



The Loneliness Of the Long-Distance

WALKER

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ERIC LARSON

BY
JOHN BRANT

Curt Clausen abandoned a comfortable middle-class life to compete in a sport that gets more ridicule than a Ben Affleck movie. Now America's premier racewalker—who covers marathon courses faster than most people run them—must ask himself, "Was this final race in Athens worth all the effort?"

CURT CLAUSEN STANDS AT THE START OF THE 50-K racewalk at the Athens Olympics, visualizing the day that lies ahead. He will walk half way around the Olympic Stadium track, eerily empty at 7 a.m., then head out onto the city streets. Unlike the Olympic marathoners, who ran the historic Marathon-to-Athens course made famous by the Greek messenger Pheidippides in 490 B.C., the racewalkers will shuttle for four numbing hours up and down Agiou Georgiou and Neapoleous streets, flat thoroughfares lined with blocky 1960s-vintage apartment buildings and

WALK THIS WAY WITH HIS DISTINCT STYLE AND 90 MILES OF WEEKLY ROAD WORK, CLAUSEN LED U.S. RACEWALKERS INTO THE 2004 OLYMPICS.

dusty shade trees. Save for the Olympic banners fluttering in the hot wind, these streets could be just about anywhere.

Clausen, the best American racewalker of his time, has walked hundreds of such courses in his 25-year career. By the end of this sizzling morning, when Athens's temperatures are expected to rise to the mid-90s, he'll know Agiou Georgiou and Neapoleous down to their last pebble. He'll need to cover the 2-K loop 24 times, walking a total of 31 miles, almost five miles longer than the marathon. His heart rate will rev to 160 beats per minute. If all goes according to plan, he'll travel each mile at a 7:30 pace, and pass the 26.2-mile mark in roughly three hours and 20 minutes.

To say that Clausen and his competitors are "just walking" would be spectacularly misleading.

Clausen waits at the starting line, flanked by fellow members of the elite international racewalk community. Among them are Robert Korzeniowski of Poland, Jefferson Perez of Ecuador, and the Russian Aleksey Voyevodin, all medal contenders. Also present is Philip Dunn, Clausen's close friend and training partner from the Chula Vista Olympic Training Center near San Diego.

Dunn, coming off knee surgery and barely meeting the qualifying standard of four hours, has little chance of medaling. Clausen's prospects are less clear. He owns the American 50-K record of 3:48:04. His bronze medal in the 1999 World Championships was the first medal won by a U.S. racewalker at a major international competition since Larry Young earned a bronze in the 20-K at the 1972 Olympics. Plus, Clausen had been a strong medal contender at the Sydney Games until knee surgery slowed him. At age 37, his fastest days appear to be behind him, but he is renowned among

On the other hand, racewalking has taken Clausen around the world, to places as exalted as this Olympic stadium and as out-of-the-way as a beach in Ensenada, Mexico, where, to his quiet but enduring satisfaction, some Mexican racewalk fans once recognized him and asked for autographs. The sport might not have fattened Clausen's bank account, but it has yielded the sharp pleasure of hammering a hard workout at Chula Vista with Dunn and fellow Olympic walkers Tim Seaman and John Nunn. And had he not given himself so completely to racewalking, Clausen never would have spent a rainy night in the California desert, searching for his missing teammate, Al Heppner.

Still, had all these redeeming moments been enough to overcome the demeaning ones?

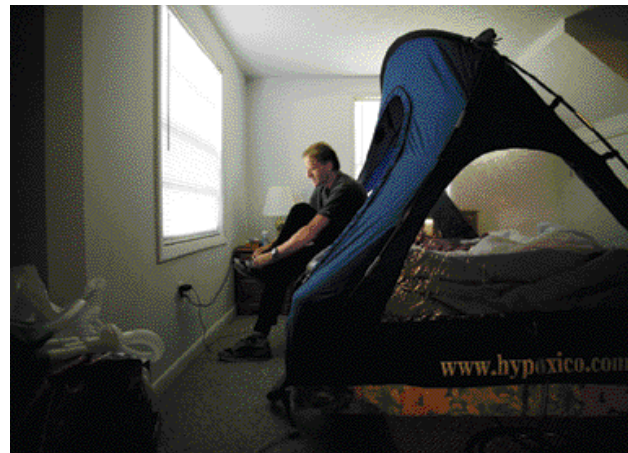
Curt Clausen steps to the starting line. The gun sounds.

