we are engulfed in the towering mountains and aqua blue rivers of glacial melt, lessening the awareness of our labored breathing. The trail is lined with countless prayer wheels and carved prayer stones. While these mantras were probably meant to pacify one's fears, we worry why there is so much need for prayer.

The first night's lodge exceeded expectations and even had electricity, albeit the lights all dimmed when anything was plugged in to

charge. It is where Jeff and I met. While sipping a cup of tea, I was intrigued by the man at the adjacent table who brought so many electronics to such a remote area. Jeff had a small laptop, a fancy digital camera, and lots of accessories. When I asked about his equipment, Jeff explained that he photographed racewalkers. My partner Nancy joined in that she knows several racewalkers from her days working at the Olympic Training Center in Colorado Springs. Who would guess that racewalking would bring people together in such a remote corner of the world? An instant bond was formed, leading to a new friendship and many more treks together.

Although our groups were traveling separately at this point, our paths criss-crossed over the next several days ultimately joining forces for our summit bid on Kala Pataar. We departed first thing in the morning and after a steep and lung-sucking climb

reached the center of commerce and tourism for the region, the village of Namche Bazaar. The cluttered sight of small shops, houses, and lodges clinging to the steep mountainside were a blessing to our weary eyes. Namche Bazaar had a good variety of facilities. Internet is available as well as several little European style bakeries that served some tempting sweets. In fact there was so much trekking gear and western style goods that it is hard to believe that Namche is not connected via paved roads with trucks bringing supplies on a daily basis. We sought basic lodging with our only exceptions being power and hot showers as this would be the last chance for such amenities. Fortunately this was not a problem in Namche. It is truly a place where the medieval world meets the modern.

Sunday is market day in Namche and we planned our trek to witness the gritty little market on a steep hillside at the edge of town with wild-eyed traders coming in from surrounding villages and even as far as Tibet to buy and sell.

### Mountains Don't Care

For the most part we go up ("ukalo" in Nepali). Ukalo, ukalo, ukalo—it hums in our bodies and rings out in our heads: It's tough, but it really torments us after we gain 500 ft. only to go back down and then right back up again. Our hard earned altitude is wasted that brings forth a new mantra: "elevation gain is a terrible thing to waste." However, the mountains don't care and it's just business as usual on the roof of the world.

We spent the bitter cold nights huddled around a wood-burning or yak dung-burning stove eating varying quality dhal bhat—the Nepali national dish. Dal bhat is basically a thick lentil soup poured over a Mt. Everest-sized pile of rice augmented by a curried vegetable or meat (if you dare). The Nepalis eat it in copious quantities for breakfast, lunch and dinner, every day, without complaint. I find it quite tasty; however some palates don't agree and almost all get a little bored after 12 days of dahl bhat. After dinner, we sipped a few cups of hot tea and had some friendly conversation before retreating to the

### Everest Base Camp Trek Overview

Days Trekking:	12
Distance:	92 km/57 mi roundtrip
Maximum Elevation:	18,200 ft. Kala Pataar 17,500 ft. Everest Base Camp
Starting Elevation:	9,400 ft.
Approximate Elevation Change:	13,900 ft. one way
Price Range Independent:	\$300-\$700
Price Range Outfitter:	\$1,200-\$3,500
Challenge Level:	Difficult

cold "bedrooms," crawling into our sleeping bags and waiting, skin shivering, for our body heat to warm the confines of our sleeping bags and slowly seep into our bones.

From Namche it was on to Tengboche Monastery and the surrounding guest houses that serve trekkers and pilgrims. Climbers of Mt. Everest historically come here for blessings by the monks in advance of their dangerous summit bids for the top. They receive a white scarf (a blessing for a safe journey) and offer a prayer to the mountain gods.

The monastery is truly in a spectacular setting. As we stood in the 360-degree panorama, I studied the topo map and pointed out the names of the surrounding peaks. Padam, our guide, knew them by heart from his many trips to the region: Ama Dablam, Lhotse, Tamscherku, Kasem Kanguru and a glimpse of Everest over the top of the Nuptse ridge. The names of these peaks have engaged my dreams for many years of studying maps and reading books of this famous region. It is great to be here, finally, and see them with my own eyes.

