

CLUB CAMEO

Robert Murkin meets Race Walker Amos Seddon



RM. Amos I was keen to focus on a walker for my second interview in this series and I hear it from great authority that you are the club's most celebrated walker. Can you tell me how you got into walking?



AS. From about the age of 8, after first hearing about the Olympics I have been keen on sport. When I was 17 I met a lad who was very very unsporting. However, later that year he competed a 34 miles race walk and never stopped talking about it. So I was determined to do the same race the next year and did. For this I received a small trophy, my first ever. For my next race I gained a "6 miles in the hour" badge. This made me think "there are easy pickings here". Well it was many, many years later before I won anything again !

RM Were you always a walker or did you participate in other events/sports before?

AS At school I did quite well at most track and field events (I once held the school discus record) but really liked running, especially cross country.

I also played the usual games, rugby, hockey, cricket all of which I liked, though I never played football. I later tried sports such as tennis, badminton, squash, but realised games involving a ball did not really suit me. I had a go at judo and wrestling. I was disqualified in my first wrestling competition.

RM Do you think walking was more popular in the past than now?

AS Of that there is no doubt, thirty years ago there would be several races every weekend, each with a good turnout. National Championships and the Autumn Open 7's had fields of up to 200.

RM Do you think enough is being done these days to encourage youngsters to take up walking?

AS Not being currently involved at Junior level (in the 1980s I was National Event Coach for Juniors) or even attending many races, it would be unfair for me to be critical but I am aware that to get youngsters involved (I have 4 grandchildren) is not easy. There are so many sports and activities for them to choose from, as well as, the computers. It does appear to me, though, that there is not the encouragement for sport generally in schools. I feel it is a great pity youngsters don't get more opportunities to try race walking (obviously it would not suit everyone) because it is a great event. As well as the physical effort, there is the self discipline aspect. Unlike running you cannot just push as hard as you are physically able, but must comply with the strict contact and straight leg rules.

RM I guess most events stress the body in various ways. Have you ever had any injuries from walking.

AS The two main 'injuries' which have affected me are back and knees. About 20 years ago I started getting low back pain, much later diagnosed as 3 worn discs. It was not until about 8 or 9 years ago I finally admitted to myself race walking was not helping the problem, but it has not necessarily caused it in the first place.

Ordinary brisk walking helps to keep my back fairly comfortable. So for the past 8 years I have

done no race walking as training.

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But as I did not want to stop competing, albeit at a slower pace, I now only race walk in races.

The knees problem I have had for about 10 years. This is probably more as a result of all the miles running and walking. Apart from the discomfort, which you learn to live with, the most annoying part of the knees problem is the difficulty complying with the strict straight leg rule. Other injuries such as calf and groin strains have come from running.

RM What was your greatest athletic achievement to date?

AS There are several I was pleased with, such as the National 35 kms Championships in 1980. My time of 2 hours 40 min is still a respectable time even in 2007. That year I had trained very hard hoping to make the GB Team for Moscow. As well as the 35 kms I did several other personal bests, including 20 miles in 2 hours 31 mins and 50 kms in 4 hours 10 mins. 1980 also saw my greatest athletic disappointment and confirmed that I was destined not to compete in an Olympics. As you may remember Mrs Thatcher (Prime Minister) tried to stop British Athletes going to Moscow (the Russians were fighting in Afghanistan), she did not succeed, but she did have more influence on those in government employ and so the then Police Commissioner for London decreed 'no policeman will be allowed to go to Moscow', I was a policeman at the time.

RM Who do you admire most in the world of masters athletics?

AS Arthur Thomson, astonishing, brilliant demoralising (especially to 'young' walkers like me) fantastic, inspiring (again to me) marvellous, superb, just a few adjectives to describe what he achieved in 2006.

RM What do you think of the masters movement in GB in world terms?

AS One of the problems with Veterans athletics I think is contained in your question. MASTERS. I do not consider myself a master. I am an old man, a veteran. Some others may not be as old, but nor are they young.

I cannot agree that calling the movement "Masters" will make us more glamorous or appealing. We can still take our efforts seriously and aim to achieve great results. When I first

started competing in Vets events in 1981, I thought it was terrific having represented GB and England about 40 times at senior level. I still found the atmosphere and enthusiasm among the veterans, especially at international events inspiring.

I have not competed in international events recently, partly because my performances are unpredictable, and I have had injuries. Also, the two main reasons are cost and 'attitude'. By attitude I mean being told I must wear British Masters Team Clothing. I have never been selected to represent GB and certainly not been provided with expenses. So when I am representing myself in a competition, provided it is not illegal, I should be allowed to wear what I want. I am not ashamed of wearing GB clothing. The night before my first international in 1973 I was so proud of my new tracksuit I slept in it, to make sure I had it to wear the next day.

However to return to the main point of your question, as I have not recently had close experience of events outside the UK I cannot give a knowledgeable response. From the results, though, we do appear to give a good account of ourselves, which is great.

RM How much training were you doing at your peak and now?

AS At my peak, I was doing about 100-130 kms per week for most of the year. 1980 was a really serious year, as least for the first 6 months. For 5 weeks (not consecutive) I did about 280 kms a week, and the other weeks were fairly busy too. You can see why I was disappointed re. Moscow, especially as I did achieve some good results. Because of the problems I've had for the last 10 years or so my training has been very much 'of the moment'. I try and walk about 60 kms a week at about 6 ½ kph.. I also do a few sessions on an exercise bike. Until 3 years ago I did one or two runs a week, but the knees don't like that anymore.

RM What was your profession?

AS I was a policeman for 30 years. Since retiring I have done a few jobs. I have regularly worked for Bourne Sports at 'outside' events such as London Marathon exhibition and Veterans Championships.

RM Many thanks Amos. I wish you well for the future, and thank you once again for this

**information. I'm sure our members will really
enjoy hearing all about your career.**