

Statistical Skier

Data based analysis and commentary on nordic skiing

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{ 2021 03 21 }

The USA-CAN Men’s Relay Rivalry Has A Very Long History

Warning: this post contains no statistics and virtually no data, but I suspect it may be fairly entertaining!

During most of my lifetime, the US & Canadian men’s 4x10km relay teams have not often been in medal contention, although the Canadians definitely had some strong teams for a period with Devon Kershaw, Alex Harvey, Ivan Babikov and others that were occasional outside contenders for a medal. (For instance, I believe the Canadians were 3rd in one WC sprint and 5th in another in the last 10 years or so.) But frequently both North American men’s relay teams have been out of medal contention fairly early. Naturally, you would expect a friendly competitive spirit to develop between the two neighboring nations as a sort of “race within the race”.

I’ve been doing some long overdue organizational work with the several boxes of paper race results records that I’ve received (primarily from Ruff Patterson & John Estle). In the process I (re)-discovered an entertaining little nugget: a [telex](#) (!) sent to the US from Europe summarizing the men’s & women’s relays at the 1985 World University Games in Nevegal, Italy. I haven’t done the research to determine for sure who sent the telex and who specifically the recipient was (presumably either Ruff Patterson, or US Ski Team staff generally) but it tells quite an entertaining story.

Here’s the scene. The US men’s relay team consisted of Joe Galanes, Terry Daley, Josh Thompson (future biathlete) and Todd Boonstra, in that order. The Canadians ran Allain Masson, Wayne Dustin, Owen Spence and Benoit Letourneau. Before we even get to the North American “race within a race” on the men’s side, there was some notable drama in the women’s race. What follows is a lightly edited transcript of the start of the telex:

Team nordic Sovi-jet (sic) women nailed for skating in tag zone, cost 'em gold. No impact on US. For (sic) good legs from men and we'd have bronze except the Canucks blew in and took it with USA fourth.

Hotline: 'They upheld a protest against skating in the tag zone of a cross-country ski relay today...and it cost the Soviet Union a gold.

Three-by-five-kilometer relay at the World University Games in Nevegal, Italy...But the five-member jury disqualified the Soviets for skating in the exchange zone between laps. The decision was the first time skating protests have been upheld in a major international race...coming on the heels of disallowed protests last month at the Nordic World Championships in Austria and last week at the World Junior Championships in Switzerland, by knocking out the Soviet women, the jury handed the relay gold medal to Czechoslovakia (sic)...with Poland the silver medalist and Finland third.

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kuusamo liz stephen

marit bjoergen mass

start men most

improved norway

olympics pursuit

race

snapshot

recap retirement

retrospective season

preview sochi

Sprint stage race

sweden tour de

france tour de ski

U23 USA usst wbc

week in review

WJC/U23

women
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Cup wsc

Exciting! The telex continues in depth on how the men's relay played out:

In the men's relay...the Soviets tooch (sic) charge on the final lap and earned the gold with Italy second and Canada holding off the lead from— of all teams Japan early on the second lap while the Soviets were struggling. However, Vladimir Nikitin took over at the start of the final 10-kilometer lap and pulled the Soviets in firts (sic), Todd Boonstra kept the US close on the last lap but it wans't (sic) enough as the US had to settle for fourth in the 11-team field.

This section of the telex (the “Hotline”) reads like a press-release of sorts. What follows appears to be more of a direct communication between ski team staff describing the race in more detail:


Bat fecal matter (sic), got the okay for Joe to race and he was accredited without problem...but who wud (sic) have figured the Canadians wud (sic) replace Austrians and Finns? We had figured Soviets and ITA as 1-2 and that gave us a shot at the bronze we got four excellent legs...but the Canadians upset everything. Galanes was six secs out of first at about 3.5km, sitting in sisth (sic) place at back of second three-man knot when his pole got caught in netting along track on a lefthand curve. He lost about 20 secs but regained it and was in fourth before running out of gas at end of lap. Still we were close to third, which was what we wanted, Josh and Terry gave us strong middle laps we needed, but the Canadians wudn't (sic) drop. They went with speed to hang-on at the end and pulled it off. Masson had 'em third behind JPN and SOV, just 25 secs out of first...Dustin took lead and they held it till end of third leg when Soviets regained it, and Nikitin cruised. Boonie cudn't (sic) catch junior Benoit Letourneau altho (sic) he cut 11 secs off the gap...women never in it with Butts skiing scramble and seventh (last) right from the start. When the Sovi-jets (sic) were dumped, that moved US to sixth.