We had an added treat during our visit to Tengboche, arriving just in time for Festival Lo Shar, the Sherpa New Year. The monks, in full regalia, were an ocular fest. Centered around a bonfire the monks chanted and tossed spears. Jeff laughed as he watched the young monks take "cheating" glances from their book of chants. It reminded him of Hebrew school where he struggled reading prayers he could pronounce but not comprehend.

Beyond Tengboche are the desolate lands above tree line. This is home of the glaciers, mountain peaks, icefalls, rock faces and glacial moraines. The amount of snow on the ground increased substantially and the wind picked up, but we were blessed by bright sunny days. On the way, we passed stone chortens that were monuments to many who have perished on Everest. This includes Scott Fischer and Rob Hall from the ill fated 1996 climbing season (chronicled in the famous John Krakauer book *Into Thin Air*) as well as Babu Chiri Sherpa who holds the record for most ascents of Mt. Everest (10). On our seventh day from Lukla we reached the group of rock huts known as Lobuche. We hunkered down and prepared for our summit bid on Kala Pataar.

At this point our two independent groups had nearly merged together. The physical and mental strain of trekking at high altitude takes a toll. We were all worn down, nervous and cold. Before bed, we discussed our strategy and expressed concerns about our ability to reach the summit of Kala Pataar. We went over our decisions for start times, clothing choices and debated taking the altitude sickness drug Dimaiox. This was a once in a lifetime opportunity and we all wanted to succeed.

## GODDESS LADY OF THE WIND

The next day was truly a day of days. We prepared to leave just before sunrise. Overnight virtually everything not kept in our sleeping bags froze solid. This included water bottles, treasured Snickers bars, and even our boots. It was hard to start an epic day of hiking only to have to put on a pair of boots that were nearly frozen bricks.

Jeff's part of our combined group was melting down from physical problems and a little sibling rivalry. In the morning one of his teammate was ill and couldn't carry on. It was excellent weather and difficult decisions had to be made about waiting an additional day in hopes of going together or carrying on immediately, but with a smaller group.

Just before sunrise we departed, a little nervous, with a smaller team, but still in over-all good spirits. The trail winded up and down over glacial moraines following the beautiful Khumbu glacier. As I have said before, elevation gain was painful to waste, doubly so at this altitude. Making our way to a place called Gorak Shep or "Graveyard of the Crows," our energy was depleted by cold and lack of oxygen. I hoped it wouldn't become our graveyard, too. Crossing a frozen lake, Jeff hummed a little song from Schoolhouse Rock about never skating on thin ice. Slowly the steep grade sapped our strength and will. As the title suggests, breathing was fundamentally important. Our brains and muscles



Photo by Jeff Salvage. www.greattreks.com

**Classic Everest - Kala Pataar, Everest Base Camp Trek, Nepal. After many days of hiking and one very long climb up Kala Pataar we were rewarded with a breathtaking view of Mount Everest.**

craved oxygen as the air was thin at 18,000 ft. In fact, less than half the amount of oxygen was available here as compared to sea level. Our breathing became more labored with every step. Jeff managed to explain that in his competitive days, he racewalked a 6:00 minute mile and a marathon at close to an 8:00 minute per mile pace—he admitted that this was harder. In the end it was sheer will, either we wanted to get to the summit bad enough to endure the pain or we didn't. That day was a triumph of will. After several false summits, we all make it to the very top of Kala Pataar, prayer flags in every inch of the summit signaled our arrival and feelings of jubilation were shared by all.

From the summit the view was absolutely spectacular. We got a good look at the windswept peak of Mt. Everest. The closer peak of Nupste looked more dominating even though it was several thousand feet shorter than Everest. Everest was named for Sir George Everest who was the surveyor general of British India in the 1800s. However, the local names were much more dramatic, even though their exact meanings were sometimes debated. Sagarmartha is the Nepali name, which translates to Head of the Sky. The Sherpa and Tibetan name is Chomolungma, which means Mother Goddess of the Universe or Goddess Lady of the Wind.

The summit wasn't the end, we still had to make it down to Lobuche before sunset. Admittedly, it was easier to go down, but it was still a challenge. It was a long day and

all of us were tired. After many hours, we arrived exhausted in Lobuche, just at twilight.

Departing the next day we head toward Lukla. The weather on the return trip was decidedly less welcoming than on our ascent. Much of the way, the wind is right in our faces and then the clouds rolled in with some brief rain and snow showers. It was the lack of sun however that really made a difference. It lets in the cold, cold, cold! Ultimately, we made it safely back to Lukla and then flew to Kathmandu.

