

FROM THE ARCHIVES – THE 1960 OLYMPIC 20 KM WALK

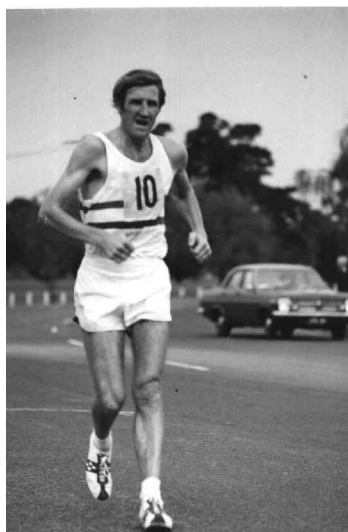
It is now 48 years since Noel Freeman won the silver medal in the 1960 Olympic 20 km walk at Rome. At 21 years of age, Freeman was a walking prodigy who had won both the 20 km and 50 km Australian selection trials and who competed in both the Olympic 20 km and the 50 km walks.

Noel raced the Olympic 20 km in the same way he had attacked the trials. Immensely self confident, he strode straight to the front and hung on grimly as the Russians forced the pace. With three miles to go, the eventual winner Golubnichky and another Russian were more than a minute ahead of him when he started a fantastic surge that, at the end, saw him only 35 yards (9.4 secs) behind the winner. His 2nd place (1:34:16) made him Australia's most successful ever walker.

In retrospect Noel felt he could have won if he had received detailed information in the last few miles – he had not known just how close he was to Golubnichky until it was too late. But there is another interesting slant on the result in that the judging summary sheet showed that Golubnichky had 2 reports and 8 cautions while Noel had a clean slate.

Golubnichiy, a 24-year-old Ukrainian, was the holder of the current world record with 1:27:05.0 and this Olympic win set him up nicely. Supported to the hilt by the powerful Soviet sporting machine, he was able to concentrate on his walking and develop his career without the cares and financial concerns that plagued amateur athletes from other countries. With his future secured, he went on to win a total of 5 Olympic medals, a feat only matched by Sweden's John Ljunggren.

By way of contrast, Noel, as a pure amateur, returned home without any expectations or support. Over the next few years, he ran his own milkbar in Richmond, spending the day on his feet, sometimes being forced to train late in the evening after the shop closed. It is to his credit that he bounced back and came 4th in the 1964 Olympic 20 km event. But one can only wonder what might have happened if one of those 6 judges who had issued a warning against Golubnichiy had followed it up with a DQ card. Might things have gone differently for Noel in those intervening 4 years and throughout his subsequent career?



Noel Freeman and Vladimir Golubnichiy

Finally, here is the DQ summary sheet from that 1960 Olympic 20 km walk. Note that there were 14 judges. Since the course was out and back, there was a lot of ground to cover and the larger number of judges were needed to ensure that walkers were monitored throughout the race.

WALKER	NAT	PL	TIME	SULAK, CVS	McGUIRE, AUS	WHITLOCK, GBR	BASSETT, GBR	STAHL, GER	FEHERUARI, UNG	GUILLEUX, FRA	LIBOTTE, SWI	LINDE, SWE	STERANENKO, URS	TOMANIN, URS	BOLLINI, ITA	CALLIGARIS, ITA	OBERLEUGER, ITA	W (WARNING)	D(DISQ)
GOLUBNICHYI, Vladimir	SOV	1	01:34:07		W	WQ		W	W			WD			W	W	W	8	2
FREEMAN, Noel	AUS	2	01:34:16															-	-
VICKERS, Stan	GBR	3	01:34:56															-	-
LINDNER, Dieter	GDR	4	01:35:33															-	-
READ, Norman	NZL	5	01:36:59					W							D			1	1
BACK, Lennart	SWE	6	01:37:17								W					W		2	-
LJUNGGREN, John	SWE	7	01:37:59															-	-
MOC, Ladislav	CZE	8	01:38:32															-	-
OAKLEY	CAN	9	01:38:40															-	-
HALL	GBR	10	01:38:50			W								W				2	-
CRAWFORD, Ron	AUD	11	01:39:12			W		W				W		W				4	-
DELERUE	FRA	12	01:39:37			W									W			2	-
HAZLE	RSA	13	01:40:16									W						1	-
CARLSSON	SWE	14	01:40:25															-	-
KRISTENSEN	DEN	15	01:41:08															-	-
KOCH	GER	16	01:41:53												W			1	-
MARQUIS	SWI	17	01:42:00		D	W									W			2	1
SOWA	LUX	18	01:42:43											W				1	-
ZINN	USA	19	01:42:47															-	-
SINGH, Z	IND	20	01:43:20															-	-
SERCHENICH	ITA	21	01:43:59					W	W						WD	W		4	1
DEROSSO	ITA	22	01:45:04															-	-
MIMM	USA	23	01:45:09															-	-
HALUZA	USA	24	01:45:11												W			1	-
ROSSCHOU	DEN	25	01:46:36															-	-
CORSARO	ITA	26	01:46:47															-	-
BAROUNI	TUN	27	01:47:10															-	-
ZLASSI	TUN	28	01:55:21															-	-
MATTHEWS	GBR	DNF												D		W		1	1
LEFANCZIK	GER	DQ		WD	D	W	W					D				W	D	4	4
SOLODOV	URS	DQ		WD	W	W	W			D	WD	WD			WD			7	5
VEDYAKOV	URS	DQ		WD	W	WD	W	W			D	WD			D	W	W	8	5
REYMOND	SWI	DQ		D			D	WD							W		W	3	3
BALOJOXA	HUN	DQ		D		D	W				D		W	W	WD	D	WD	5	6
SINGH, A	IND	DQ		W	D	D		W	W		W				WD			5	3
LAZHAR	TUN	DQ		WD	W	WD	WD	W	W	W	D		WD	W	D	WD	WD	11	8