



Robert Dobson

Name: Robert (Bob) Dobson

Born: 04/11/1942

Date Joined: 1979

Personal Bests:

3k 12m 40.4s

5k 21m 50.4s

10k 44m 16s

20k 1h 30m 2s

30k 2h 27m 28s

50k 4h 07m 22.4s

100k 9h 56m 34s

12 hours 118.805km (world best) = 73.822miles

24 hours 204.330km = 126miles 1709yds

First Club Race: 21/5/1963 (with Essex Beagles)

Favourite Race:

Hastings to Brighton (38 miles) 6 times winner

Notable Performances:

Completed 125 races of 50k - 29 of which were UK Champs & all finished in first 9 positions.

49 years in the top 10 UK All time list at 50kms.

1974 Set UK National & British Commonwealth 30 miles & 50kms records (4.02.29.2)
(4.11.,22)



Robert Dobson

When winning Invitation 50kms Track Race in Paris (7th on All Time World Lists)
subsequently broke UK record on 4 other occasions

2 European Championships, 1971 & 1974

4 Race Walk World Cup Finals, 1970, 1973, 1977, 1981

1 World Championship 1976

1 Commonwealth Games 1970

Winning UK Nation 50kms 1970, at only my 2nd attempt at 50k.

23 International Representations from 1970 to 1995 - GB 19, England 2, Wales 2

Biggest Disappointment:

Missing out on 1972 Olympics (controversial non selection) and 1976 Olympics (50kms event dropped & rescheduled as World Champs in Sweden - set new UK Record 4.10.20)

Missing out on 1974 Commonwealth Games after winning UK National 20miles but not exempted from trial (Finished 4th) 2 weeks after 50Kms in Switzerland (World Cup Final.)

Typical Weeks Training at your peak .

Weekdays- 6 a.m. 7 miles - lunchtime Gym - 7p.m. 7 miles.

Weekend Sat/Sun 2 x 15 miles. (Completed whilst working Full time. Once during holidays covered 165 miles in 1 week.

Favourite Sessions:

The ones when I felt I was going well - Hated Interval sessions so rarely did them.

Favourite race distance : 50kms

What advice would you give our current crop of youngsters

“Take up Football as there is no money in Racewalking !!!!! “

But seriously - don't expect immediate success it took me 7 years to reach International Standard.



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Who is the most Famous Athlete you Trained with or would like to train with:

Enrique Vera (Mexico) at the time he was 50kms World Record Holder & stayed with us for 6 months in 1977

How would you improve the sport – More Sponsorship and Publicity

Favourite Athlete or Sportsman; David Hemery – Great Athlete, Great Captain & a true Gentleman. :

What other sports do you follow: Football (West Ham),

Speedway

Best Country Visited : Austria

Favourite Food & Drink : Fillet Steak & Merlot Wine – Cider as a long drink & most desserts.

Favourite TV Shows: The old ones are the best. – Only Fools & Horses & Till death us do part.

Last Film Seen : Bobby (The Bobby Moore Story)

Last Book Read : Money Walks (Book by Chris Maddocks 5 times UK Olympic Racewalker).

Favourite Band Singer: Sadly, Whitney Houston

Last Album Bought or Downloaded: Alphaville, Pet Shop Boys

Last Concert Attended: John Bon Jovi Tribute concert.

Any Pets: Cat

What are your aims for next season – to resume training after long layoff in 2020

Tell us a Joke:

2 Irishmen taking a lunch break.

Paddy says to Mick "What have you got there Mick? "

Mick Replies " Its a Thermos Flask"

Paddy asks " What does it do?"