We had a few days left to experience the rich culture and ancient architecture on the narrow medieval feeling streets of Kathmandu. It is really a fascinating place to explore. For such a small country on the map, Nepal has so much to offer. Nepal is one of the most spectacular trekking destinations with non-stop Himalayan scenery and a culture rich with Hindu and Buddhist traditions. It was sad to depart but it is good to have reasons to return to such beautiful places. I hope you have a chance to take a walk on the rooftop of the world. ♦

**Kirk Markus** is an intrepid traveler, trekker and outdoor enthusiast who calls the open road his home and Chicago his base.

**Jeff Salvage** is a walking enthusiast, writer, and photographer who never passes up an opportunity for an adventure.

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## Thinking (and Walking) Tangentially

By Dave McGovern

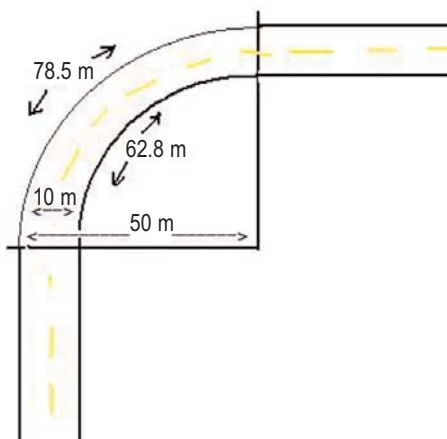
I've just returned from the San Antonio Marathon where I was recruited to hold pace for four-hour walkers in the half marathon. There were over 30,000 participants in the race so a lot of walkers were shooting to come in under that mark. And yet I spent most of the race all alone. There were plenty of people walking at the same pace as me, but they were all—ALL—walking waaaay over on the other side of the street.

To me, walking the shortest distance in a race is second nature. I've done it for years in training so I see the straightest line from turn to turn without even thinking about it. Sometimes I even catch myself "cutting the tangents" when driving—not recommended!

Cutting the tangents derives from simple geometry: the shortest distance between two points is a straight line. Yet most beginning walkers will follow the curves of the road wherever they lead, often walking many meters longer per turn. In a race like San Antonio, not following the straightest line can add up to a mile or more of extra distance walked over the course of a marathon. (Your Garmin isn't lying... You really did walk 6.48 miles in that 6.2-mile "10K" race you did last week!)

A little junior high geometry: The circumference of a circle =  $2\pi \times r$ . If a road is 10 meters wide and makes a 90-degree turn (1/4

of a circle) and the radius of the circle from the origin (center point) to the outside edge of the road is 50 meters, the difference in distance travelled is =  $[2\pi \times r]/4$  of the outer edge of the road along the turn (which is 1/4 of the radius of a full circle) -  $[2\pi \times r]/4$  of the inner edge of the road. So the distance saved by walking along the inner edge of the road rather than the outer edge of the road is  $[2\pi \times 50]/4 - [2\pi \times 40]/4$  or  $78.5 \text{ m} - 62.8 \text{ m} = 15.7 \text{ m}$ . At 12 minutes per mile (0.45 meters per second) that's 35 seconds. For one turn! That's 35 FREE seconds just by taking the shortest distance along that one turn. Now multiply that 35 seconds by the dozens of similar turns taken during the race and you can see how walking the shortest distance consistently can really add up.



Walking the shortest distance is a pretty easy process, but it takes some practice before it becomes ingrained so that you do it automati-

cally when racing. A few How To's:

- ♦ Look far ahead down the road to where the walkers or runners ahead of you are disappearing around the next turn. Head in a straight line for that point.
- ♦ Whenever possible hug the inside of the turns.
- ♦ When coming out of the turn look ahead to the point where the next turn disappears and head in a straight line for that point.
- ♦ Try to anticipate what the people ahead of you are doing so that you don't have to suddenly scramble the long way around packs of walkers.

Let's say you've just turned right, hugging the curb on a road course, and the next turn is a left-hand turn 400 meters ahead. Ideally you should walk as straight a line as possible to the curb of the upcoming turn, gradually crossing the street diagonally to reach that point. Most of the people around you will immediately cross the street, like lemmings, and then walk along the curb on the far side of the road. You may not be able to walk in the middle of the road at home during training, but in a race, with the road closed to traffic this is unnecessary and doing so will add 20 to 30 meters to the distance walked. Again, multiply that 20 to 30 meters by 20 turns and you've saved 400 to 600 meters (3:00 to 4:30 minutes at 12:00 pace) over the course of the race.

