

SHAUL LADANY- OLYMPIAN AND ULTRA WALKING LEGEND

Much of this information is taken from website <http://www.jewsinsports.org/> where comprehensive biographies are kept of many Olympians of Jewish origin.

One of the greatest ultra distance walkers in history, Ladany still holds the world record in the 50-mile walk (**7:23:50**), and the Israeli national record in the 50-km walk (**4:17:07** -- set in 1972).

Ladany was born in Beograd in Yugoslavia on April 2, 1936. At the age of eight he was sent to the Bergen-Belson concentration camp during the Holocaust. He told the Jerusalem Post in 1972, "*...I saw my father beaten by the SS and I lost most of my family there...A ransom deal that the Americans attempted saved 2,000 Jews and I was one. I actually went into the gas chamber but was reprieved. God knows why.*"

He began his athletic career as a marathon runner, but turned to walking in the early 1960s. He soon forced his way to the required international standard and competed in two Olympiads for Israel. At the 1968 Mexico City Games, he finished in 24th place in the 50-km walk with a time of **5:01:06**. He then returned to the Olympics at the 1972 Munich Games as Israel's sole male representative in track and field. He again competed in the 50-km walk and improved to finish in 19th place with a time of **4:24:38**.

The morning after his race, in the early hours of September 4, 1972, Palestinian terrorists broke into the Olympic Village with the intention of taking the entire Israeli delegation hostage. The terrorists captured wrestling coach Moshe Weinberg, who led them away from Ladany's apartment towards the two rooms housing Israel's bigger wrestlers and weightlifters. Weinberg and 10 other Israelis were killed by the terrorists, but Ladany and four others escaped.

1972 also saw him the gold medal in the 100-km (**9:31:00**) at the World Championships. He also won the Israeli national walking championships 28 times from 1963-1988; won the U.S. walking championship six times (from 1973-1981); the championship in Belgium twice (1971 and 1972); in Switzerland in 1972, and in South Africa in 1975. In 1976, Shaul became the first person ever to win both the American Open and Masters (40 years and over) 75-kilometre walking championship. He repeated the feat in 1977 and 1981 (by which time the event had become a 100-km race). Ladany also won the 20-km, and 50-km walk at the 1973 Maccabiah Games.

Subsequent to the 1972 Games, Ladany received a doctorate in Business Administration from Columbia University (in New York), and is currently a professor of Industrial Engineering and Management at Ben-Gurion University.

In 1997, Ladany's memoirs, *The Walk to the Olympics*, were published in Hebrew.



Shaul competes in a 50 km walk in Melbourne, Australia, in 2005

On May 18-19 2006, Shaul showed that he had lost little of his enthusiasm or legendary strength when, in Ashtabula in Ohio, he completed a 100 mile effort in **21:45:13** under the close watch of Ron Laird and other observers. The race was held on a 285m illuminated asphalt lap and the event was covered by the local newspaper, radio and TV media. The event was organized by Laird (4 time USA Olympian) and other local identities.



Shaul Ladany trains with Ron Laird before his successful 100 mile attempt in 2006 (Warren Dillaway / The Star Beacon, Ashtabula, USA)

This was not Shaul's first 100 mile walk. He was already an American centurion, having completed the feat previously in Ohio in 1973 (**19:38:26**).