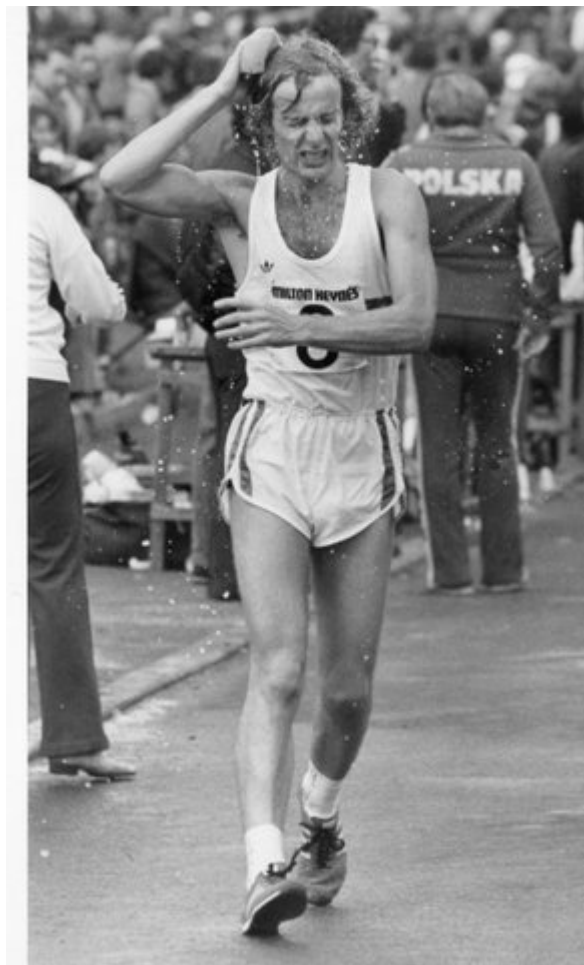
" It keeps hot things hot & cold things cold"

"Well what have you got in it?"

"2 cups of tea and an Icecream"



RWD Hastings-Brighton



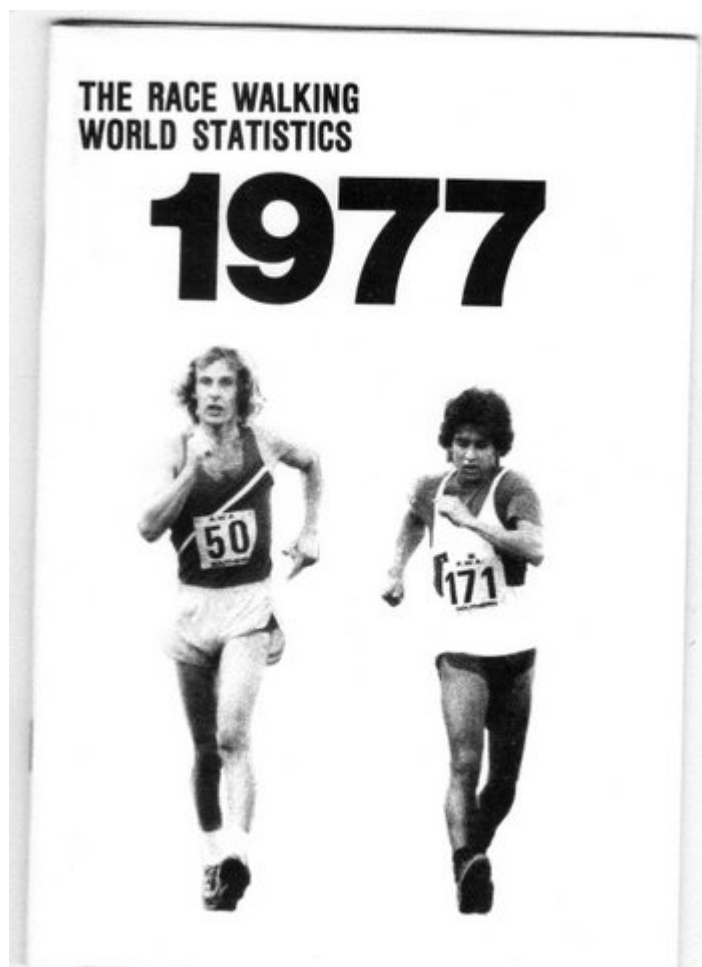
Lugano Cup. Milton Keynes 1977



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Lugano Cup Milton Keynes 1977



