

**RONALD WEIGEL AND HARTWIG GAUDER - DDR**

Amongst the many gems on Dominique Guebey's website (<http://www.dg77.net/marche/>), I found the followed training program from 1983 50 km World Champion Ronald Weigel of East Germany. Since Ron was our Australian national walks coach for a number of years and coached the likes of Nathan Deakes and Jane Saville, it is interesting to review how he trained in the days when DDR dominated world walking and how this possibly influenced his coaching when at the AIS.

Phase	Transition	Preparation	Competition
Period	September-December	January-April	May-August
Monday	25 km Walk at 70% 10km Run + 1h PPG	30 km Walk at 70% 10km Run + 1h PPG	30-35km Walk at 85% 15km Walk at 70%
Tuesday	10km Walk at 80% 15km Walk at 70% + 1h PPG	20km Walk at 80% 15km Walk at 70%	25x400m Walk at 105% 10km Run + 1h20 PPG + play
Wednesday	25km Walk at 70% 2h PPG + play	30km Walk at 70% 10km Run + 1h20 PPG + play	30-35km Walk at 85% 10km Walk at 70%
Thursday	10km Walk at 80% 15km Run + 1h PPG	15km Walk at 85% 3x2000m Walk à 90%	25km Walk at 70% 10km Run + 1h20 PPG + play
Friday	15km WalkM at 70% 2h PPG + play	20km Walk at 70% 2h PPG + jeux	5x2000 Walk at 95% 10km Walk at 70%
Saturday	30km Walk at 75%	30km Walk at 75%	35-40km Walk at 85%
Sunday	15km Run	10x1000 Walk à 100%	10-15km Walk at 95%

\* PPG = Physical Training

The East Germans were big on volume and that is evident from the table above. Training twice per day was the norm and second sessions were often done when in a state of "training specific tiredness". This is high risk, and not for everybody and probably only succeeded in the DDR context because of the huge Sports Science monitoring of their athletes. Long walks were often done while in a fatigued state and it was common practice to do long walks on consecutive days, with the longer walk being on the second day. Note that this is NOT something that I recommend for our aspiring Australian walkers! But it did produce the goods for Weigel and the other top DDR walker Hartwig Gouder.

The following article was written by Jack Mortland and published in the November 1992 Ohio Racewalker magazine.



**Gauder (left) and Weigel (right) in the 1987 50 km World Champs – Gauder won in 3:40:53 and Weigel was second in 3:41:30**

During the 1980s, the names Hartwig Gauder and Ronald Weigel became synonymous with excellence in 50 Km walking and they were at their zenith when they traded one-two finishes at the 1987 World Cup and World Championship races. Weigel won the Cup race in New York, but Gauder came back later in the summer to beat him in the World Championships race. Before and since that banner year, they have been dominant figures in the event, with each also having significant success at 20 Km on occasion.

The two were in New York earlier this month for the New York Marathon, and, thanks to Helene Britton, we had the opportunity to converse with them on the phone, primarily with Hartwig. Before we attempt to summarize some of the highlights of that conversation, let's turn to the highlights of their stellar careers.

Gauder launched the decade of the '80s with a gold medal in the Moscow Olympics 50 Km. He was ranked number one in the world that year and also earned number one rankings in 1985, 1986, and 1987, along with several other rankings in the top five. He was ranked third at 20 Km in 1986. He was unable to defend his Olympic title because of the 1984 Eastern bloc boycott, but finished third in 1988 and was still good for sixth this summer at age 37. In World Cup competition, Hartwig was second in 1981, first in 1985, second in 1987, and sixth in 1991. And, he had that 1987 World Championship along with a third in 1991.

Born November 10, 1954 in Vaihingen in the Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany), Hartwig moved with his family to the German Democratic Republic (East Germany) at age 5. Standing just over 6 feet tall and weighing about 160 pounds, Gauder has a 50 Km best of 3:39:45 and 20 Km best of 1:20:51. He was a European Junior champion at 10 Km (1973 in 42:27) and is one of only three athletes to have won European Junior and Senior, Olympic, and World Championships titles. (Decathlete Daley Thompson and triple jumper Khristo Markov are the other two.) (I don't know if there have been others since.) He retired briefly in 1989, but came back to competition in 1990.

