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2008 OPEN ATHLETICS YEAR IN REVIEW

OPEN TRACK & FIELD

Jim Bush Southern California Championships

The 22nd annual Jim Bush Southern California USATF Association Championships was held on Saturday, June 7, at Occidental College. Once again, the meet was selected by USA Track & Field to serve as its **West Region Championship**—a scored competition for USATF clubs from 18 western state Associations. The **VS Athletics Track Club** won both the Men's and Women's team titles as 9 meet records were set. Perhaps most important, the meet produced 72 qualifying performances for the U.S. Olympic Trials. We were also very pleased that the meet's namesake, Hall of Fame coach *Jim Bush*, was able to attend despite ongoing health challenges.



Photos of Jim Bush courtesy of UCLA and Linda Wallace

The Jim Bush Championships was also the 2nd of three high-performance meets the Open Athletics Track & Field Subcommittee hosted in 2008. Bookended by meets on May 24 at Santa Monica College and on June 15 at Mt. SAC, these meets were designed to provide final-qualifying or tune-up opportunities for the Olympic Trials at the end of June. In order to host this series, the Committee diverted funding that would have otherwise been budgeted for a summer grand prix series. However, between them, these three meets drew more than 1,300 athletes from across the country and produced a total of 94 qualifying performances for the 2008 U.S. Olympic Track & Field Trials. This was certainly the right thing for us to do in an Olympic year.

2008 Olympic Trials

92 Southern California athletes (47 men and 45 women) competed in the **U.S. Olympic Track & Field Trials** held in Eugene, Oregon from June 27 to July 6. The partnership created between the University of Oregon, Oregon Track Club, cities of Eugene and Springfield, and State of Oregon resulted in forever raising the bar for organization, presentation, media coverage, and local fan support for the largest track meet held in the United States every four years.

2008 USATF National Club Championships

2-weeks after the Olympic Trials on July 18-19, the rotation of the 8th annual **USATF National Club Track & Field Championships** brought the 2008 edition of the meet to the Midwest and the Olathe District Activity Center (ODAC) in Olathe, Kansas. Olathe served as the beginning of the both the Oregon Trail and Santa Fe Trail and its local stores and businesses were heavily dependent on supplying the wagons trains headed West. This year's meet featured 375 entries representing 37 clubs from 16 States. The *Kansas City Smoke* used its home team advantage to win the men's team title with 146 points, while the *Nike Central Park Track Club* was 2nd with 120 ½ points, and *VS Athletics* was 3rd with 114. Nike Central Park won the women's title with 178 points, with VS Athletics placing 2nd with 143 points and the Norfolk Real Deal Track Club 3rd with 100. Southern California's **VS Athletics Track Club** also had seven individual champions in

Roseline Agboke (Women's 800m), **Aris Borjas** (Men's javelin), **Matt Carter** (Men's high Jump), **Katelyn Ciarelli** (Women's discus), **Ben Clark** (Men's 400m hurdles), **Casey Kraychir** (Women's hammer), and **Sam Lightbody** (Men's Discus) and 33 gold, silver, and bronze medalists in all.

2008 Olympic Games

At the Olympic Games in Beijing, China, California once again played a pivotal role in the success of our USA Track & Field Team. **31 of its 132 members were either California natives or current residents—including 17 Southern Californians.** (What's more, according to ESPN nearly one-half of America's 2008 Olympic Team competing in 28 different sports in Beijing were Californians.) Californians winning track & field medals were **Bryan Clay** (gold- Men's Decathlon), **David Neville** (bronze- Men's 400m/gold- 4x 400m relay), **Allyson Felix** (silver- women's 200m/gold- 4x 400m relay), **Dawn Harper** (gold- women's 100m hurdles), **Stephanie Brown-Trafton** (gold- women's discus), and **Monique Henderson** (gold-women's 4x 400m relay).