One final note: Cutting the tangents is not cheating! Not doing so is cheating yourself! Races are measured on the tangents, so if the course is advertised as a 10K, it is a 6.2-mile race, measured along the shortest possible distance. The elite runners and faster walkers will be walking a 10K, but somewhere in the middle of the pack things break down and a lot of the slower walkers and runners start wandering the course along the curves which results in the slower athletes actually walking a much longer distance than the faster athletes.

Racing is hard! A marathon—or a 10K or 5K—is a long way to go. Why walk 27.3 miles or 6.48 or 3.24 when you can walk 26.2 or 6.2 or 3.1? If you can't be fast, at least you can be smart! Cut the tangents!♦

**Dave McGovern** is a 20+-year veteran of the U.S. National Racewalk Team who now coaches masters and elite walkers and enjoys cutting the tangents to the nearest seafood buffet. Visit his website at [www.racewalking.org](http://www.racewalking.org).

# “Dear Diary, I Finished the Marathon...”



Photo courtesy of MarathonFoto.

Larry Smith walks hard during the 2008 Nationwide Columbus Marathon. WALK! Magazine followed him through his training throughout the year leading up to this race and his quest to break the 5-hour mark.

*Larry Smith trained for and completed his first marathon in 2007 learning quite a bit from that experience.*

*With that experience under his belt, Larry agreed to let us follow his training for the 2008 Columbus Marathon on October 19 and his goal of breaking 5 hours. This is the final installment of a four-part series.*

**By Larry Smith**

## **Marathon Race Diary** **Columbus Marathon, October 19, 2008,** **scheduled race start 7:30 a.m:**

**6:15 a.m.:** I wonder if my wife, Andrea, will find a parking space soon. We are supposed to meet fellow walkers at the Columbus Renaissance hotel at 6:30 a.m. Want to get there in plenty of time.

**6:20 a.m.:** Enter the lounge at the Columbus Renaissance. The place is empty, except for one other walker. OK, guess we got here on time.

**6:50 a.m.:** Begin pre-race warm-ups.

**7:20 a.m.:** Kiss Andrea and wish her luck on her first marathon. Find my way to the starting area to line up by my race pace. Freaking out because my GPS watch is not locking in on the satellite. Must be due to the downtown buildings. How will I know my mileage and pace during this race? At 7:30 a.m., the gun goes off to mark the start of the 2008 Columbus Marathon.

**7:38 a.m.:** I finally pass the starting line. I'm careful to avoid tripping on the discarded sweatshirts, hats and gloves of the racers ahead of me not needing the warm attire.

**Mile 0.9:** GPS finally locks in. Great, I will be able to see my pace, but now my mileage will be off by about 0.9 miles. Referring to my watch for distance is just confusing at this point.

Continued on next page.

## Larry

Continued from page 23.

**Mile 2.5:** There's Doug, the first of my course support team, waiting in the COTA bus shelter just as we planned. He hands me a bottle of water. I hand him my jacket. I'll see him again at Mile 7.

**Mile 3:** My right foot starts to tingle. Geez ... my shoelace must be too tight. How long can I continue like this? Numbness ensues. I decide to stop and take the time to make the necessary adjustment. Precious time.

**Mile 5:** Katie and Lillian are waiting for me in Bexley under the stop sign at the southwest corner of Drexel and Bryden, exactly as we arranged. Grab a Gatorade from them. Appreciate the dual-purpose, handmade sign cheering on both Andrea and me.

**Mile 7:** Where's Doug?

**Mile 7.1:** Hit the water stop because no Doug.

**Mile 8:** Strike up a conversation with a fellow walker. Turns out she grew up in the same neighborhood in Cincinnati as me. Small world.

Fatigue is setting in. I'm concerned by the tightness in my hamstrings. ... Upon careful consideration, I declare this is my last marathon ... ever.

**Mile 9:** Crowds are really big as we head back Downtown. Darla, one of Larry's Ladies, is up ahead. I'll see her again at Mile 12. Darla says Andrea is doing well as she cheers me along.

**Mile 10:** I hear "Hey Larry." It's my buddies Doug (no, another Doug) and Molly in front of their house in German Village. Feeling really good at this point. Confident in my fluid management strategy.