No, I do not understand the “bat fecal matter” reference either. It continues...

Taylor: 'We wanted four good legs and we got 'em but there was no way we could anticipate the Canadians being so tough. Dustin is skiing very hot right now and is the classic picture of someone getting better as his confidence grows. Getting Joe last night was a shot-in-the-arm and obviously was the key to us being any kind of a contender, who knows what wud hv (sic) happened if he hadn't gotten hung-up in the nets but he gutted it out and made good comeback. Terry and Josh really showed something and I'm going to talk with Terry about his thoughts on skiing for us, he's raw talent and wud (sic) be a terrific addition if he decided he'd put his career on hold. Boonie skied a honey of a race, too, but he's not the Todd Boonstra we've seen in the past, still, absolutely no complaints—except someone forgot to tell the Canadians what we planning (sic)'

The US would have won the bronze if it hadn't been for those [meddling Canadians!](#) After all that, one of the things that actually fascinates me the most is that after mentioning the surprise position of the Japanese team early in the race, the telex fails to mention that they were disqualified! Here's images of the actual race results:

Universiade
Invernale



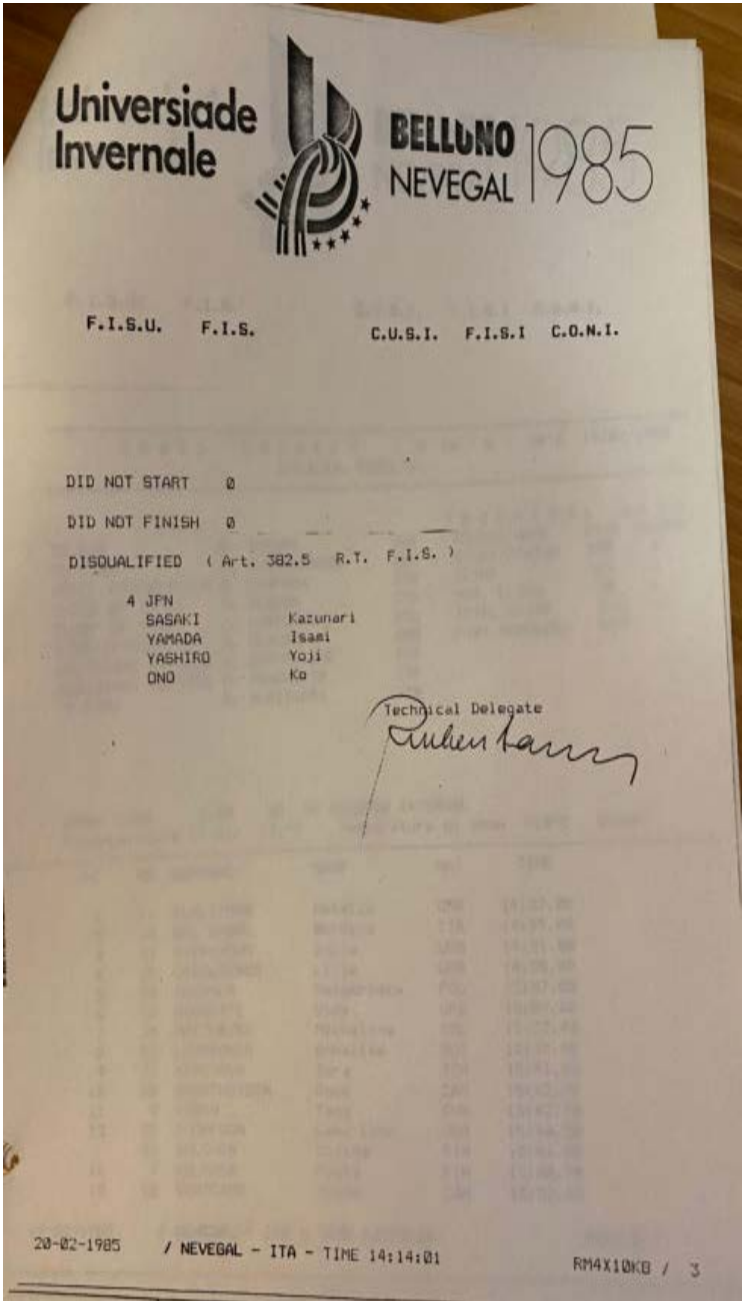
F.I.S.U. F.I.S. C.U.S.I. F.I.S.I. C.O.N.I.