ON A COOL MORNING IN JUNE, two months before the Olympics, dense fog casts the Pacific Ocean, and the sky above it, a dreary shade of tooth-filling gray. In the parking lot of the Chula Vista Marina, Curt Clausen unfolds from behind the wheel of his old black pickup truck. At 6'2", with flowing blonde hair, cable-muscled shoulders, and blue eyes set deep into a sun-seamed face, Clausen, who grew up in Wisconsin, could pass for an archetypal Southern Californian—a surfer, character actor, or stunt man.

What Clausen does not resemble is the geeky stereotype of the racewalker. You know, those who can't run, walk; the swiveling hips and frenzied arm pumping. "I hear criticism all the time about racewalking being unnatural," Clausen says. "Well, what's natural? Is throwing a 16-pound ball of steel natural? Is jumping over a stick natural? Walking is much more natural than most sports. We're just trying to walk as fast as we can."

The sport requires power, a strong sense of rhythm, and advanced levels of flexibility. It tends to be the most coordinated distance runners, not the slowest ones, who evolve into racewalkers. Consider the challenge they encounter with every step: Racewalkers must always keep one foot in contact with the ground, and the lead leg must be straight upon contact. If a racewalker receives three red cards during the course of a race, he's disqualified. But in recent years, elite athletes have pushed these strictures to and beyond their farthest limits; video replays of current top walkers show that, technically, they are often in violation, with the lead leg very slightly flexed, and both feet airborne for a split second. However, race judges (in international competition, approximately eight judges are positioned throughout the course) can't use cameras. If the infractions aren't perceptible to the trained but naked eye, they aren't cited.

This morning, Clausen has a 14-mile workout in store. It's the kind of daily training he's been doing since 1997, when he left a white-collar career in North Carolina to make racewalking a full-time job—without, unfortunately, the full-time pay. U.S. Olympic marathoners earned as much as \$85,000 for qualifying for Athens;



Awakened to his mortality, Clausen pledged his life to his sport. "I'd been cheating myself!"

his peers for his toughness and resourcefulness. In the 50-K, especially on a hot day such as this one, these qualities are crucial.

"Curt fears no one—not the Russians, the Poles, the Central Americans," says U.S. coach Enrique Pena. "He will walk his best against anybody, under any conditions."

But this race offers a condition like no other. Finality.

In a few weeks, upon returning to the States, Clausen will leave full-time racewalking behind. At an age when most men are plotting their next move up the career ladder, Clausen will be starting law school at the University of Wisconsin. After this 50-K, Clausen will no longer have to live in a cramped dorm room in Chula Vista and queue up for dining hall meals. He will no longer scrounge for financial support or compete in a National Championship race with 20 spectators attending. And finished will be the days of explaining his sport—and justifying himself—to a condescending American public. "Racewalking," NBC sportscaster Bob Costas once cracked, "is like seeing who can whisper the loudest."

Clausen received \$6,000 for his Trials victory. He cobles together a living through a combination of modest stipends and sponsorships, and by living rent-free at the Olympic Training Center. The rewards of the sport, Clausen explains, are more intangible. "The 50-K is about managing pain and working through problems," he says. "You need a lot of years of training and racing in order to understand it."

A few minutes later, Dunn, Seaman, and Nunn arrive at the marina in their well-seasoned Corollas and Accords. Coach Pena, a middle-aged former Olympic racewalker from Colombia, pulls up in a glinting SUV that would be the pride of any six-figure-income Carlsbad resident. Clausen quietly explains that Pena's wheels are on loan, property of the United States Olympic Committee.

The athletes stretch on the lawn. Dunn, who's from Portland, Oregon, is a slight, wiry, 33-year-old veteran of the 50-K. Seaman, 32, a voluble, outgoing Long Island native and the U.S. 20-K record holder, is built along the lines of Dunn. Nunn, at 26, is a maturing 20-K talent, a member of the army's elite athlete program, headed for his first Olympics. Nunn is as big as Clausen, and standing together, they resemble a pair of NFL wide receivers.