OPEN ROAD RUNNING

2008 Olympic Marathon Trials

Big Bear, CA, native **Ryan Hall** won the **2008 U.S. Olympic Marathon Trials** on November 3 in New York City with a trials-record time of 2:09:02. Joined by **Justin Patananan** and **Aaron Sharp** of *Nike Team Run LA*, 2004 Olympic silver medalist **Meb Keflezighi** (8th overall in 2:15:09), **James Lander**, **Antonio Arce**, **Steve Frisone**, and **Josh Cox**, Ryan was part of an 8-man Southern California contingent in the field of 132 competitors who all ran a marathon in 2:22:00 or better in the previous 12-months to qualify for the Trials. Unfortunately, the race was marred by the tragic death of Ryan Shay who collapsed and died after just 5 ½ miles. Ryan won the 5000 meters at our 2007 Jim Bush Southern California USATF Track & Field Championships last at Occidental College.

Southern California USATF Road Championship Series

Thanks to new Open Road Running Subcommittee chair, **Wayne Jones**, in 2008 we held the first Southern California Road Championships in more than 20-years. The series began with the **SCA 5K Championship** held in conjunction with the **Coaster Run** on April 14. The start/finish and post-race Expo was located at the entrance to Buena Park's famous *Knott's Berry Farm*. The men's overall winner was **Christian Hesch** (Morro Bay, CA) in a course record 15:05. In 2nd, **Danny Rojas** (Baldwin Park) at 15:08 was the first Southern California finisher and SCA 5K Road Champion. The women's winner, **Midori Sperandeo** (Laguna Niguel), ran 17:26 and knocked :21 seconds off Ceci St. Geme's 2007 course record.

The next race in the series was the **Southern California USATF Half-Marathon Championship**. Awarded to the **Long Beach International City Bank Half-Marathon** on October 12, the results supported the reputation of it being one of the most popular, and fastest, half-marathon races in the Western States. In a thrilling finish to the men's race, Los Angeles residents **Christian Hesch** and **Brian Livingston** battled stride for stride over the entire 13.1 miles, with Christian prevailing at the finish for a :02 second win with a course record time of **1:06:20**.



Christian Hesch



Mary Akor Photos by Wayne Jones

In contrast, the winner of the women's race, Hawthorne's **Mary Akor**, broke away from the field very early and crossed the finish line in 1:17:54—more than five minutes ahead of the next female finisher. Amazingly, just 7-days earlier Mary had run the Twin Cities Marathon in Minneapolis, MN—where she placed 4th with a time of 2:40:00! In April, Mary also placed 19th in the 155 runner field at the 2008 Women's U.S. Olympic Marathon Trials in Boston.

The first Masters female finisher was Carlsbad's **Stacy Schafer**. After the race, the ebullient Schafer could not stop smiling after running almost three minutes faster than her previous half marathon PR of 1:28:13. The first Masters male finisher was Brea's **Kevin Broady** who finished 10th overall in 1:12:32. In total, 24 Southern California runners won received gold, silver, or bronze USATF Association Championship medals for finishing 1st, 2nd, or 3rd in their age-groups—including runners as young as 23 and as old as 73!

On November 27, the inaugural **2008 Southern California Road Championship Series** concluded with the SCA 10K Road Championship held in conjunction with the 31st running of the **Dana Point 10K Turkey Trot**—America's largest Thanksgiving Day road race. With rain threatening during the early morning hours, it was not until just after the 7:00am 10K start that the skies unleashed a torrential downpour that turned the technically challenging course into a series of intertwining rivers. Within minutes, the driving rain had more than 3,200 runners in ankle-deep in water, barely able to see, as they negotiated the twists and turns that make the Dana Point course so unique.

Incredibly, despite the conditions, front runners **Mohamed Trafteh** (29:22), **Ben Bruce** (29:23) and **Brandon Bethke** (29:27) came within seconds of setting a new course record. Trafteh had just returned from training in Morocco, but showed no signs of jet lag en route to winning the So Cal USATF 10K Road Crown. Unlike the close finish in the men's division, in the women's division the winning time of 35:49 by **Tove Berg** well over a minute faster than 2nd and 3rd place finishers **Adrienne Schumm** (37:06) and **Emily Mitchell** (37:17).

