

Racewalking-the Remedy For Many Maladies

by Alice Winkler

I am so thrilled that I found racewalking. Now, I really loved running too. However, running really didn't love me in return. The Sports Medicine Doctor said, "Your body is not biomechanically correct." We tried to correct it with orthotics and they worked for a while, but it was a litany of injuries that accompanied speed.

Racewalking on the other hand has been a kind and gentle friend. Last summer while on a hiking vacation in Norway, I developed a real respect for the sport. This was an Adventure Vacation. Every day, we were scheduled to hike. On the third day, as we came to the end of a six mile hike along a fjord, the trail deteriorated. Part of the trail collapsed, and so did I. It didn't feel too bad initially, so I finished the hike and asked the guide for ice. I iced it and compressed the ankle. I continued to ice it all night, however by morning the ankle had grown to double its size.

The group was scheduled to hike up 3000 ft to a summer farm. My ankle would never be able to take the stress coming back down that mountain. Instead, I took a day cruise and felt a bit sorry for myself. My mind started clicking with facts as I absorbed the scenery. I remembered reading that racewalking was less impact than regular walking. Since my ankle ached while regular walking, maybe I could racewalk.. I went back to the hotel and donned my racewalking apparel.

I was able to racewalk three miles without pain. WOW! The vacation wasn't ruined afterall! I had to be careful choosing the hike, but I found level areas and racewalked. Hiking, and leisure walking made my ankle ache, but there was absolutely no pain when I racewalked.

On December 23rd, I had another freak misstep. My arms were full and I couldn't see the wayward shoe on the landing. I lost my balance, and slammed into the wall and the wooden molding. I saw stars and felt an incredible amount of pain. No broken bones to report, just intense trauma to the right hip. The pain accompanied muscle spasms. For two days, I could barely move. On December 26th Ron said, "You need to loosen up those muscles, go for a walk." Very slowly, I racewalked for one and one half miles. Actually I did feel much better afterwards. Racewalking once again came to the rescue.

Several years ago, Ron had a second degree hamstring pull. It was bad! At that time, Ron was a runner. He wanted to run pain-free, but the pain-free state was elusive. He could only run for a mile at a time and then he'd have to stretch. I kept suggesting racewalking. It took a while, but monkeys do fly and Ron did racewalk. That first day, he walked 6 miles pain-free. The hip motion had loosened up the tight muscles. Ron too became a loyal friend of the sport. He also discovered that he was already pretty quick because of his good conditioning from running.

Ron still enjoys running and racewalking. At times, he gets pain in his calf while running. If he keeps running, the pain just intensifies, and stretching doesn't help. He has to stop running to alleviate the pain. In the past, that meant an incomplete workout. Now he can switch to racewalking and finish the workout.

We've also discovered that the common cold or sinusitis are also helped through exercise. If you are all stuffed up, a little exercise clears the head and the nasal passages. If you have a fever, stay in bed. If not, get out there and walk, you'll feel better.

Racewalking often comes to the rescue. Many people seem afraid to try it though. "Will I be able to get a good workout? Will I be able to go fast? Will I burn enough calories? Will I get a racewalking high?"

The answer to all of these questions is, "**Yes.**" Give racewalking a chance, and you too will develop a real respect for the sport.