The walkers are mostly silent, but it's a comfortable silence, reflecting their familiarity with one another. For nearly a decade, Clausen, Dunn, and Seaman have trained, raced, and traveled together, learning each other's most galling weaknesses and enduring strengths, when to draw close and when to keep a distance. Seaman finally speaks up. "Hey, I'm gonna be on the radio Wednesday night," he says. "Some station's doing a show about Olympic athletes in the lesser-known sports."

Dunn gives a thin smile. "Lesser-known," he says.

Clausen guides the conversation to an upcoming meet in Los Angeles. "I found us a hotel," he says, unfolding a Web site printout from the pocket of his warmups. The other walkers, who, like Clausen, have to pay their own race expenses, watch intently.

Clausen clearly is the executive of the group. Seven years earlier, he'd been the driving force behind the organization of the Chula

TRAINING 24/7/365 IN PREPPING FOR HIS FINAL OLYMPICS, CLAUSEN NEVER LET UP. HE SLEPT IN A TENT THAT SIMULATED A LOW-OXYGEN SETTING SO AS TO GAIN HIGH-ALTITUDE BENEFITS (TOP, LEFT), AND LIVED AND WORKED OUT WITH TEAMMATES LIKE 20-K SPECIALIST JOHN NUNN.

Vista racewalking program, and spearheaded the effort to bring Pena from Ecuador, where the coach had developed Jefferson Perez and other top racewalkers. But while the other men defer to Clausen, they hardly bow to him. Their interaction resembles that of a veteran rock band; Clausen may be lead guitarist, but the

group remains an ensemble.

"I don't think you're going to find a tighter group of athletes," Clausen had said earlier. "When one of us succeeds, it's like all of us succeed. And we share the hard times the same way."

Now, Clausen turns back to the hotel printout. "...the Occidental College campus lies only five minutes from the hotel..." he reads.

Seaman's skeptical. "Five minutes," he says. "What, at three o'clock in the morning?"

"Traffic should not be a factor," Pena says diplomatically. "Re-

member, we don't race until nine o'clock on Saturday night."

"Do the rooms have refrigerators?" Nunn asks.

Clausen scans the printout and frowns. "No refrigerators."

Dunn cuts to the chase. "How much?"

"With a AAA discount," Clausen says, smiling, "\$59 a night."

Then they start walking. Clausen steps to the lead, moving at 50-K race pace, about 7:30 per mile. He walks with a fluid, powerful glide, his legs a seamless blur. His arm swing, while more pronounced than a runner's, is just as economical. His long legs steadily eat the asphalt. A red spot grows on the back of his singlet, where the strap of his heart rate monitor chafes against his skin. He stares into a private middle distance, pursuing his vocation with a hungry, undivided heart. Dunn, Seaman, and Nunn follow, each absorbed in their own fierce rhythm.

CLAUSEN'S WINDING TRAIL TO THE Chula Vista training center began in Trenton, New Jersey, where he was born in 1967. Shortly after his birth, his parents gave him up for adoption. When Clausen was nine, his adoptive parents divorced, and he and his



LOOKING AHEAD WITH HIS RACING DAYS OVER, CLAUSEN NOW SETS HIS SIGHTS ON ANOTHER LONG-DISTANCE JOURNEY: LAW SCHOOL AT WISCONSIN.

sister moved with their mother to her native Stevens Point, Wisconsin. Life was harder there, at least materially; the family lived in a small apartment, and Clausen's mother worked as a secretary. And while he grew especially close to his grandfather, when kids at school asked Clausen about his absent father, the angry little boy told them the man had died.

In this small-town environment, Clausen still managed to do well in school and tried every sport that came in season. In the summer of 1980, when he was 12, Clausen tried racewalking. He was drawn less by the sport itself, he admits, than the opportunity to excel. "I just loved to compete," he recalls, sitting over a late lunch at the Olympic Training Center dining hall. "Not many kids would try racewalking because it was too hard. I didn't mind the difficulty,

and I loved the fact that I could win a lot more often in racewalking than I could in cross-country or track."