RANK	NR	NAT	SURNAME	NAME	TIME	BEHIND	TOTAL
4	5	USA					
			GALANES	JOE	25:36.20 (4)	01:56.10 (4)	
			DALEY	Terry	25:38.10 (4)	02:35.70 (4)	
			THOMPSON	Joshua Casey	25:11.30 (3)	01:14.40 (4)	
			BOONSTRA	Todo	25:01.00 (3)	02:04.00 (4)	1:41:27.40
5	3	AUT					
			HOFSTAETTER	Bruno	26:49.60 (9)	02:09.50 (9)	
			KATTNIG	Wolfgang	25:38.00 (3)	03:49.00 (6)	
			HOFSTAETTER	Siegfried	24:49.50 (2)	02:05.90 (5)	
			STADLOBER	Alois	25:11.00 (5)	03:04.70 (5)	1:42:20.10
6	2	FIN					
			VESALA	Teemu	25:33.00 (3)	01:53.70 (3)	
			LAUKKANEN	Aarno	25:45.20 (5)	02:40.40 (5)	
			KYROK	Kari-Pekka	27:13.90 (9)	03:21.70 (6)	
			JAAKKOLA	Timo	25:09.00 (4)	04:18.30 (6)	1:43:41.70
7	7	SUI					
			GODLY	Andrea	26:31.10 (8)	02:51.00 (8)	
			ANNEHEIM	Daniel	26:31.60 (8)	04:24.10 (8)	
			PHILIPP	Juerg	26:30.30 (6)	04:21.00 (7)	
			CONDRAU	Giusep	25:56.10 (7)	06:05.70 (7)	1:45:29.10
8	9	KOR					
			CHO	Sung-Hoon	26:22.40 (7)	02:42.30 (6)	
			JEON	Young-Hae	26:42.20 (10)	04:26.00 (9)	
			HONG	Kuen-Pyo	26:41.20 (7)	04:34.60 (8)	
			PARK	Ki-Ho	27:22.10 (10)	08:44.50 (8)	1:47:07.90
9	11	AUS					
			HEBERLE	Christopher	26:22.40 (6)	02:42.30 (6)	
			PAUL	Andrew W.	26:36.30 (9)	03:20.10 (7)	
			HISLOP	Roderick A.	27:00.60 (8)	04:48.10 (9)	
			LEE	David Andrew	27:13.30 (9)	08:49.20 (9)	1:47:12.60
10	10	FRG					
			HIRSCH	Volkmar	30:24.70 (10)	06:44.60 (10)	
			DOLD	Guido	25:46.50 (6)	07:32.60 (10)	
			SCHRTL	MARTIN	27:31.40 (10)	08:31.40 (10)	
			GEISSLER	Christoph	26:33.30 (8)	11:52.50 (10)	1:50:15.90

02-02-1985 / NEVEGAL - ITA - TIME 14:14:01

RM4X10KB / 2

CONCESSIONARI TBM



I can't find an Article 382.5 in the current FIS rules, so I'm not sure what the Japanese team was disqualified for. But I guess that was overshadowed by the drama with the Soviet women skating and the battle royale between the US & Canadian men.

Posted by [Joran](#) on Sunday, March 21, 2021, at 9:55 am.

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