In the Masters age-groups, the most competitive men's division was M50-54, lead by local runner **John Loftus** who won in **35:55**. The field in the women's master division was also deep, with **Rosalva Bonilla** winning in **40:21**. 12-days earlier, Bonilla had won the Southern California USATF Masters Women's 6K Cross Country title at Kenneth Hahn Park in West Los Angeles.

Overall, there was an enthusiastic turnout by USATF runners in all age-groups despite the forecast for rain. More than forty Southern California Association members won USATF Championship Medals in age- groups ranging from 15-19 to 55-59. As predicted, the 10K race sold out this year and, in total, a record-breaking 12,000+ runners participated in the Dana Point 5K, 10K and kiddie run Turkey Trots.

Looking ahead, the **2009 Southern California USATF Road Championship Series** promises to be even more popular with the addition of the first-ever **SCA Marathon Championship** at the **Avia Orange County Marathon** on May 3. The Series will kick-off on March 15 with the **Southern California 5K Championship** at the flat-and-fast **Coaster 5K** in Buena Park.

OPEN CROSS COUNTRY

On November 1, new Open Athletics Cross Country Subcommittee chair **Mike Mahurin** added the **Southern California Cross Country Open** to the 2008 harrier schedule. Held on the collegiate conference weekend, the meet filled a gaping hole in the cross country competition calendar for open runners. Hosted on the international-style all-grass course in the bowl at the top of Kenneth Hahn Park in Baldwin Hills, the meet was highlighted by a great battle in the Men's 8K race between **Brian Livingston** of **Nike Team Run LA** and former UC Santa Barbara star, **Micah Tyhurst**...with Brian finally pulling away for a :01 second win, 24:30 to 24:31. In team competition, **Track Club LA** won the Open and Masters men's team titles.

Two-weeks later on November 15, Kenneth Hahn Park hosted the **2008 Southern California USATF Cross Country Championships**. However, after enjoying nearly ideal cool, overcast running conditions on November 1, the temperature had climbed to 90-degrees for the 9:00am start of the Open Men's 8K Championship. This time a battle royal between **Brian Livingston** and **Micah Tyhurst** was joined by Brian's **Nike Team Run LA** teammate **Danny Rojas**. Once again, Brian emerged victorious pulling away on the 4th 2 kilometer loop for a :06 second 24:27 win over Danny as Micah ran 24:35. In team competition, **Nike Team Run LA** regained the team championship cup they lost to the **Pacers Running Club** in 2007.

In the Open Women's 6K Championship race, the team title was won by **The Janes Elite Racing Team** for the 4th consecutive year, while **Tiffanie Marley** of **Nike Team Run LA** won individual honors in 21:38. In the Masters Men's 6K Championship, **Brian Pope** defended his 2007 individual title and helped **So Cal Fleet Feet** reclaim the team championship cup they lost to **Team Runners High** in 2007. In the Masters Women's 6K Championship, **Rosalva Bonnilla** defended her 2007 individual title, but **Track Club LA** eeked out a one-point victory over their So Cal Fleet Feet rivals as the day saw eight (8) gold traveling cups awarded to the men's and women's open and masters team and individual champions.

OPEN MUT (Mountain/Ultra-Distance/Trail Running)

High Desert 50K Trail Run – SCA 50K Association Championship 12/06/08

While race day dawned with partly cloudy skies, by noon more serious storm clouds became apparent over the mountains to the West. Soon thereafter, a few sprinkles became a steady drizzle. Hail was even reported by Gracies Mansion aid station. **Brian Krogman**, of Van Nuys, was the 50K overall winner, in a time of 3:46:57, while the first 50K female finisher was **Angela Shartel** of San Diego in 4:10:45. Our military winner was **Matthew Sandlin** of Twenty-nine Palms, in 4:42:51. In all, 217 runners and walkers completed the 50K. For complete results, visit <http://www.othtc.com/ultra/index.htm>

2008 Southern California Ultra Runners Grand Prix Final Standings

The 2008 Southern California Ultra-Distance Series was a great success with 79 USATF members participating in 18 series races.