Through high school (where he was a teammate of Suzy Favor Hamilton), Clausen was more runner than racewalker. During his senior year, he was Wisconsin's top-ranked cross-country runner and was poised to win the state meet when a case of bronchitis scratched him from the race. He would later enroll at Duke University, where he continued to run during the school year and walk in the summers, collecting several national junior racewalk titles. He graduated from Duke in 1990, married his college sweetheart, earned a master's degree in public administration from North Carolina State, and started a career as an administrator for the city of Durham, North Carolina. He continued to racewalk, although he trained mostly by running, squeezing in workouts around family and work priorities. He consistently ranked among the top American racewalkers, but fell short of international standards. Clausen didn't much care. He had a good marriage, a satisfying job, a comfortable house, and a little sport on the side to keep his interest.

But that happy balance started to shift in early 1994. One winter day in Stevens Point, Clausen's grandfather slipped on a patch of ice and suffered a fatal head injury. Clausen was still grieving when word came from Florida that his estranged adoptive father had died of a sudden stroke. Then, just a few weeks later, while driving from North Carolina to a racewalk competition in Georgia, Clausen's car collided with another vehicle in a highway construction zone. He woke up in the hospital with a severe concussion and a badly bruised chest. A passenger in the other car was killed.

"As I lay there in the hospital, it occurred to me that tomorrow wasn't guaranteed," Clausen says. "My grandfather had been elderly, and my father was an overweight former football player, a guy who chain-smoked and drank a fifth of whiskey every day of his life, so it was no great shock that either one of them died. And my accident, of course, was just one of those chance occurrences. Still, coming one after another, those three events sort of stopped my world."

Awakened to his mortality, Clausen chose to pledge his time and heart to racewalking. He aimed to fulfill his boyhood dream of competing in the Olympics, and invested all he had in the cause. "I realized that I'd just been dabbling in the sport so far," he says. "I had been cheating myself." He stopped running as part of his regimen and upped his weekly walking mileage to 90. His times dropped accordingly. After finishing fifth in the 1995 20-K Nationals, Clausen set his sights on the 1996 Olympic Trials. He trained even harder, and made repeat trips to Atlanta to familiarize himself with the Trials course. In the spring of '96 he stunned the U.S. racewalk community by winning the trials in 1:29:50.

The Atlanta Olympics proved deflating: Clausen finished 50th. But he seized the opportunity to study the world's top walkers and determine how he could possibly join them. He concluded that a tight-knit community of athletes, guided by a first-rate coach, was just as important as a wholehearted commitment. So, drawing upon his experience in public-sector management, he began the

painstaking process of lining up support and sponsorship for a resident racewalking program at the new Olympic Training Center in Chula Vista. By the time he left North Carolina for California in early 1997, Clausen was totally focused on racewalking. His marriage, his career in city management, and the rest of his conventional, middle-class life had come to an end.

"I admit I'm driven, that it's not my nature to do things halfway," Clausen says. "A few years ago, I picked up golf, and within a few weeks, I was playing so compulsively that my racewalking started to suffer. So golf had to go." He pauses. "Any athlete living a balanced life will eventually get his lunch handed to him by some wild man who eats, drinks, and breathes his sport 24 hours a day."

The added intensity paid off, for a while. Leading up to the Sydney Olympics, Clausen became the U.S.'s top racewalker in both the 20-K and 50-K. In 1999, at the age of 32, he earned his bronze medal at the 50-K World Championships and later set the 50-K American record of 3:48:04. He finished the year ranked fourth in the world. But just four weeks before the Sydney Games, where he seemed a sure bet to end America's 28-year racewalking medal drought, he underwent surgery to repair torn cartilage in his knee. He ended up limping to a 3:58:39, 22nd-place performance in the 50-K, and returned to the U.S. devastated.

"Through the rest of 2000, I was basically in the tank," he recalls. "I just couldn't bring myself to train seriously at all. I was considering hanging it up. In the fall I decided to climb Mount Whitney, the tallest mountain in the lower 48 states. It turned into a fiasco. The guy I was supposed to climb with didn't show up, and it started to snow like crazy. I decided to go ahead anyway. I was hiking through waist-deep snow. It was absolutely nuts, but I couldn't stop. It took me two hours to climb the last quarter mile. I was half-frozen, but I made it to the top. When I got back to San Diego, I discovered that something had been settled in my mind. I felt clear and hungry. I was ready to start training again."