1977 Bob Dobson & Enrique Vera



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Suffolk Open 7 Miles	
1 E. Vass (Suffolk AC) (West)	48 48
2 R. Dobson (Suffolk AC)	49 27
3 G. Smith (Belgrave H) (2)	50 32
4 A. Smith (Suffolk H) (1)	51 27
5 C. Green (Belgrave H)	51 30
6 P. Hill (Dyming AC) (2)	52 30
7 D. Taylor (Dyming AC)	52 38
8 K. Carter (Suffolk AC)	52 38
9 J. Hall (Belgrave H)	52 38
10 S. Lightman (Horn AC)	52 38
11 J. Jones (Suffolk H)	52 38
12 G. Stone (Suffolk H)	52 43
13 G. Smith (Dyming AC)	52 43
14 S. Hildesley (Dyming AC)	52 43
15 R. Williams (Cambridge H)	52 50
16 M. Williams (Cambridge AC)	52 50
17 R. Armstrong (Horn AC)	52 50
18 M. Jones (Horn AC)	54 14
19 R. Williams (Horn AC)	54 14
20 D. Hunt (Horn AC)	54 27
21 D. Sheppard (Horn AC)	54 33
22 R. Williams (Belgrave H)	54 38
23 D. Hilly (Brighton & Hove AC)	54 38
24 D. O'Neil (Brighton & Hove AC)	55 10
25 R. Hildesley (Horn AC)	55 29
26 J. Robinson (Dyming AC)	55 48
27 L. Williams (Horn AC)	55 50
28 E. Williams (Horn AC)	55 50
29 E. Williams (Horn AC)	55 50
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100 E. Williams (Horn AC)	55 50



Bob Dobson (50) and his Mexican boarder, Enrique Vera, during the Enfield 7 Miles.
Photo by Mike Street

1977 Bob Dobson & Enrique Vera

BOD ANSWERS YOUR QUESTIONS

You've put much back into athletics by officiating & serving as Race Walking Association President - after a 1972 shameful Olympic omission, your event not staged 1976 (only Olympics since it's 1932 introduction) and a 1986 Commonwealth Games' snub when Wales could have got you there for the price a train ticket, how did you managed to get over severe setbacks to show so much genuine keenness for race walking?



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I suppose I got used to disappointments but after failing to make the 1980 Olympics I kept my momentum going by notching up numerous appearances in specific races, winning Essex medals, and “Masters” titles. I also moved up in distance and tried to set records at the multi distance events.

Your great win in the 2001 “Hedgethorpe Memorial 100” at Colchester’s Lower Castle Park was the closest finish in UK ultra-distance racing (apart from a contrived dead-heat between the 2 Browns) as you so narrowly defeated Richard Brown, becoming our oldest winner of a UK National race walking title. What do you recall from that event?

My win in 2001 came as a surprise. I had entered in tribute to John Hedgethorpe but it was 15 years on since my 24 hours track win and only a few 100kms races in between. So it was going to be a test of endurance. The multi lap out and back helped because I could keep my eye on the opposition. Richard Brown had all the multi distance experience and was my main threat. I knew he had the ability to finish strongly so I had to keep focused. Only when he gave me a “high five” on the penultimate lap as we crossed in opposite directions did I sense he had conceded defeat.

Is British race walking close to a proverbial cliff edge - or do you see light at the end of the tunnel?

We have seen a massive loss of young talent over the years but now there is a glimmer of hope with age group championships and a more professional set up at the top for our seniors. But above all UK Athletics, European, World and Olympic Athletics Organisations MUST maintain our sport at various distances. Race Walking is an endurance event and should cater for all. The move towards ditching the 50kms ,and in some cases the 20kms(Commonwealth Games)is a tragedy.

What made you pick Race Walking as opposed to Running ? Who introduced you to the sport?



Robert Dobson

At school my running was confined to short distance and the occasional cross country, but when working I spent a summer season competing for my Office Team in the London Civil Service Athletic League (LCSAL). At no time was I fast enough to call myself a sprinter but I did try a number of events and became a “jack of all trades – master of none”. In one of those LCSAL meets I tried the 3k walk & to my surprise didn’t come last. A fellow pukka racewalker thought I had done well and when I got home I told my parents. The next day my father told one of his work colleagues – an ex Essex Beagle Racewalker – that I had done a racewalk & he then introduced me to Essex Beagles where I served my “apprenticeship” under the guidance of Phil Everard and Ron Gum.