**Mile 13:** Get a shout-out from a half-marathon runner as he turns toward his finish line, "Way to go, speed walker! Looking smooth." That little exchange helps pump me up.

**Mile 13.5:** Take my tequila shot ... without the tequila ... without the lime. I read about this technique in Runner's World. For those

who need the extra sodium, like me, grab a salt packet from a fast food restaurant, sprinkle it on your fist, and lick it off just like doing a tequila shot. Do this at the start and halfway through the race. Yuck.

**Mile 14:** My buddy from work, Eric, and his wife are eating breakfast al fresco at a restaurant on High Street, just as planned. When he sees me, he trots into the middle of High Street to hand me a bottle of Gatorade. It helped that lingering salt shot I did a few minutes earlier.

**Mile 15:** Uh oh. Mismanaged my fluid intake. Find myself on the other side of the H<sub>2</sub>O equation. Must make a pit stop at the Porta-John. Precious time.

**Mile 17:** There's Deb on 17th Avenue, just east of Ohio Stadium. I knew she'd be there, but I didn't know she'd be playing the kazoo. She hands me a Gatorade.

**Mile 20:** The Columbus Marathon is renowned as a flat course, but there is a steady incline from the Stadium to Upper Arlington. I handle it well. There's Steph up ahead with a bottle of Gatorade, bag of pretzels and a gel packet. She's screaming for me so loud, the crowd around her starts cheering for me, too. I take the Gatorade and pretzels, but refuse the gel. At this point, I know my stomach won't tolerate it.

**Mile 21:** I start eating the pretzels in hopes of settling my stomach. I am breathing so hard and my mouth is so dry that as I chew, I am blowing pretzel dust out of mouth. Fortunately, no spectators to picture that.

**Mile 22:** Fatigue is setting in. I'm concerned by the tightness in my hamstrings. I can't keep my stride length. Upon careful consideration, I declare this is my last marathon ... ever.

**Mile 23:** Gail is waiting for me on First Avenue in Grandview. When she sees me approach she gets the crowd fired up as well. She hands me the last bottle of Gatorade, which I force down. I know I need the carbs and the fluids to finish, but it's really hard to

Fitness Walker? Race Walker? Trekker? then visit [www.jeffsalvage.com](http://www.jeffsalvage.com) or any of his walking websites



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take. I begin to realize I am not going to break 5 hours.

**Miles 24 & 25:** A desolate part of the course. The crowds are sparse, many have dispersed. I struggle to stay focused. I really want this to be done.

**Mile 26:** Turn the corner on to Nationwide Boulevard and head for home. The Jumbotron ahead projects a familiar image. Hey, that's me! The announcer calls out my name. I hear Andrea screaming for me on the sidelines, "Go Larry! Go racewalker, go!"

**Mile 26.2:** My time, 5:02:39. All my muscles tighten as I go through the chute and hug Andrea. Not sub 5 hours, but strangely enough, I feel really good about my race.

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Many people have told me they are sorry that I did not break 5 hours. For the first day or so, not meeting my goal was on my mind. It soon occurred to me that 5 hours was just a goal, something to shoot for; something to motivate me to get through all those training miles. But what does that number really mean? Is there anything magical about 4:59:59? Not really.

You know what numbers are magical to me? The numbers that show my blood pressure has dropped into the normal range, my good and bad cholesterol numbers are where they should be, my resting pulse is significantly lower, and my weight is down to where it was when I was in college. To me, those are the powerful numbers. And, it all comes from walking. I would never have imagined that the simple act of walking would produce such powerful and transforming results. Though, admittedly, averaging 100 miles per month and at a pretty blazing pace, it's not simply walking.

Sure, I get a lot of grief from people about walking. My wife has to remind me that "we're not going to talk about walking anymore" when she feels I may be boring our dinner companions ... again. My friends tease me that walking isn't really a sport and certainly isn't a suitable pastime for a "real man."

My Jewish mother insists that walking is destined to be the death of me. "What? Six miles isn't good enough? You have to try to kill yourself by walking 26?"

My 16-year-old daughter is mortified by me,

especially when I am in full racewalking mode. On more than one occasion, especially after her friends have seen me out during my training walks, she has implored, "Please, can't you do it indoors? Don't you care about me?" Oh, the humanity!

