

PETER MARLOW

In March 2015, British racewalking judge and long time athletics administrator Peter Marlow was chosen by the European Athletics Association to receive the plaque of merit, along with the former IAAF General Secretary Pierre Weiss, for services to European Athletics. Only 3 people in Europe every 2 years get this award so it was a fitting reward for Peter and a great recognition for our sport of racewalking. His CV at the time of the award read as shown below and he is standing for a final term for IAAF RW Committee in August 2015. When Lamine Diack steps down he will be the single longest serving member of any IAAF Committee.

Date of birth: 1941
Profession: Head of UK Athletics Race Walking Policy and Support Team
Award: Plaque of Merit

Positions within athletics

- 1976 - present: Member of the IAAF Race Walking Committee
- 1987: Meeting Director of IAAF World Cup, Douglas, Isle of Man.
- Member of UK Athletics International Group
- Chairman of the IAAF Sub-Committee's Rules & Officials.
- Chairman of the European Athletics Race Walking Commission
- Secretary of the British Race Walking Association
- 1977: Meeting Director of IAAF World Cup, Milton Keynes
- Chief Judge at Olympic Games (1992), World Championships (1991, 1993 and 1999), European Championships (1994, 1998 and 2002), Commonwealth Games (1986, 1994 and 1998) as well as IAAF World Walking Cup events.
- Chief Walking Judge 2003, World Championships in Paris and Olympic Games 2004 in Athens.
- As a Technical Delegate, Peter has attended the Commonwealth Games (1986, 1994, 1998 and 2002), European Championships (1994, 1998) World Walking Cup (1995, 1997).

Sport references

- British International Race Walker
- 1972 Olympic Games
- 1974 British 10k and 20k Champion

Other relevant information

- Author of the IAAF 'Hints for Judges' handbook.



Peter (second from right) walks the course with the other international judges at the 2014 World Cup in Taicang, China

The following biographical information on Peter's earlier career as an international walk is based largely on a 2012 article by Paul Warburton: <http://www.getwestlondon.co.uk/sport/other-sport/west-london-athlete-sat-oblivious-5975928>.

Peter took up race walking 'for a laugh' when, as a 15-year-old 400m runner, he won the London Grammar Schools walk title, beating the favourite from Latymer Upper in Hammersmith. He then got serious about the sport and was given a contentious nod for the last place in the Munich Olympics when others arguably had a better claim. "There were at least two others who might have got the Olympic place in 1972. After all, I had only walked three 20kms before I got the call. As luck would have it, the British Olympic Association team leader was Arthur Gold, and when I worked for Sotheby's, I had the job of helping to auction his mother's estate. Maybe, my name stuck with him when it came to selection."

If it was a bit of who you know rather than what you know, Marlow was still good back-up for the other two GB contenders, Paul Nihill and Phil Embleton. However, all three were shipped off to St Moritz for altitude preparation and came down only two days before the race. "The effects and benefits of altitude training were in their infancy back then. Paul Nihill was a favourite for a medal, and he could only manage sixth."

Marlow remembers just two things about the race: the crowd, and a wooden bridge that formed part of the course once the race left the stadium. "To hear the roar of 80,000 as you leave and return to the stadium was incredible. If you can't be emotionally moved by that, you can't be moved by anything."

The loop involving the bridge over a stream looked good to spectators and TV, but the walkers had no choice but to bounce over pliant wood - not something you need when trying to comply with the rule that demands contact with the ground at all times. Marlow also admits his lack of 20km experience told in the latter stages, as he faded to 17th in 1:35:38, nearly nine minutes behind East German winner Peter Frenkel. "I could take the world on at 10 miles but that two-and-a-bit extra miles was telling, and in the end it was all about finishing the race."



Peter in his racewalking days – 1972 Olympic 20km in Munich

Munich was the scene of the infamous Israeli massacre. Steven Spielberg's 2005 film vividly depicted the attack by Black September terrorists in the Games Village, which ended in a bloody shoot-out, and even more deadly reprisals. The entire world knew about the Israeli hostage taking at about 4.30am on September 5, 1972, but not Peter, who was no more than 200 yards away. In a strange twist of fate, he stayed late in his room that morning, and in the days before internet and wall-to-wall TV, it was a phone call from his mother that alerted him to the shattering news.

"We all had to give an emergency number to our next of kin. When she rang to ask if I was OK, I hadn't a clue what she was talking about. The Israelis were just far enough away in the village for us not to pick up or get involved with what was going on."

Later, he successfully tightrope a witch hunt as an IAAF committee member, initiated by the head of world athletics in the 1990s, to remain Britain's sole representative on the IAAF racewalking committee - a position held since 1976 and an IAAF record.

Even though he suffered a minor stroke in the leadup to the 2012 Olympic Games in London, Peter still managed to orchestrate the three walks up and down The Mall and was voted to stay on the IAAF walks committee until 2015.

After over 50 years in the sport, Peter continues to contribute above and beyond the call of duty. May he have many more years at the top.

Tim Erickson
29 March 2015