

ROBERT KORZENIOSKI - A PROFILE

Robert Korzenioski is without doubt the greatest racewalker ever. His 4 Olympic Gold medals are the icing on the top of an international career that spanned 14 years. This brief profile was published on the IAAF website to mark the occasion of his retirement in October 2004.



Korzenioski powers to victory in the Athens Olympic 50 km event

Race walking was popular in the part of Southeast Poland where Robert Korzenioski grew up. However for the 13-year-old Bruce Lee fan who wanted to take part in a sport after a bout of rheumatic illness, Judo was the first choice. Unfortunately, during the state of emergency, the authorities weren't happy with boys learning to fight and the school gym was shut down. So Korzenioski joined the school track and field team, at first to run.

In January 1984 he was invited to take part in his first walk, taking third to qualify for the Polish championships. There he came last but resolved to do better - and the next year he won! Steady progress followed, and a breakthrough came in finishing fourth in the 20km at the 1990 European Championships in Split.

This convinced him to become a full-time athlete but top level success eluded him and, furthermore, he faced the indignity of disqualifications in the 1992 Olympics and in the 1993 World Championships. "I had a big beginning but I was naive - I had no knowledge and was arrogant," he admitted. "My training was haphazard and I was often over-trained and injured."

A realisation came after these disappointments, however, and with his coach Kryzstof Kisiel, Korzenioski worked on technique and a new attitude. "I learned to take on board criticism. Another important thing for me was moving to France. I also read up on the theories of training and learned to be patient."

This new self-awareness was rewarded as Korzenioski claimed the bronze medal at the 1995 IAAF World Championship 50km. From then on he won all but one World, Olympic and European Championship race at the distance over the next decade.

Unusually for a 50km specialist, Korzenioski has the speed to compete with the best at 20km - providing an important psychological edge over his rivals over the longer distance. Korzenioski dominated the event like no one before - he would, as he said "supervise" races, at his pace.

The foundation of this confidence was thorough preparation. Indeed, he once chided an under-performing fellow competitor by saying "*for the well prepared athlete, there is no such thing as an off day.*"

The high point in his career came at the Sydney Olympics, in becoming the first walker ever to sweep the 20km and 50km races, and the first to defend a 50km title.

A measure of his consistency is Korzeniowski's fifteen consecutive Polish 20km titles. He also won the inaugural IAAF World Race Walking Challenge in 2003 - a global series of races, which he retained this year.

Having been pushed to a World Record to win in the World Championship 50km last year, and expecting fierce heat, Robert decided to concentrate on the 50km in Athens. In the event, his younger rivals failed to match his pace and he achieved his biggest winning margin in a major championship race.

Korzeniowski didn't rest on his laurels though; there was the final league 5000m track race for his AWF Krakow club two weeks later. On 26 September he walked another sub-40 minute 10km for victory at the 6th Pino Dordoni International at Piacenza, Italy and this was a fitting occasion for the four-time Olympic champion to end a 20 year odyssey.

Korzeniowski now has a totally new career ahead. From the beginning of November he is to take up the post of head of sport for State Television station TVP.

His competitive record makes for almost unbelievable reading.

Olympic Games

1992 20km - DNF, 50km - DQ
 1996 20km - 8, 50km - 1
 2000 20km - 1, 50km - 1
 2004 50km - 1

IAAF World Championships

1991 20km - 10, 50km - DNF
 1993 50km - DQ
 1995 50km - 3
 1997 50km - 1
 1999 50km - DQ
 2001 50km - 1
 2003 50km - 1

EAA European Championships

1990 20km - 4
 1994 20km - DQ 50km - 5
 1998 50km - 1
 2002 50km - 1

IAAF World Cups

1989 20km - 40
 1991 20km - 7
 1993 20km - 4
 1995 20km - 9
 1999 20km - 4
 2004 20km - 2

EAA European Cup

1996 20km - 1
 1998 20km - 2
 2000 20km - 1

World University Games

1991 20km - 1
 1993 20km - 1

European Junior Championship

1987 10km - DQ

World Indoor Championship

1993 5000m - 2

World Record

50km Walk - 2003 Saint-Denis, FRA 3:36:03

Olympic Record

20km Walk - 2000 Sydney, AUS 1:18:59

Racing Record and Progression

Year	Races	Wins	Best 20km	Best 50km
1984	6	0	51:04 (10km)	
1985	10	2	46:44 (10km)	
1986	12	10	1:32:33	
1987	9	4	1:29:40	
1988	12	4	1:26:04	
1989	11	4	1:23:19	
1990	15	9	1:19:32	
1991	14	6	1:21:19	
1992	16	12	1:19:14	3:46:42
1993	18	12	1:20:55	3:44:24
1994	15	9	1:20:55	3:45:57
1995	13	9	1:20:52	3:45:57
1996	13	9	1:20:51	3:42:40
1997	12	10	1:19:43	3:44:46
1998	14	11	1:19:36	3:43:51
1999	15	10	1:18:39	
2000	14	12	1:18:22	3:41:50
2001	15	11	1:20:31	3:42:08
2002	14	9	1:19:40	3:36:39
2003	16	11	1:19:11	3:36:03
2004	17	12	1:19:02	3:38:46