All that stuff is kind of amusing to me. Fortunately, for as many people who razz me about my passion/obsession with walking, I have just as many people tell me they are grateful to me for my example. A good number of people have told me that I have inspired them to commit to a regular exercise program, which is really amazing to me and I am humbled by it every time I hear it. Others turn to me for advice or ask me to help them develop training plans for races. A proud moment for me was when my son, who is in college, started running last year because he saw what I was doing and asked me to set up a training schedule for him to complete a half marathon. We both did that half marathon together last May.

That's what it's all about. It is what really keeps me motivated, along with all the friendships I have developed from my walking experience. I look forward to doing this walking stuff for the rest of my life, with my ultimate goal of achieving a longer, healthier life. Maybe I can get all of you a little bit more motivated, as I leave you with one of my favorite marathon quotes from an unknown author:

"You will have days when you do not know if you will be able to complete a marathon. You will have a life time of knowing you did."

Thank you, Cindi Leeman, **WALK! Magazine** editor, for allowing me to share my thoughts through marathon training this year.



**Larry Smith with his wife Andrea Applegate.**

Also, thanks to Larry's Ladies for all your support through the training – you guys are the best!

And, I especially want to thank my wife Andrea, for helping me with these articles. Andrea is not just my marathon training partner, but my training partner for life. ♦

**Larry Smith** lives in Central Ohio and is a member of the New Albany Walking Club. He is does environmental engineering work for an environmental consulting company in Columbus.



Wendy Bumgardner in the 2003 Portland Marathon. Courtesy of Flash-Pro.com.

## Wendy Bumgardner

About.com Guide to Walking  
<http://walking.about.com>

I am a registered Medical Technologist but I have been in hospital administration for the past 12 years.

I started walking in September 1984. My husband-to-be was a hiker and participated in volkssport walks when he was stationed in Germany in the Army. We saw an announcement for the first volkssport walk in Oregon and joined in. I had never walked 10K before, and was thrilled to finish it and get a medal. After that, I was hooked.

I am a volksmarcher, but I also have been a marathon walker since 1999. Nowadays, I am cut-

ting back to being a half-marathon walker.

Nobody ever expected me to be a fitness walker. I have nerve damage from an operation I had at age 14 and when I started volksmarching, I still had a distinct limp. Thanks to volksmarching, I stopped seeing myself as handicapped and instead became a serious walker.

I have been the Walking Guide at About.com since they debuted in 1997. I have tutorials on every kind of walking: fitness walking, racewalking, marathon and half marathon training, volkssport walking and nordic walking. I review shoes, walking gear, pedometers and treadmills. We have an active Discussion Forum where walkers can ask questions and give each other advice.

It has been a joy to create this site for the benefit of everyone who wants to walk more and walk better.

Because of my web site, I have learned many different varieties of walking. I trained to be a race-walker and I use nordic walking poles every now and then. But my main walking life is still centered around volkssport walking.

(I walk) six days a week. Total mileage depends on where I am in my training cycle for a marathon or half marathon. I like to walk at least 10K (6 miles) each weekend day and at least 1 mile a day during the week.

Walking is my main activity on the weekends, so I plan my weekends around when and where I want to walk. During the week, I like to walk during the workday around our campus on break or at lunch.

I prefer routes that have few street crossings. I live close to a greenway path that is paved and runs for 10 miles with street crossings only once a mile. That is an ideal route for being able to walk and talk or to train for speed or distance without interruption. I enjoy trail hiking as well and often our weekend walks will be on natural trail surfaces in local parks.

My favorite marathon is the Portland Marathon because they are so welcoming to walkers and ensure that walkers have as good of an experience as the runners.

My favorite half marathon is the Las Vegas Marathon and Half Marathon. They have a great expo, and all of the fun of being in Las Vegas with 100 running

Elvises and couples getting married at the run-through wedding chapel.

For my usual volkssport walks, I love the flower walks we have every year in our area at local flower farms. These include the Monitor Tulip Walk, Canby Dahlia Walk, and Keizer Iris Walk.

At an AVA walk, you get a walk experience rather than a race experience. AVA events are designed by walkers for walkers. They try to incorporate interesting trails and sights along the way, to please a walker who wants to experience the route rather than a runner who is looking for an unimpeded course. It is the best way to really see the area you are passing through. Everyone is a winner, so there is no competition for making the best time.

Most AVA events don't have the big expo or hoopla, but you can rely on them for a good walking experience. Plus, they are often free or very inexpensive.