It was not a decision to take lightly. Clausen was now in his mid-30s. His most dependable source of income was stacking books in a local library, and his chances of ever catching up to the world's best walkers seemed remote. He was committing himself to four more years of sharing 12-by-12 dorm rooms with a succession of rowers and pole vaulters. Most men would have regarded such a future as a jail sentence; Clausen saw it as freedom and opportunity. "I don't

worry about paying homeowners insurance or shopping for food or cooking," he points out. "I don't worry about taking out the trash, or helping kids with their homework—not that those aren't important things, and that at some point I wouldn't want my own home again, and my own family. But by living here, I can best concentrate on walking. The sport has taken me around the world and connected me to a lot of wonderful people. Ten or 20 years from now, I'm not going to look back and regret that I didn't give walking my best shot."

IT'S LATE IN the afternoon in Chula Vista, and Clausen heads over to the track, where he'll join Nunn for a light four-mile workout. Along the way, he detours into Pena's office to play a short video of last February's 50-K Olympic Trials race, held at the Chula Vista Marina. That was the fateful race in which Clausen earned a trip to Athens, and Al Heppner didn't.

The tape shows a golden winter morning, with cheerleaders from the local high school shaking their pom-poms. That day Clausen felt confident. He'd been training well, and he obviously knew the course and his competition. He thought he was in sub-four-hour shape; if he finished under four hours, he would meet the Olympic A standard, and almost certainly win the Trials. And even when his stomach started churning early in the race, forcing him to make a pit stop and lose a full 10 minutes, he didn't panic. There is time to recover from almost anything over the course of a 31-mile walk.

Clausen's slow start, though, did let Heppner, a 29-year-old racewalking veteran and charter member of the Chula Vista group, jump to a big lead at 10-K. Through the mid-reaches of the race—loop after loop, the walkers staring down each other's throats with each turn around the pylons—Heppner expanded his lead. But Clausen sensed Heppner would eventually come back to the pack. Racewalking 31 miles requires a stability of mind, a steadiness of purpose, that Heppner, for all his talent and experience, could not always maintain. In 2000, at the 50-K Olympic Trials, Heppner had dominated until 40-K—nearly the marathon mark and the point at which all physical reserves hit bottom and the true walking begins. Unlike the other walkers, Heppner raced without a T-shirt under his singlet, exposing himself to that day's wind and rain. Ultimately, he would have to drop out due to hypothermia. Clausen, meanwhile, won that race in 3:56:16, (continued on page 97)

Is There an Asphalt Eater Inside You?

Maybe you've seen racewalkers compete in your local running races. Maybe some have even passed you. Maybe you watched the Olympic racewalkers during the late-night broadcasts from Athens, realized these people are *athletes*, and wondered if you, too, could keep stride with them. If so, you're not alone. Thousands of people racewalk in the United States, and most are former runners.

"Generally, they weren't quite good enough to medal for their college," says John MacLachlan, president of Racewalking International, which promotes the sport via its Web site (worldwidewalkers.net), "but they want to stay competitive so they gravitate toward racewalking." Plus, walking provides good exercise with less pounding.

But where do you go to learn racewalking's funky techniques, like keeping one leg straight while stepping forward? With coaching on the local level at a premium, your best bet may be the Web. In addition to [Racewalking International](http://RacewalkingInternational.com), check out racewalk.com, walk-usa.com, and philsport.com/narf (home of the North American Racewalking Foundation). One tip: You don't need to be a Curt Clausen clone to compete. "We tell people that if they're marginally straightening their leg," says Gary Westerfield, director of Walk USA, a racewalking club with members nationwide, "we'll cut them some slack."

Long-Distance Walker

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 85

claiming a ticket to Sydney. Heppner came away empty. He'd allowed the lack of a T-shirt to beat him and deny him an Olympic spot.

Now, four years later, the pattern was recurring. Heppner had pulled away from the pack, but, in his exhilaration, neglected to drink and fuel adequately. As the day wore on, Clausen chipped away at the lead. At 40-K, the same point where Heppner had crashed in the 2000 Trials, Clausen blew past him.