A huge thank you is due to **Gary Hilliard** for coordinating this very successful series and for promoting USATF membership among its participants. Even with the infusion of prize money, many participants decline to join USATF...even though two of the series races host SCA Association Championships: the **Mt. Disappointment 50-Mile Trail Run** and the **High Desert 5K Trail Run**. We will continue in our efforts to promote USATF within the ultra community and also among sub-ultra trail athletes in 2009.

Thanks should also be given to all the race directors who participated in the 2008 series, as well as to Series Statistician **Fred Pollard** and Series Treasurer **Joe Magruder**, who both assisted Gary throughout the year. Fred has compiled some statistics from the series participant's efforts this year. This year seventy-nine athletes entered the Series and ran a total of 14,039 miles in 344 races.

On January 31, the Series Awards/Run/Pot-Luck Lunch will be held at Chantry Flat in the San Gabriel Mountains. A mountain run will be followed by good food and camaraderie. Gary and MUT Chair **Lorraine Gersitz** will actively recruit USATF members at this time by speaking about the benefits of joining USTAF and especially the support MUT events receives from SCA. Overall and age-group awards and high mileage plaques will be awarded as will prize money to USATF members. **Patrick Sweeney** is the 2008 Overall Male Winner and **Gina Natera-Armenta** is the 2008 Overall Female Winner. The 2008 Men's Mileage Champion is **Ted Liao** and the 2008 Women's Mileage Champion is **Gina Natera-Armenta**. For complete results see the series website at <http://www.socalultraseries.org/>

Overview

2008 was a banner year for MUT in that it received a budget of \$3,000 from the SCA Open Athletics Committee for prizes and awards for its championships and series winners. Although most members of the ultra-distance running community have resisted joining USATF, we did gain many new members in 2008 and hope to attract more in 2009. Emails have been sent to one of the largest trail clubs in the area and to all Series participants. USATF membership forms will be available at the Series Awards Banquet on January 31.

Trail running has become increasingly popular in the Southland, with dozens of shorter distances and marathon trail runs being contested in various locations and attracting large fields. It is our hope to can add several sub-ultra distance trail championships to the SCA calendar in 2009, as well as a Road Ultra-distance Championship.

Lorraine Gersits adds, "I would like to take this opportunity to thank SCA/USATF for supporting ultra-running since I was invited to serve as Women's LDR Chair in 1998. Shortly after that, SCA became one of the few USATF Associations in the country to create a standing sport committee for MUT—which I was asked to Chair. Just a year or two after that, we held our first Southern California USATF MUT Championship over the 50K trail distance. Most recently, as a result of the Association restructuring itself, the SCA once again showed it's commitment to MUT athletes and programming by creating two sport chair positions for MUT— one for its Open Athletics Committee and another for its Masters Athletics Committee. We are very lucky to have two MUT positions in our association when most associations don't even have one. Within the SCA, and MUT in general, open and masters-level events are closely connected. In the SCA this is particularly true as all our programs are geared to provide opportunities for both groups of athletes to participate in MUT events. The Open and Masters Committee Chairs will continue to work together to advance the sport of MUT in Southern California and to encourage more MUT athletes to become USATF members."

The 2009 Southern California Ultra-Distance Series

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| 01/17/09 Avalon Benefit 50-Mile | 06/06/09 San Diego 100 |
| 01/18/09 50K Calico Trail Run | 06/14/09 Holcomb Valley 33 Mile |
| 02/21/09 Orange Curtain 100K & 50k | 08/08/09 **Mt. Disappointment 50K & 50 Mile |
| 03/14/09 San Juan Trail 50K | **SCA 50 Mile Trail Championship |
| 03/28/09 Old Goats 50 Mile | 08/22/09 Bulldog 50K & 25K Run |
| 04/18/09 Leona Divide 50 Mile | 09/19/09 Angeles Crest 100 Mile Endurance Run |
| 05/02/09 Wild Wild West 50K, Marathon, 10 Mile | 09/27/09 Noble Canyon 50K |
| 05/09/09 PCT 50 Mile Trail Run | 11/30/09 Santa Barbara 9 Trails 35 Mile Endurance Run |
| 05/16/09 Bishop High Sierra 100K, 50M, 50K, 20M | 12/07/09 **High Desert 50K & 30K |
| 05/30/09 Shadow of the Giants 50K | **SCA 50k Trail Championship |