I have a shoe wardrobe that includes summer trail running shoes, waterproof trail shoes, and lightweight running shoes. I decide based on the trail surface I expect and on how wet it is predicted to be. If we are going to walk on gravel or natural trail, I wear trail running shoes to prevent gravel and roots from poking through the sole. But for general purpose, I've been wearing the same model line of New Balance shoes for the past 10 years and don't want to change. They have seen me through seven marathons and countless half marathons and long training days. I have a bunion and rely on a particular design of upper to prevent bunion pain. ♦

**Walker Events**

**June 6, 2009**

**Walk Wisconsin, Stevens Point, WI**

Mark your Calendar for the Midwest's Premiere Walking Event!

Walk Wisconsin offers three distance options, Full Marathon (26.2 miles), Half Marathon (13.1 miles) and Quarter Marathon (6.5 miles) all non-competitive and taking place on the beautiful Green Circle trail system.

All three walks take place on June 6, National Trail day, with the Full Marathon starting at 8 a.m., the Half Marathon starting between 11 and 11:30 a.m. and the Quarter Marathon between 1 and 1:30 p.m. Participants for each walk will begin and end their event at Pffnner Park in downtown Stevens Point.

Registration is \$25 and includes a T-shirt, sports sack and medallion as well as food/refreshment along the course. Both online and mail in registration to be available soon, please watch this site!  
www.walkwisconsin.com/

**Walker/Runner Events**

**May 2, 2009**

**OneAmerica 500 Festival Mini-Marathon, Indianapolis, IN**

The 500 Festival is now celebrating the 33rd running of the nation's largest half marathon! This premier event features a lap around the world-famous Indianapolis Motor Speedway, home of the Indianapolis 500, US Grand Prix, and Brickyard 400. The Mini-Marathon starts at 7:30 a.m. EDT.  
www.500festival.com/marathon/

**May 3, 2009**

**Cincinnati Flying Pig Marathon Cincinnati, OH**

The 11th Flying Pig Marathon and half marathon start at 6:30 a.m. on Sunday, May 3, 2009. The two groups will go together for approximately 9 miles,

when the half marathon field will turn back toward downtown and end at the joint finish line along Yeatman's Cove.

Walkers are welcome in the half marathon.  
www.flyingpigmarathon.com/

**August 2009**

**Crim Festival of Races Flint, MI**

Whether you watch, walk or run, the Crim Festival of Races has something for everyone!

10 mi start (walkers & runners)	8:00
8k walk	9:45
5k walk	10:30
1 mile walk	11:50
Teddy Bear Trot	1:00

As the largest 10-mile race in Michigan, and the 3rd largest in the nation, the Crim attracts runners and walkers of every age and skill. Check the website for dates. www.crim.org/race/

**August 16, 2008**

**Parkersburg News and Sentinel Races, Parkersburg, WV**

The race includes run, walk, and wheelchair divisions. Prize money and trophies will be awarded to top finishers. The Parkersburg News and Sentinel Two Mile Race will be right after the start of the half marathon. All ages of runners and walkers are encouraged to participate. We even have a team division for this race.

Competitive and noncompetitive walk divisions.

For more information, check out our web site:  
extras.newsandsentinel.com/half-marathon/index.html

**October 18, 2009**

**Detroit Free Press/Flagstar Marathon (Half)**

A unique course crossing the U.S./Canadian border twice and great musical entertainment along the way, there's no end to the excitement of this race! Features the world's only underwater mile. Due to time constraints for

closing bridge and tunnel, walkers are limited to entering the half only. Competitive and non-competitive divisions. www.detroitmarathon.com/

**October 2009**

**Brooksie Way Half Marathon and 5K Race/Walk, Rochester Hills, MI**

The Brooksie Way races were launched to enhance the quality of life for residents of Oakland County by promoting healthy, active lifestyles.

The Brooksie Way is not merely a road race through inviting Oakland County neighborhoods, a vibrant university campus or a lush trail system. It's a model for life, a model for living. Dream big. Dream often and follow your dreams. But most importantly, do it now and do it all the way. That's the Brooksie Way.

That's the way Brooks Stuart Patterson would have done it: All the way, all the time.  
www.thebrooksieway.com/index.html

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DATE: **Saturday, May 2, 2009** START TIMES: **Mini-Marathon 7:30 a.m. 5K 8:25 a.m. EDT**