At the finish, it was Clausen winning in 3:58:24, which made him the American champion and also the only competitor that day to meet the Olympic A standard. Seaman, intending to walk only the 20-K in Athens, finished second. Dunn, the third-place finisher, missed the A standard but would nail it a few weeks later at a race in Tijuana, and thus win his second Olympic berth. Heppner finished a dismal fifth, in 4:23:52, far short of qualifying for Athens.

Days later, despondent after his disappointing performance, Heppner drove his car into the desert east of San Diego, and jumped off the Pine Valley Bridge to his death.

Clausen watches the tape from the Trials with a tight face. A few minutes later, out on the track, he and Nunn walk shirtless under the setting sun. Coach Pena looks on. "Racewalking is not like running or other sports, where the pursuit of money can set one athlete against another," Pena says. "In walking there is no money. All we have is one another. We work together every day, on the same roads that Al used to walk." He pauses. "Since Al's death, we have grown more determined. It has brought us closer together."

In a bitter irony, Heppner's death, and not the athletes' accomplishments, finally brought attention to the sport of racewalking. Re-

porters from national publications, the likes of *Sports Illustrated* and *ESPN: The Magazine*, suddenly besieged the Chula Vista group. Clausen responded professionally, yet also knew that what appeared in print could not adequately convey his sense of the catastrophe; commingled feelings of grief, rage, and helplessness, along with the knowledge that in the affair's darkest moment, he and his teammates behaved with honor.

Clausen recalls how one day last November, three months prior to the Trials, he had led a group hiking expedition to Pine Valley, in the Cleveland National Forest, 40 miles east of San Diego. Four miles in, he had stopped and pointed up. At 450 feet above, so high as to appear a mirage-like speck, the Pine Valley Bridge was etched against the desert sky. Heppner, Clausen remembers, had been deeply impressed, and had spent a long time staring up at the bridge.

And yet nothing seemed overtly wrong with Heppner right after the Trials. In fact, he had gone out for a long postrace recovery walk with Seaman and seemed upbeat and resolved. But after that walk he disappeared. A few nights later, Seaman called Clausen with ominous news—the California Highway Patrol had found Heppner's car parked along Interstate 8, near the Pine Valley Bridge.

"Okay, Tim," Clausen said over the phone. "Let's go find him."

"We can't," Seaman replied. "The CHP said not to come out tonight. They said to meet them at the bridge in the morning."

"We're not waiting til morning," Clausen said. "We need to go now."

Together with Seaman and Nunn, Clausen drove east through the rain, leaving the lights of San Diego behind, climbing into the national forest on the fringe of the Mojave Desert, continuing to the bridge spanning Pine Valley Canyon.

Six police cars awaited them. None of the authorities were pleased to see the walkers, who were ordered to go home and to return at first

POWERSOX
ENHANCING YOUR ABILITY TO ACHIEVE YOUR GREATEST POTENTIAL
POWERSOX.COM

PHOTO: JAMES HARRISON
PHOTO: DANIEL JAMES HARRISON
BIG SPORTING GOODS SHOE CARENAVAL SPORTSMART OSHKOSH ACADEMY CORPUSCOPUS FASHION FOOTWEAR ALL SPORTS MODELL'S BACK ROOM SHIRT SPORTING GOODS GATTS THE SPORTS AUTHORITY

Add
life.

Mix
well.



The all-new Hyundai Tucson.

Coming Fall 2004 • HyundaiTucson.com

170-hp engine. MP3/CD player with disc speakers. And three power outlets. Things that come in handy when you're out stirring things up. The all-new 2004 Tucson. Perfect for whatever | whenever



light. The three friends protested. "Go home," the cops repeated.

Heading to their vehicle, Clausen said to Seaman and Nunn, "We're not going home. We're going to walk that trail and find Al."

They drove a mile farther east and found the national forest trailhead. Using flashlights, the three followed the trail they had hiked on that brilliant afternoon months earlier. Now it was pitch-black and raining. Each step was an anxious one, as if at the end of a 50-K racewalk. The only prospect worse than not finding Heppner was finding him—stumbling upon his body in the dark.

"But there was just no way we could turn back," Clausen explains. "Al was out there. If the situation had been reversed, he would have come looking for me."

The walkers had covered a mile or so when a searchlight piercing down from the highway split the night. "Come on back up," a patrolman called. "You don't have to look for him any longer."

