



Who's Who.....a 7 year update on one of Ilfords Olympians

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Message from Billy Green June 29, 2020 15:30

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ilfordathleticclub.co.uk/messages

Back in 2013 our 'Who's Who' article featured one of a handful of Ilford members who have competed at the Olympic Games 'Neringa Aidietyte' which can be viewed here:-

ilfordathleticclub.co.uk/2013/04/25/neringa-aidietyte/

Below is an interview she did for Ilford member Len Ruddock in 2012 after the London Olympics and attached are a couple of photos from the event in London.

It is worth noting that since these articles Neringa went on to break her 20km pb which is now 1:29:01 set in 2014, and went on to compete in World and European championships in 2013, 2014 and 2015.

Even more pretentiously she has appeared for Ilford AC in a couple of Elvis races!

She has also since married and is now Mrs Neringa Masilioniene - a mother of one, with another in the way residing in Collier Row.

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Take 5 with Len Ruddock

The interview took place in a coffee shop just over the road from the sports store where Neringa works in central London.

After waiting a few minutes the tall girl with the winning smile appeared out of the gloom and so it was latte and cappuccino all round!

Hailing from Vilnius in Lithuania, Neringa came to Britain just 3 years ago, as good as retired from Race Walking following a disappointing 2009 season.

Up until then she had competed internationally at a number of Lugano Cup - World Team Championships, European Team Championships and Universiades.

Her best result for the 20Km Walk was at the 2007 Universiade in Bangkok finishing 5th and her personal best time in the same year stood at 1 hour, 33 mins and 54 secs (1:33:54).

She didn't remain 'retired' for long as following a holiday to her homeland, she competed in the 5Km indoor Championships for, 'old times sake'. She came 6th but more importantly Neringa found that she had 'the Buzz' again which propelled her onto the latest and most remarkable stage of her athletics career.



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The 3 years following her arrival in the UK, Neringa's dedication to the tough sport of Race Walking has seen her compete in the top 3 events of all. 2010 saw her at the European Champs in Barcelona followed in 2011 by the World Champs in Daegu, South Korea. These two were trumped by her appearance in this years' Olympic Games.

Next door to Stratford, Bethnal Green resident Neringa moved into the Athlete's village only the night before her event. She preferred to be based at home close to her Victoria Park training ground and even carried on working up until a week before her event, 'to keep busy'. On the day of the Olympic 20km Walk, Neringa admits to being disappointed, finishing 39th in 1:34:01 and behind her compatriots, Kristina Saltanovic (21st in 1:31:04) and Brigita Virbalyte (26th in 1:31:58).

After the race, her disappointment was revealed to Lithuanian TV viewers, bursting into tears whilst being interviewed. (Don't worry about that Neringa - it can happen to the best of 'em!) She had set a 1:33:05 PB earlier in the season, which secured Olympic selection. Following selection, she had been in such great shape at a training camp, particularly indicated by excellent speed training. She then attended altitude training at St. Moritz.

She felt the time gap to her event on 11th August was too long. Together with a return to work, which she admits was probably not the best idea as it added to the pressure of having to fend questions all the time, this left her feeling on the day, 'heavy legged'. Having said that, her early 2Km splits were in the 9:12 - 9:19 range bringing her 46:24 at half way and she only slowed in the last quarter of the race. Apart from that, the support from the crowd was 'amazing', not able to hear anything including her own breathing for the first lap at least. She was encouraged to hear her name being called out by friends and team-mates throughout the race.

Neringa talks with excitement and pride about her Olympic experience. All the athlete's needs were catered for and was thrilled to be part of the opening and closing ceremonies and yes, she has the duvet - along with everyone else!

What about Rio 2016? Too early to say, just post these Olympics. She'll be 33 then and although some say that you improve with age, it has to be noted that the Olympic Champion, Elena Lashmanova is just 19.

Neringa's boyfriend, Muzaffer is keen on her continuing but Neringa knows that the high qualifying standard needs to be met year-on-year for her to continue competing at the main championships.

2013 may be a quiet year as she admits not being too keen on Russia, with Moscow being the venue for the World Champs.

Neringa was chuffed at being recently invested as a Life-Member of Ilford AC, as recognition of her achievement, joining a select band of 4 other Ilford AC Olympians, including fellow 20km walker Roger Mills who competed in the 1980 Moscow Games.



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UK race walking aficionados have applauded Neringa on her elegant, classic and fair race walking style. Also, she is to be commended in not being persuaded by others in adopting more of the 'flying' style which has brought the sport so much controversy over the years. Long may she continue to do so!

Neringa acknowledges the support for her early international career from the Lithuanian athletic federation. However, all this naturally stopped in 2009 when she came to London. Following the later flourishing of her career which has seen her become an Olympian, Neringa feels very strongly to emphasise that she has shown that it's still possible, with dedication, to reach a high standard whilst holding down a full-time job. 'Legacy' is one of the Buzz words from these Olympics and so Neringa hopes that by setting this example will prove to be part of her own legacy.

My thanks to Neringa for the very interesting conversation that we had, and the coffee wasn't bad either!

Len Ruddock
November 2012

If you need to respond to this email please do not reply but contact Billy Green separately

