

2009 Race Walk Development

This year with the restructuring within USATF taking place and USOC money that was not forthcoming, development for race walking was almost non-existent. Other “development” events suffered too. Most of the support went to “A” qualifiers with emphasis on Summits and Competitive Opportunities Program. A Summit is usually a two, possibly three day event that brings together the best sport science, coaches who have “cracked the code” (usually meaning they have put an athlete on the podium in Olympics or World Championships) and of course, the best athletes. The technical events do a lot of film analysis and have a bio-mechanist working with them. Competitive Opportunities Program seeks to bring athletes chasing the “A” standard together at designated meet.

A proposal for a race walk Summit following the '09 outdoor Nationals in Eugene was submitted but its approval was held up due to the uncertainty of USOC funding. Eventually as the date grew closer, we had to conclude that this Summit was not going to happen. It was very frustrating to have set everything up and then be left dangling. We then decided to apply for some small funding for a Jr Training Camp that Tim Seaman was putting together for a few top Jrs preceding the Jr Nationals. Airfare was provided for the athletes and a portion of the food costs. The results of the athletes attending the training camp who were at the Nationals were very impressive. Trevor Barron won the Jr Nationals, walking his second 5000m under his own US record for that distance and Tyler Sorenson finished second, walking the fastest time ever for a 15yr old. Chris Tegtmeier, an open athlete attending the camp at his own cost, had a PR, walking a negative split.

Just to give a little background on development funding: Long gone are the days when a comprehensive development program was conceived by the RW committee and a lump sum was given. Gone now too, are the more recent ways of submitting requests for individual programs and having them funded only if they deemed to bring in medals at the world level. This always proved problematic for us anyway, as we would pull together some really good plans but because we would only be given a fraction of what was needed to do the job well, the program would falter. The Development proposals will now fall under the three categories in the Performance Improvement Programs along with the Competitive Opportunities Program.

1. HP (High Performance) Summits- as explained before, two days of bringing the best in the sport together, preferably incorporating a Sports Science segment. It must be well planned out, addressing the events “critical zone” and performance based needs. Summits for the future must now also include a “zero tolerance” component. (It’s important to know that the total budget for all the events is only \$225,000)

We have an outline for a 2010 RW Summit following the outdoor Nationals in Des Moines, Iowa. The program would start Sunday after the conclusion of the races and end on Monday. This proposal would have us take full advantage of the filming at the National Championships and use of the HP Center. It would be available to all athletes (and their coaches) who qualify for the open and Jr races with the possibility of lodging reimbursement for the top ranked athletes. The intent would be to work with Drake University or a local NAIA College in obtaining facility access. The summit would focus on biomechanical analysis, physiology and training systems, sports psychology, nutrition and injury prevention.

It has been suggested by Duffy Mahoney at the National office that we have a Summit at Colorado Springs where Randy Wilbur might act as our sports scientist. It sounded like it would be limited to the younger athletes who have shown the fastest times.

2. HP Sport Science Programs- many events have Sports Scientists working with them. For the most part, they are usually employed by a University and “borrow” from them equipment and grad students for data collection and performance analysis. As an example, Bing Yu is a bio-mechanist working with the discus group. He spent a long time gathering data, then decided on the key components of a good throw and worked on this with them. The women discus throwers recently showed marked improvement. USATF’s Sport psychology works out of this program also, they make regular presentations at various summits and events as well as assist athletes on international teams and major competitions. (Total budget \$100,000)

RW has not had a Sports Science person working with us in more recent times. In the past we have had Lyle Knudson doing filming analysis. We have made many inquiries; some said they would only have time for a small project. There are several difficulties: they have to understand the event, we need to provide them what meaningful aspect should they analyze and they have to have sufficient interest in the event to do a lot of the work non-gratis and have the time and \$ to travel. It has been suggested that Randy Wilbur at Colorado Springs might be willing to work with us. Another thought is to look within our own RW group.

3. HP Centers- filming and review at Nationals, relays, big invitational meets. Dartfish/ filming systems record the performance of an event sometimes focusing on targeted athletes at these big meets then have it available near the track or at a host hotel. The athletes and their coaches either by CD or “thumb drive” receive record of their performances. Whenever possible the bio-mechanist for the event group will do a presentation at a designated time. (Total budget \$225,000)

This was initially only available if a bio-mechanist was working with an event group but we petitioned to allow the RWers to review and obtain the DVD of their performance. Despite putting this info out to the athletes, very few took advantage of it. There was apparently difficulty filming this past years National 20k’s out on the road but the Jrs were filmed. This next year we want to be absolutely certain that the filming will be sufficient for a meaningful review and work on getting a bio-mechanist present.

Our Development proposals need to be written up under Performance Improvement and Competitive Opportunities. Much will be explained at the Annual Meeting in the Development and HP meetings. Of great interest to us will be the Centers of Excellence for this is where we can make our greatest strides. Whether they will come under Development and what the structure will be for funding, will all be unveiled at the Annual Meeting.

With all the changes and uncertainty, I talked to Rita Somerlot, Tonie Campbell (HP/dev Coordinators) and Duffy and asked what can be done for RW. They understand we are in a unique situation and seemed willing to work with us. They realize medals in the near future will be very difficult for RW and are willing to look to the future. They want us to identify young talented athletes we assess as having a very high potential and support a program around them.

We also may have a little leeway with the Competitive Opportunities Program designed to have athletes working together to chase the “A” standard. We might be able to put a proposal together for a race in Mexico or Europe to allow any of our younger athletes to go for a “B” and get international racing experience.

Often we don't take a good hard look at the Elite Athlete Support Programs that exist, mostly because our race walkers don't yet qualify for them but we should make sure our athletes are aware of what's out there. I have put together a brief outline of the programs;

Elite Athlete Support Programs-

1- Travel allocation- USA Indoor/ Out National Championships:
Funding for defending Champion plus next top 4 performers.

2-Prize money- USA Indoor/Out National Championships:
Indoor- top 3, Out- top 5

3-Performance Pool Funding-
Three tier direct athlete support that includes a coaching stipend based on Olympic potential and financial need. Basically top 10 World ranked with income below \$40,000 cap

4- Coaching Stipend-
Small amount of funding for coaches with athletes in top 10.

5- Post Collegiate Scholarship Fund:
Must have "A" standard and within two years of graduation

6-USATF Sports Accident Insurance- Through USATF Membership
Secondary Insurance that comes with membership

7- USATF/ ST Vincent Sports Performance Elite Athlete Medical Support Program
Assists "qualified" injured athletes by providing primary care or a second opinion.

USOC Programs

8-Operation Gold Grants
Stipends for athletes that finish in the top eight in a World event.

9-USOC Tuition Grants
Direct Athlete Support recipients can apply for undergraduate/graduate tuition.