CURT CLAUSEN HAS TOLD friends that a day doesn't go by when he doesn't think of Al Heppner. He's also wondered how racewalking could drive a man to his death. And yet, on this day in Athens, he must also think about himself and his final day as a racer.

Athens is baking this Friday morning. At 11 a.m., four hours into the 50-K, it's nearing 95 degrees. Clausen is among a dozen or so walkers still on the course. He's completed the 24 loops outside the Olympic Stadium and now heads back toward it. The race, though, already has a winner.

A little over 30 minutes ago, Robert Korzeniowski of Poland walked across the finish line to win his second consecutive Olympic 50-K, and the fourth gold of his Olympic career. Polish fans waved flags and chanted "Robert! Robert!" throughout his 3:38:46 triumph. His time was just seconds off the Olympic record. He's hailed as the greatest racewalker of his generation. Clausen, meanwhile, still has several strides to go and no one's chanting "Curt! Curt!" The helicopter that had been hovering over the route is no longer in sight, and the camera crews are packing up. Greek policemen outnumber fans along the last stretches of the course as Clausen turns off the loop and toward the stadium. The only shade in this last stretch comes from utility poles, and the only cheers come from a nearby pool, where water polo is being played in front of a packed house.

Unlike most of the other walkers, Clausen races without a cap, his blonde hair flowing. He had hoped for a performance similar to



OVER AND OUT On Athens's scorching streets, Clausen completed his final 50-K.

the one he'd logged at the 50-K Olympic Trials in February, when he'd walked negative splits—faster over the second half of the course than the first half—and came from far behind to pass Al Heppner and win the race. That won't happen today; too many talented walkers ahead of him, and too many years behind him. One hour into the race he was in 29th place, an hour later, 41st place. Now, he's rallied himself into the top 35. Not far behind is his teammate, Philip Dunn.

As his strides in the sport dwindle to a final few, the question remains: Have all these years of training and sacrifice been time lost or time redeemed? Later, after he finishes in 4:11:31 and in 32nd place, he'll tell a few reporters, "I'm really looking forward to changing from full-time athlete to full-time law student. There's a lot of pain in my legs." But right now, outside Olympic Stadium, there's no time for self-examination. There's a race to finish. He walks closer and closer to the entrance, but before going in, one of the few onlookers left on the route calls out in an indeterminate accent, "USA, well done! Well done, USA!"

And Clausen keeps walking. One foot always touching the ground. **RW**

(Additional reporting by Dave Kuehls)

RUNNERS WORLD (ISSN 0897-1706) IS PUBLISHED MONTHLY BY RODALE, INC. VOLUME 39 NUMBER 11. EDITORIAL OFFICES: 33 E. MINOR ST., EMMANUS, PA 18098; (610) 967-5171. COPYRIGHT ©2004 BY RODALE, INC. ARDATH RODALE, CHAIRMAN; STEVEN PLESSETTE MURPHY, PRESIDENT, RODALE, INC.; BOB ANDERSON, FOUNDER. OUR COVER, INSIDE PAGES AND RESPONSE CARDS ARE PRINTED ON RECYCLED PAPER CONTAINING POSTCONSUMER WASTE. SUBSCRIPTION RATES: U.S.A. AND U.S. POSSESSIONS, ONE YEAR (12 ISSUES), \$24. CANADA, ONE YEAR, CDN\$31. SUBSCRIPTIONS TO ALL OTHER COUNTRIES (AIR/SURFACE SERVICE), ONE YEAR, U.S. \$50, PREPAID. **POSTMASTER:** SEND ADDRESS CHANGES TO: RUNNER'S WORLD, P.O. BOX 7307, RED OAK, IA 51591-0307. PERIODICALS POSTAGE PAID AT EMMANUS, PA, AND ADDITIONAL MAILING OFFICES. **IN CANADA,** POSTAGE PAID AT GATEWAY, MISSISSAUGA ONTARIO. CANADA POST PUBLICATION MAIL AGREEMENT NUMBER 40063752. RETURN UNDELIVERABLE CANADIAN ADDRESSES TO RUNNER'S WORLD, PO BOX 7000, GEORGETOWN, ONTARIO L5G 5B9. GST #R122988611

PRINTED IN THE U.S.A.



JEFF SALVAGE