OPEN RACE WALKING

2008 was a successful year for race walking in the Southern California Association. Once again, at the NAIA Indoor and Outdoor Track & Field Championships we had two individual male and female NAIA All-America medalists in **Megan Wong** and **Daniel Lew**—both from Westmont College. Both were graduates of our ***Southern California Elite Race Walking Initiative***, an intensive technique immersion and training program. We also held race walk clinics and national championship qualifying races as part of several NAIA track meets in 2008.

2008 SCA/USATF Race Walk Grand Prix Series

Our 2008 series concluded with the One-Hour Postal Competition and annual Race Walk Awards Picnic held in Pasadena at the park behind the Cal Tech track & field facility. Everyone enjoyed a fine breakfast and each other's company. Participants in the Series all received USATF certificates and a medal for their age-group place.

2009 SCA Race Walk Schedule and Grand Prix Series

The 2009 race walk schedule has been tentatively formalized as follows: (Grand Prix races are **bolded**)

Sun, January 18: Walkers Club of LA Rose Bowl 10-Mile/Richard Oliver 5K- Pasadena

Sun, February 8: Palm Desert Games

Sun, March 15: Easy Striders St. Pat's Day 20K/5K- Huntington Beach

Sun, April 5: Mt. SAC Relays 5K/10k- Walnut

Sun, April 19: So Cal Walkers Whopper 10K/5K- Pasadena

Sun, May 17: USATF National Masters and West Region 15K- Riverside

Sat, June 6: Jim Bush SCA Track & Field Championships: Elaine Ward & Jim Hanley 5K Cup Races- UCLA

Sat, June 6: Fontana Days 5K Race Walk

Sat, June 6: Senior Olympics Track and Road Races- Cal Tech, Pasadena

Sat, June 6: SCA Masters T&F Championships 5K- Soka University, Aliso Viejo

Oct./Nov/Dec: One-Hour Postal Competitions

Championship Bids:

The SCA bid to host the **2009 USATF National Masters 20K Race Walk Championship** was successful. During deliberations we were asked if we would be willing to host the event for 2-years and we were awarded the event for 2009-2010. **Pedro Santoni** presented the bid and was eloquent in explaining the benefits of having the event in beautiful Southern California. We were also selected to continue to host the **USATF Masters 15K Race Walk Championship** in Riverside.

USATF Annual Meeting in Reno, NV

Chris Rael and Pedro Santoni represented the SCA as Race Walk delegate and attendee. The Race Walk Executive Committee began the session with a moment of silence in memory of Bob Fine, Master RW Chair, who was killed in an accident while running Wednesday morning in Reno.

It was announced that the Committee has forwarded the name of Philip Dun to be one of the Athlete Representatives to the new USATF Board of Directors. Philip is a three time Olympian race walker, lives in San Diego, and regularly participates in SCA race walk events.

The following rule changes will affect all race walkers:

- It has been recommended that the current policy of accepting the entry to the National Championships of anyone who has won a National championship be changed entry to allowing entry only if the athlete won the National Championship at that same distance.
- Anyone disciplined for a doping offense be ineligible to serve as a USA Team staff person in any capacity.
- The role of a Jury of Appeals has been clarified to conform to IAAF Rules. Essentially, if there is no compelling evidence to overturn the decision of a referee or chief race walk judge, then the Jury of Appeals should not.
- The number of athletes a lap scorer should be responsible for has been changed from four to three.

National Team Meeting

The members of the USA National Race Walk Team unanimously voted to appoint SCA Open Race Walk Chair, **Chris Rael**, as National Senior Team Coordinator. His duties will include recruiting open-level athletes to increase the numbers of elite race walkers, oversee the development and support of current national class walkers, and conceptualize and implement new and innovative programming to elevate the status of race walking in the United States.

Respectfully submitted,

Skip Stolley, Vice President, Southern California Association
Chairman, SCA Open Athletics Committee