Nearly five years younger than Gauder, Ronald Weigel emerged as a force at 50 Km in 1983 when he won the World Championships. The following year, he earned a number one world ranking in the event. He had number two rankings in both 1987 and 1988, and was ranked fifth last year. He also had number two rankings at 20 in 1984 and 1988. In the Seoul Olympics (1988) he captured silver medals at both 20 and 50 and has continued strongly with third place finishes in the 1991 World Cup and 1992 Olympic 50s. Weigel, at 5' 9" and 135 pounds, has a 50 Km best of 3:38:17 and 20 Km best of 1:19:19. He was born August 8, 1951 in Hildburghausen.

When Helene introduced Hartwig to me on the phone, she noted that the two of them had given a clinic that morning (the day before the marathon), which had been excellent. She quoted his as saying at the clinic that they do more than 200 miles a week in training and that is why they have stayed on top. Well, it turns out that many been some what of an exaggeration, but they certainly have done a tremendous volume of training through the year.

When I asked Hartwig about training, I didn't get any real specific answers (A telephone interview in his second language-he speaks very well, but I wasn't always sure he completely comprehended my questions-is not the best situation). However, I got the numbers of 30 to 34 hours a week in training. This consists of walking, running, and "gymnastics". In fall and winter, activities include ski-rolling, mountain bike riding, and cross-country skiing. About 2 hours a week involve what he termed "athletic training." He threw out the figure of 230 Km in a typical week, and I think, indicated that this includes about as much running as walking. He also mentioned 35-40 km in the morning and 15-20 km in the afternoon, which, of course, would come to much more than 230 km a week in training. He does more running and skiing in the winter and starts specialized racewalk training in February. I got the idea from both that their training is mostly pounding it out on the roads, and includes little interval work. Hartwig noted that he also enjoys volleyball and football (soccer to us).

Gauder does most of his training alone, except when he is in a training camp situation, where he might train with Weigel or others. They usually get to Mexico in the spring for several weeks. Hartwig is coached by former 1500 meter running great Siegfried Hermann. Ron's coach, Hans Joachim Patus is also the national coach-and his father-in-law. (I competed against Patus way back in 1967 at the Lugano Cup in Bad Saarow, GDR-or, I should say, was in the same race.)

Hartwig started in sports competition at age 12 with ski jumping and did not find racewalking until age 17. He turned out to be natural at the sport, walking a 10 Km in 53:00 in his first race with little training and improving to 49 minutes just three weeks later. His first international race was a year later (1972) when he won at a seven-nation meets in Pris. In 1973, he captured that European Junior title. His first 50 km wasn't until 1979 and was walked as a joke, he says. Some joke, as he did 4:01. The next year he finished third in the German trials with a 3:49 and then on to win the Olympic gold.

I asked both why they have dropped back a bit the last few years (if battling for a medal rather than battling for the gold in dropping off). Gauder now being 38, I gave him the option of age as an excuse, and he felt that was part of it. He also mentioned the problem of incentive, which obviously gets tougher once you have conquered the mountain. Ron turned more to problems with organization since German reunification. The same support structure is not in place now that they had grown used to. Hartwig also noted this as a problem. Ron expressed confidence that things are getting better and will continue to do so., and both look forward to challenging the

likes of Perlov and Mercenario in the future.

In talking to Hartwig, I tried to get into the question of how walking had been accepted by the general public in the GDR, wondering if they were subjected to the same sort of ridicule walkers elsewhere get, despite their stature in the sport. This was one question I couldn't quite get across, however, and all I got was that all sports were and all athletes were treated equally by the sports authorities.

Hartwig is an architecture student in Weimar and hopes to be opening an architectural partnership in 1993. His wife is a dentist and they have a 9-year-old son. Formerly a major in the Army, Ron is a journalism student.



**The Australian connection – Ron Weigel with Nathan Deakes (left) and Brent Vallance (right) in 1997**