I had 6 months as a junior before reaching 21 & thus then competing as a senior. As I progressed with some of the Beagles Seniors particularly Colin Young I was intrigued by his stories of endurance & thus my appetite was whetted.

I also got to meet the great Jim Peters. I suppose I also had a niche for endurance for as a former swimmer not fast enough to aspire to International Level – thus retired at 18 – I had thoughts of swimming the channel until I read a book about it which quickly dispelled these thoughts..

Have you ever done any running races ?

School sports & Office Sports. Nothing of note.

What was it like training around the streets in the 70s ?

A lot better than it is now. I had several big routes where you could train on the pavement for miles without encountering cars or lorries parked on the pavements, building site obstructions, skateboarders, cyclists or scooters.

There was more respect and tolerance in those days,

I see you were capped twice by England and twice by Wales. How does that work ?

In 1970 I gained my 1st International & that was for England at 20 miles in the Commonwealth Games in Edinburgh.

My 2nd England International came in 1990 at 100kms in France. In between I had competed for Great Britain & because I moved to Wales in 1980 I was eligible by residence to compete for Wales in 1981 (10k track in Cwmbran) and 1995 (35 Kms in Denmark)

Did you ever race against OLIVER CAVIGLIOLI who represented Thurrock and also France ?



Robert Dobson

Yes, after my spell at Essex Beagles I competed for Basildon and thus raced with and against Oliver Cavigioli who was also a Basildon member.

Greatest Memory from Race Walking ?

A difficult one, as being in the sport for 57 years there are many memories and many that I have forgotten. But what always inspired me in my early career was watching on TV Ken Matthews winning the 1964 Olympic 20k title in Tokyo. The TV clip was repeated over the years and I know I saw it at least 25 times.

What has happened to all your trophies ?

They rarely see the light of day. But I do look at them from time to time & wish I could repeat the performances that won them for me.

Did you follow any nutritional guidance in your halcyon days ?

Yes. I learnt about the so called "Bleed Out Diet" from Ron Hill (carbohydrate abstinence followed by carbohydrate excess loading). I spent a weekend with him when we went to Munich in 1971 for the pre Olympic Meet (marathon & 50Kms walk).

What was the first single and album you ever bought ?

As a teenager I was a great fan of Adam Faith. I bought several singles, saw his film with Shirley Anne Field and bought the album Beat Girl.

I still have the album like a lot of my other old LP's. I am a hoarder who rarely throws anything away.

Do you think the Tokyo Olympics will ACTUALLY go ahead ?

I think they will go ahead because the Japanese are fanatical & have invested too much money to forfeit them. But of course the IOC will have the final word.

What should happen to drug cheats ?



Robert Dobson

There has to be a great deterrent. They have been around too long & I have raced against them in the 1970's and beyond. I am all for a lifetime ban.

Do you keep in touch with your Race Walking Ilford Colleagues?

Yes, definitely. Although I live in Cardiff I am still an East End Boy & proud of my Essex roots.

What are your thoughts on International Race Walker Tom Bosworth and how do you feel he will perform in next Year's Olympics ?

I remember judging Tom when he first came on the scene as a scrawny schoolboy with sparrow-like legs. Unlike so many of our past talented youngsters he has stayed the course & showed a determination to get to the top. His success & his character have not only endeared him to the public but he has brought Racewalking into focus with Mainstream Athletics. Sometimes I think he needs to control his exuberance and if he uses his head he could get a top 6 place in the Olympics.

Have you ever been disqualified in a major event? Do you think the rules are complex for those not involved in the sport?

Never in an International Event and only once in a UK National 50kms in 2012 when nearly 70years old my legs did not straighten to the complete satisfaction of 3 judges so I was dqd. Yes the rules are too complex for non walkers to master. Not only is technique a big issue but now we have to contend with yellow cautions, DQ recommendations, a Penalty Zone with time penalties and Chief Judge's Sole Discretion in the last 100metres. How can the Public follow that.